



ROMANIA IN THE OTTOMAN RUSSIAN WARS



TURKISH NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY  
FATİH INSTITUTE OF MILITARY HISTORY STUDIES

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INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS  
15-16 MAY 2024 İSTANBUL



ISBN:





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**Editors**

**Bünyamin KOCAOĞLU  
Ahmet TAŞDEMİR**





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## PREFACE

The close collaboration between the Turkish National Defense University, Fatih Institute of Military History Studies (Fatih HATEN) and the Romanian Ministry of National Defense, Institute for Defense Policy Studies and Military History (ISPAIM), which began with the Türkiye-Romania Joint Military History Symposium in 2023, has evolved into a partnership that encourages joint academic research and publications. These efforts paved way for important events and publications. After the first symposium in Türkiye, the second joint academic meeting took place in Bucharest in October 2023, which was dedicated to the centenary of the Republic of Türkiye under the title “Romania-Türkiye Relations in the Centenary of the Republic of Türkiye”. Our third joint symposium, “Romania in the Ottoman Russian Wars International Symposium”, held on 15-16 May 2024 at Turkish National Defense University campus in Istanbul.

This symposium gathered scholars from Türkiye and Romania, as well as from the Czech Republic and Ukraine, to explore the Ottoman-Russian struggles on Romanian territories after the mid-16th century. During this period, Romanian territory repeatedly faced the political and military influence of the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire. The symposium focused on the strategic and military importance of Romania during these conflicts, highlighting the common grounds of Turkish and Romanian military history. The contributions at the event delved into various key battles and wars, from the earliest Ottoman-Russian encounters to the 1828-1829 War, Crimean War, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, and the First World War, with focusing on their impact on Romania. Another primary aim of the symposium was to explore the strategic significance of Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as their populations, during these wars. In this context, the discussions provided valuable insights into the broader framework of Ottoman-Russian conflicts and made significant contributions to the field of Turkish-Romanian military studies.

In line with the ongoing academic collaboration between Fatih HATEN and ISPAIM, several publications have been published. The first symposium’s proceedings were published by Fatih HATEN in 2023 under the title “Türkiye-Romania Joint Military History Symposium”. Also, Fatih HATEN published three books as part of this collaboration. The first book, “Romanya Tarihine Dair Türkiye’de Hazırlanmış Bilimsel Yayınlar



Bibliyografyası” (The Bibliography of Turkish Studies on Romanian History), offers a comprehensive collection of over one thousand academic references, establishing an important source for scholars focused on Turkish-Romanian relations. The second book, “Bükreş’te 20 Yıl: Şevket Turgut Paşa ve Romanya Ataşemiliterliği Raporları” (20 Years in Bucharest: Şevket Turgut Pasha and His Military Attaché Reports in Romania), presents Ottoman Bucharest Attache Şevket Turgut’s military reports on the Romanian army. The book was published in Turkish by covering his military career in detail. An English version of the book, titled “Selected Reports of the Ottoman Military Attaché in Bucharest on the Romanian Army (1891-1897)”, was also published with full translations of Şevket Turgut’s reports and his military activities in Romania.

ISPAIM published a two-volume study titled “Romania and the Republic of Türkiye: A Century of Cooperation and Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989”. This comprehensive collection contains selected documents from the Romanian archives and provides valuable insights on the political and military relations between Romania and the Ottoman Empire, and later Republic of Türkiye. A special issue dedicated to the centenary of the Republic of Türkiye was also published in *Revista de Istorie Militară*, an international peer-reviewed journal of ISPAIM. This joint issue featured contributions from both Turkish and Romanian scholars. Through these scholarly efforts, the partnership between Fatih HATEN and ISPAIM will continue to provide a strong foundation for future academic projects, particularly in the field of military history.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Dr. Erhan Afyoncu, Rector of the Turkish National Defense University, for his unwavering support and patronage. We wish to express our deep appreciation to our collaborative partners: Dr. Carmen-Sorina Rîjnoveanu, Director of the Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History and Prof. Dr. Muzaffer Şeker, President of the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA). Also, we are pleased to express our sincere thanks to Prof. Dr. Gültekin Yıldız, Res. Asst. Ahmet Taşdemir, Dr. Cristina Bragea, the personnel of the Fatih Institute of Military History Studies, and our esteemed colleagues from the Turkish and Romanian academic communities for their invaluable contributions to the symposium.

Prof. Dr. Bünyamin Kocaoğlu

October 2024



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# PRELUDE TO THE OTTOMAN-RUSSIAN WARS: MOLDAVIA, THE COSSACKS AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN SOME DOCUMENTS OF 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

*Ovidiu CRISTEA\**

## Abstract

The Ottoman-Russian Wars of the 18th-19th centuries were preceded by a long period in which the Cossack attacks affected important parts of the Ottoman area of hegemony. During the 16th-17th c. the Cossacks were a major issue in Ottoman-Polish relations and their raids continued even after the conclusion of peace treaties. The present article focuses on several case studies occurred in the second half of the 16th century, which involved the Cossacks, the principality of Moldavia, Poland and the Sublime Porte. All of them mirror the delicate position of Moldavia as a buffer state between the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Poland, and also the difficulty of Moldavian *voivodes* to deal with the Cossack menace. All these actions led by the Cossacks which affected the territory of Moldavia anticipated the Russian-Ottoman confrontations of the 18th-19th centuries. In the 16th century as well as later on Moldavia was a battleground between the neighboring states and the examples analyzed show how limited the principality's room for diplomatic and military maneuver.

**Keywords:** Cossacks, Ottoman Empire, Moldavia, Poland.

## Introduction

In 1589 a war between the Ottoman Empire and Poland seemed imminent. According to reports reaching Venice<sup>1</sup>, the beylerbey of Rumelia was ordered to march against Poland and news of a forthcoming

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<sup>1</sup> Al. Ciorănescu (ed.), *Documente*, doc. 196, p. 94. The document is a report of Spanish ambassador in Venice, Francisco de Vera y Aragon, summarizing news received from Constantinople: *Al principio deste llegaron cartas de Constantinopla de 7 de Julio; lo que en ellas se avisa es... que a los 3 del mismo Julio partió de aquella ciudad el Belerbey de la Grecia contra los Cosaques que estan a los confines de Polonia y de los estados que el Turco tiene en aquellas partes, con orden de hazer la massa de su gente en Cicópolis, y que la tenia el Tartaro de hallarse personalmente en aquella empresa, lo que podria facilmente causar un gran rompimiento y principio de guerra con Polacos.*

Polish-Ottoman clash continued to circulate over the next few years<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, according to a letter of Sultan Murad III to Queen Elisabeth I the war against the Poles was a *fait accompli*: “Further, the King of Poland having violated the treaties between us, war was declared on him. His country was put to fire and sword and ruined. He sent Ambassadors to sue for peace, which was refused. But your ambassador (i.e. Edward Barton) here resident has, in your name, expressed your great desire that peace should be granted to the King of Poland; therefore, to satisfy you, we have yielded to your ambassador’s request. You must, accordingly, write and urge him (i.e. Sigismund III Wasa, King of Poland) to a full, faithful, and sincere observance of this treaty”<sup>3</sup>.

While the details included in the letter are exaggerated the document mirrors, nevertheless, the tense Ottoman-Polish relations were solved only by the *ahd-name* of 1591 mediated by the English ambassador, Edward Barton<sup>4</sup>. The treaty identifies the Cossacks as a major issue in the relations between the two powers and, in this respect, the treaty stipulated that “from the side of the aforementioned king, his governors, Cossack brigands, dependents and other mischief-makers no meddling or interfere, damage or harm should touch my well-protected dominions, my border fortresses, my towns and other boroughs, villages and lands belonging to my well-guarded dominions. And in short [the king] should be a friend of my friend and an enemy to my enemy”<sup>5</sup>.

The Cossacks were indeed a major issue in Ottoman-Polish relations since the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup> and despite the *ahd-name* of 1591, their raids continued regardless of the peace just concluded. The next pages will

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<sup>2</sup> Al. Ciorănescu (ed.), *Documente*, doc. 201, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Horatio Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> For the treaty and its contexts Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15-18th century). An Annotated Editions of ‘Ahdnames and other Documents*, (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2000), p. 124; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania, International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th-18th century). A Study of Peace Treaties followed by Annotated Documents*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011), p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> The original text and English translation in Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish*, p. 284-293 (290 for the quoted fragment). The clause is to be found in subsequent Ottoman-Polish treaties.

<sup>6</sup> For the Cossack issue see Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish*, pp. 31, 51-52; Andrei Pippidi, “Cazacii navigatori”; Dariusz Milewski, “From Świerczowski to Wallachian Expedition of Jan Zamoyski: Rise of the Cossack Factor in Polish-Ottoman Relations (1574–1600)”, *From Pax Mongolica to Pax Ottomanica. War, Religion and Trade in the Northwestern Black Sea Region (14th-16th centuries)*, ed. Ovidiu Cristea & Liviu Pilat, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2020), pp. 215-227.



focus on some events occurred in the reigns of Stephen Báthory and Sigismund III Wasa which concern the Cossacks and the status of Moldavia as a buffer state between the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Poland. While the Latin version of the treaty of 1591 stipulated firmly that the Poles were forbidden to cause harm to the Moldavian prince and his subjects<sup>7</sup> the principality was more than once the target of the Cossacks' expeditions.

### **Events and Rumours: Moldavia in two Episodes of 1576 and 1582**

The following case study is a situation of both misunderstanding and/or manipulation. It may also be seen as an episode of unintentional humor if we pay credit to the version recounted by King Stephen Báthory. The main characters in the episode occurred in 1576 are Stephen Báthory, Prince of Transylvania and newly elected King of Poland, the lord of Moldavia, Petru Șchiopul (Peter "the Lame") (1574-1577; 1578-1579; 1582-1591), and the papal nuncio in Poland, Andrea Bolognetti, to whom we owe the story. In fact, this is a story within a story, since the nuncio includes in one of his reports the king's versions of an episode that took place some time ago, but which became relevant only due to recent events.

In a report dated 7 December 1582, Bolognetti adds a long postscript about the arrival in Poland of an Ottoman emissary (*çavuş*). The envoy announced the replacement of the ruler of Moldavia, Iancu Sasul (Iancu „the Saxon”) (1579-1582), by Petru Șchiopul, and asked the Polish king, Stephen Báthory, to punish the Cossacks who had entered the principality with hostile intentions towards the new ruler<sup>8</sup>. The Ottoman diplomatic mission was discussed between the King and the nuncio. In the dialogue that follows, Stephen Báthory admitted that Moldavia had been indeed attacked by Cossacks who had brought with them another candidate for the Moldavian throne. However, something unexpected had happened: instead of meeting the invaders with fire and sword, Prince Peter had sent them gifts. In response, the Cossacks not only gave up their attack on Moldavia, but also surrendered to Peter the man they had brought with

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<sup>7</sup> The King pledge to offer compensation in case of any damage against Moldavia and to punish the culprits see Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish*, p. 295: *A palatino Moldaviensi et incolis Moldaviae, regno hominisque nostris nullum damnum inferatur; si damnum illatum fuerit, postquam probatum fuerit, damno recompensato, damnorum illatores puniantur.*

<sup>8</sup> For the message delivered by the Porte to the Polish King see I. Corfus, *Documente*, doc. 183, pp. 352-353.

them to take the throne<sup>9</sup>. It is interesting however that Stephen Báthory mentioned a different version of the events in a letter sent to Sultan Murad III. This time the King claimed that the Cossacks directed their attack not against Peter the Lamé but against his predecessor, Iancu Sasul, who had harmed them during his reign. However, when they found out that Iancu Sasul had been replaced by Peter the Lamé, the Cossacks aborted their attack. Some turned back home while others entered the service of the new ruler of Moldavia<sup>10</sup>.

There is no proof that Bolognetti knew the letter sent by the king to the sultan. It is certain, however, that the first version of the story made some impression on him. The nuncio considered it important enough to include it in the report sent to the Roman Curia. He also included in the report the ensuing dialogue with King Stephen. Bolognetti expressed his wonder in respect with the diplomatic solution and peaceful nature of the Moldavian ruler. To cast away any doubts and to strengthen the impression already produced, King Stephen added a personal experience happened six years earlier, in 1576: "His Majesty told me that, when he passed through Moldavia to reach Poland with about 2,000 veteran infantrymen and a small number of horsemen, the one [i.e. Peter the Lamé] who was in the camp with a larger number of horsemen and about 6,000 foot soldiers run away, believing that His Majesty was coming to put a new ruler on the [Moldavian] throne. Then, when he [i.e. Stephen Báthory] made him understand that he was coming not as an enemy but as a friend to reach his newly acquired kingdom of Poland, where he was to be a good neighbour to him from that [country] as well, he [=Peter] thanked him, and his subjects made a great feast in honour of the release of their ruler as if he had been taken prisoner before"<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Monumenta Poloniae Vaticana (henceafter MVP), V (1581-1582), doc. 495, p. 587: *Inoltre mi disse la Mtà Sua esser vero ch'i cosachi erano andati per scacciar il nuovo vaivoda, conducendo con loro un figliuolo d'un certo palatino, qual (disse) non sapeva chi si fosse, et credeva che così havessero finto essi cosachi per dar colore al lor disegno, ma che Pietro, il presente vaivoda, mando ad offerir loro danari quali essi accettarono, et non solamente si pacificarono con lui, ma gli diedero anco nelle mani quel giovane che conducevano con loro, per farlo vaivoda.*

<sup>10</sup> Ilie Corfus, *Documente*, doc. 185, p. 354. In the end the King promised to punish the Cossacks if their actions harmed the interest of the Porte.

<sup>11</sup> MVP, V (1581-1582), doc. 495, p. 587: *mi racconto S. Mta che, quando ella passo per Moldavia per venir in Polonia con circa 2 m. fanti veterani et alcuni pochi cavalli, esso che si trovava in campagna con maggior numero di cavalli et con forse 6 m. fanti, apparecchiava i carri per fuggirsene, credendo che S. Mta andasse per metter in stato un nuovo vaivoda. Poi, quanto essa gli fece intender che non veniva come nemico ma come*

The story aims to be an explanation of Peter the Lamé's attitude to the Cossack invasion in 1582, although the contexts in which it unfolded, and its stakes were obviously different from the episode of 1576 in which King Stephen was involved. Moreover, in 1582 King Stephen Báthory purposely ignored the fact that Peter the Lamé's decision to welcome the Cossacks with gifts was a beneficial solution not only for the ruler of Moldavia, but also for Poland. Otherwise, the king would have had to find a way to appease the discontent provoked by the Cossacks' action against the Moldavian ruler of the Porte. Since the second half of the 16th century, the Cossack incursions had more than once irritated the Ottomans, who saw them as a blatant violation of existing peace treaties.

In context, an action aimed to replace a prince appointed by the sultan was an obvious act of hostility and a reason for war. However, one may ask how accurately the story was narrated by the king. At first glance, the episode does not cast Peter the Lamé in a very favourable light. Every single detail seems to be against him. He appears as a prince who gathers an army but is unable to use it against an alleged enemy; he also seems to be a ruler unable to distinguish between friends and foes and who, despite his superior numbers, decided to run away in front of a hypothetical danger; and finally, Peter the Lamé appears as a ruler who does not seem to value information, since he seemed to have no idea about the intentions of Stephen Báthory and the events seem to catch him completely off guard.

Nevertheless, if we accept that Andrea Bolognetti played no role in shaping the episode, then it may be assumed that Stefan Báthory had a great influence on the way the story was narrated and written. Obviously, several factors may have played a role. Perhaps the king's memory was extremely selective, or perhaps he left out many details to prove something to the papal nuncio. Peter the Lamé's decision to retreat with haste in front of Transylvanian troops should have reinforced, in the nuncio's eyes, the impression of the Moldavian ruler's weakness. Peter is depicted as a coward who would rather run than fight. Subtly, the story suggests that the Moldavian voivode lacked warrior qualities indispensable to any prince. Nothing seems to justify the flight, which was the result of fear and the unfounded rumour that Stephen Báthory was bringing another pretender to the throne with him. Also, the hasty retreat of the ruler of Moldavia was more dangerous for the newly elected king of Poland than a clash with

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*amico, per passar al suo Regno di Polonia, dove gli sarebbe stato buon vicino anco da questa parte, esso lo ringratia, et i suoi facevan festa della liberatione del lor signore, come se prima fosse stato prigioniero.*



Moldavian troops. If Peter the Lame crossed the Danube and announced that he had been expelled from Moldavia by his Transylvanian neighbour, Stephen Báthory would have had enough trouble convincing the Sultan that it was only a misunderstanding.

The fear and the lack of information that had sent Peter the Lame on the run would have bounced back to the Polish king. However, other documents from the period alter considerably the picture. In 1575, Stephen Báthory's election as King of Poland had been received with satisfaction at the Porte, but with great displeasure at the Habsburgs' court. Fearing he would be attacked on his road to Poland, the newly elected king spread rumours before his departure for Kraków about the route he intended to follow. It was said that he was going to go through Partium and Hungary<sup>12</sup>, and even asked Emperor Maximilian II for free passage through Habsburgs' territories<sup>13</sup> but - in fact - from the beginning he intended to pass through Moldavia.

Can we imagine that the Moldavian ruler had not been informed about this decision? The hypothesis is highly improbable if we consider the detailed preparations made by the Transylvanian Prince for his departure to Poland. Not only Stephen Báthory was careful to hide his established itinerary but also asked the Porte for military support from the Tartars and the Pashas of Timișoara and Buda, who would have had to keep an eye on the Habsburgs<sup>14</sup>. But even if we admit that Stephen Báthory wanted to keep the details of his departure as secret as possible, and, therefore, he would not have informed his Moldavian neighbour, he nevertheless informed the Porte about his intentions. Consequently, it is to be assumed that the Ottomans had sent orders to the lords of Moldavia and Wallachia to support the new king on his itinerary to Poland. This would also explain why, when he entered Moldavia, Stephen Bathory found Peter the Lame in the camp.

In the context of Stephen Báthory diplomatic preparations for the departure to Poland the episode of the alleged runaway of Peter the Lame at the appearance of the Transylvanian army became hard to understand even meaningless. Equally absurd is Báthory's fear of possible tensions in

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<sup>12</sup> Andrei Veress, *Documente*, II, doc. 78, p. 100-105.

<sup>13</sup> Maria Pakucs-Willcocks, "De la voievod la principe și rege : Ștefan Báthory în primele luni ale anului 1576", *În căutarea celui alt. Diplomatie Război, Memorie. In Honorem Ileana Căzan*, ed. Mioara Anton, Georgiana Țăranu, (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2024), p. 70 with bibliography.

<sup>14</sup> Andrei Veress, *Documente*, II, doc. 82, p. 109.

relations with the Ottoman Empire. The Porte not only supported Stephen's election as King of Poland but also ordered its vassals to assist the newly elected king. As told by the king and recounted by Bolognetti the episode of 1576 seems to explain what happened during the Cossack invasion in Moldavia in 1582 and mainly Peter the Lamé's decision to send gifts to the invaders. If the voivode was unable to use military force even when he had a superior number of troops, diplomacy and gifts were the only means he could have used to avoid the Cossack's intervention in Moldavia.

The moral of the story narrated by Stephen Báthory and recounted by Andrea Bolognetti has less to do with Peter the Lamé's flaws than with the rumours, which seem the main character of this episode. The King of Poland wanted to tell a story about a weak ruler of Moldavia who was frightened by an allegedly unexpected event; he ended up telling a story about how an image can be diffused by exploiting weaknesses in the portrait of the "other" and how powerful a rumour could be when spread by a source of unquestioned authority. In 1582 the story was supposed to convince the papal nuncio that Peter the Lamé was a simple puppet in the Ottoman hands, enable to face even a minor military threat. Nuncio Bolognetti trusted the story told by the King of Poland because it confirmed recent events and because he had no reason to question or to verify it. For a modern scholar, the moral of the episode seems to lie elsewhere. The story mirrors less Peter's alleged weakness and more Stephen Báthory's fears in relation to his new position acquired in 1575; the story echoes how important communication in the process of the political decision was and how thin the difference between news and rumours was; finally, we learn that the lord of Moldavia lack military expertise but had sufficient diplomatic skills to resolve a tense situation. Also, one may conclude that the king of Poland liked to tell a good story and to shape a past event according to his views. Lastly, we find in the story of nuncio Bolognetti, a proof that news and rumours could be an extremely dangerous weapon, sometimes with effects that were difficult to control.

### **Raids and Counter-raids**

On 12 January 1594 a letter of Jan Zamoyski, chancellor and *hetman* of Poland, included some concerning news about a Cossack attack against the Moldavian town of "Iurghiov", not far from Akkerman and Bender. Several thousand Cossacks coming from a "desert" in the Dnepr region plundered the aforementioned town and his hinterland and, even

worse, killed a number of Ottoman subjects<sup>15</sup>. The incident could have been considered by the sultan as an infringement of the peace treaty and the chancellor tried to use all the diplomatic means to avoid straining relations with the Porte. Thus, to appease the sultan's anger, Zamoyski sought to win the Moldavian prince's, Aron Tiranul ("the Tyrant") goodwill. The chancellor tried to convince the voivode that the Polish kingdom was not involved in the attack. The culprits, explained Zamoyski, were not Polish subjects, but a mixture of outlaws of various origins (Poles, Muscovites, Moldavians, Tatars) who "having nothing with which to feed themselves and their wives and children (...) go out into the wilderness, and attack not just the neighbouring states but also cause harm and loss in the lands of the Crown"<sup>16</sup>. Quite interesting, Zamoyski's arguments resemble with a report written in 1590 by Lorenzo Bernardo, the Venetian *bailo* in Istanbul. Speaking about the Ottoman relations with other Christian realms, Bernardo emphasised the tensions in Polish-Ottoman relations (*pace ... molto sospetta e turbata*) due to Cossack raids into Ottoman territories. Although they were theoretically Polish subjects, the Cossacks were impossible to keep under control, as they were simply outlaws of various origins. Bernardo compares the Cossacks to the *uskoks* of the Adriatic region, and this comparison indicates the principal problem in repelling them. The Cossacks, like the *uskoks*, launched quick attacks and then retreated before their victims could gather troops and retaliate. They were not tied down to any territory so they could not be tracked down and punished. Therefore, the Porte could react only by ordering similar raids led by the Tatars into Polish territory<sup>17</sup>. As was remarked later by a prince of Moldavia, Ieremia Movilă (1595-1606), every Cossack raid was followed by a counterraid led by the Tatars in Polish territories. Under these circumstances, the border zone between Poland and the Ottoman Empire became extremely dangerous, with Moldavia often suffering "collateral damage" being raided both by the Cossack and Tatar as Ieremia Movilă's letter suggests<sup>18</sup>.

Turning back to Zamoyski's letter there is no possibility to verify if the attempted persuasion succeeded. More probable the outcome was negative as other documents suggest that Prince Aron ordered reprisals against neighbouring parts of the Polish kingdom. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1574,

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<sup>15</sup> Ilie Corfus, *Documente*, doc. 197, p. 375-376. The letter was sent to the Bishop of Cujavia, Ieronim Doliwa Rozrazewski.

<sup>16</sup> Ilie Corfus, *Documente*, doc. 197, p. 376.

<sup>17</sup> Maria Pia Pedani-Fabris (ed.), *Relazioni*, p. 372.

<sup>18</sup> Petre P. Panaitescu, *Documente*, doc. 12, p. 38 the letter is from 24 December 1596.



for instance, the nobles of Podolia asked chancellor and hetman Zamoyski to take measures against the Moldavians who plundered their territory at the order of their prince<sup>19</sup>. In fact, such “small border wars” were a usual practice during the time. During the reign of Aron, the Tyrant it seems, for instance, that the Polish merchants were frequently robbed when passing through Moldavia to the Balkans. On 18 January 1593 Jan Zamoyski sends a letter to the Moldavian voivode asking him to cease the robberies against the Polish subjects. Zamoyski’s message is unequivocal and firm; the abuses had to stop, and the victims had to receive justice. The conclusion is also very firm: “I too shall order my loyal servants and subjects to behave in the same way with the men and the subjects of your gracious majesty”. In other words, the chancellor warned the Moldavian prince that he would adapt his actions depending on Prince’s decisions. If the Moldovans continued to plunder the Polish merchants, they should have expected reprisals<sup>20</sup>.

Later in 1593, on 7<sup>th</sup> December the Moldavians were again accused of attacks against Polish subjects some merchants and noblemen being held captive in the Moldavian fortress of Hotin<sup>21</sup>. There are countless similar examples in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Although the Polish-Ottoman treaty of 1598 stipulated that the prince of Moldavia was obliged “to allow envoys and merchants free passage and to do them no harm”<sup>22</sup>, the attacks continued into the first decades of the seventeenth century.

What is worth mentioning is that such plunders at the Moldavian-Polish border seem to have no consequences until the reign of Michael the Brave. The Wallachian prince’s involvement in the “Long Turkish War” (1593-1606) confronted the prince with a serious military and financial challenge. Continuously confronted with a lack of money, the Wallachian prince was forced to resort to all sorts of expedients on the eve of his conquest of Transylvania (1599) and Moldavia (1600). Among them, the plunder of Polish merchant caravans was, in short run, an easy way to

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<sup>19</sup> Ilie Corfus, *Documente XVI*, doc. 198, pp. 376–378.

<sup>20</sup> Ilie Corfus, *Documente XVI*, doc. 194, p. 367: “[I received] news of my subjects, townfolks, who were seized by Your Highness’ men when they came into Moldavia, their goods plundered as well as their possessions, and many other offences were done. Thus, I ask Your Highness to order and command that your dignitaries see that justice is done without delay for my subjects who have been robbed in Moldavia and forbid all in future from such theft and robbery and not allow such things to happen.”

<sup>21</sup> Ilie Corfus, *Documente XVI*, doc. 196, p. 372–375.

<sup>22</sup> Ilie Corfus, *Documente XVI*, doc. 201, p. 390.

gather money but also, in a long run, a very risky one<sup>23</sup>. He provoked the anger of both Ottomans and Poles and his fall was the result of the Polish military intervention which expelled him not only from Moldavia but also from Wallachia.

However, the Moldavian and Wallachian raids had, on long term, limited impact on the balance of forces in East-Central Europe. On the contrary, the Cossacks continued to pose a serious threat to the Ottoman Empire well into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As Dariusz Kołodziejczyk underlined, the Porte asked for the cease of the Cossacks attacks in the *sanction* of the ‘*ahdnames* issued in 1623, 1634, 1640 and 1667 and omitted after the conquest of Podolia and right bank Ukraine in 1672 when they became vassals of the Porte<sup>24</sup>.

Also, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, along with the usual raids in Ottoman territories, the Cossacks began to launch maritime attacks against the Western shores of the Black Sea plundering the coast and capturing Ottoman vessels which navigated from Istanbul to the mouth of the Danube<sup>25</sup>.

All these land and maritime actions led by the Cossacks which affected not only the Ottoman Empire but also the territory of Moldavia anticipated the Russian-Ottoman confrontations of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century as well as later Moldavia was a battle ground between the neighbouring states and the examples analysed show that the principality's room for diplomatic and military manoeuver was limited.

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<sup>23</sup> Ovidiu Cristea, “Michael the Brave, the Long War and the Moldavian Road”, *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 51/1-4 (2013), pp. 239-253 with the previous bibliography for the so-called “Moldavian Trade Route”; see also Ștefan Andreescu, “Comerțul danubiano-pontic la sfârșitul secolului al XVI-lea: Mihai Viteazul și “drumul moldovenesc”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 15 (1997), pp. 41-60.

<sup>24</sup> Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish*, p. 31

<sup>25</sup> Andrei Pippidi, “Cazacii navigatori, Moldova și Marea Neagră la începutul secolului al XVII-lea”, *Marea Neagră. Puteri maritime – puteri terestre (sec. XIII–XVIII)*, ed. Ovidiu Cristea, (Bucharest: ICR, 2006), pp. 273–274. For the Ottoman reaction to such naval attacks see Victor Ostapchuk, “An Ottoman Ġazānāme on Hālil Paşa's Naval Campaign against the Cossacks (1621)”, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 14/3-4 (1990), pp. 482-521.

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## WAR OF 1711 IN THE OTTOMAN MAPS

*Oleksandr SEREDA\**

### Abstract

The events of the Prut campaign of Moscow troops are represented by Ottoman maps in the archive of the Topkapı Palace. The maps depict the march of Moscow troops through the territory of Ukraine to the Dniester and Prut in 1711. The map provides a detailed description of the areas and cities through which the troops passed to the Prut River. A separate map shows the siege of the Moscow camp by the Ottoman-Tatar army. The deployment of Moscow troops in Pokuttia and Bukovyna is marked in detail. Ottoman cartography clarifies the position of the Moscow army in the imperial ambitions of Peter I.

**Keywords:** Battle of Prut, Map, Topkapı Palace Archive.

The beginning of the 18th century in the history of Ukraine and Romania is largely associated with military conflicts between the Moscow Tsardom and the Ottoman Empire. The consequences of the military miscalculations of the Swedish offensive in the Battle of Poltava resulted in the Moscow tsar's further aggression against the Ottoman Porte. In particular, in January-March 1711, the Muscovites sought to complete their military successes by attacking the Right Bank Ukraine<sup>1</sup> and the Ottoman Balkan possessions. In reality, the fact that the Swedish King Charles XII and the Ukrainian Hetman Ivan Mazepa managed to successfully retreat to the Ottoman possessions in the Northern Black Sea was considered by Moscow Czar Peter to be his greatest failure and he sought revenge primarily against the Swedes and the rebellious Cossacks. The Ottomans, on the other hand, traditionally wanted to use their allies to restore the status quo in the Northern Black Sea region. In April 1711, the voivode of Moldova, Dimitri Cantemir, signed a secret agreement with the Tsar of Moscow on a military alliance against Porta. The Moscow tsar had an ambitious plan to quickly conquer the lands up to the Danube and, under the influence of Dimitri Cantemir, persuaded the voivode of Wallachia,

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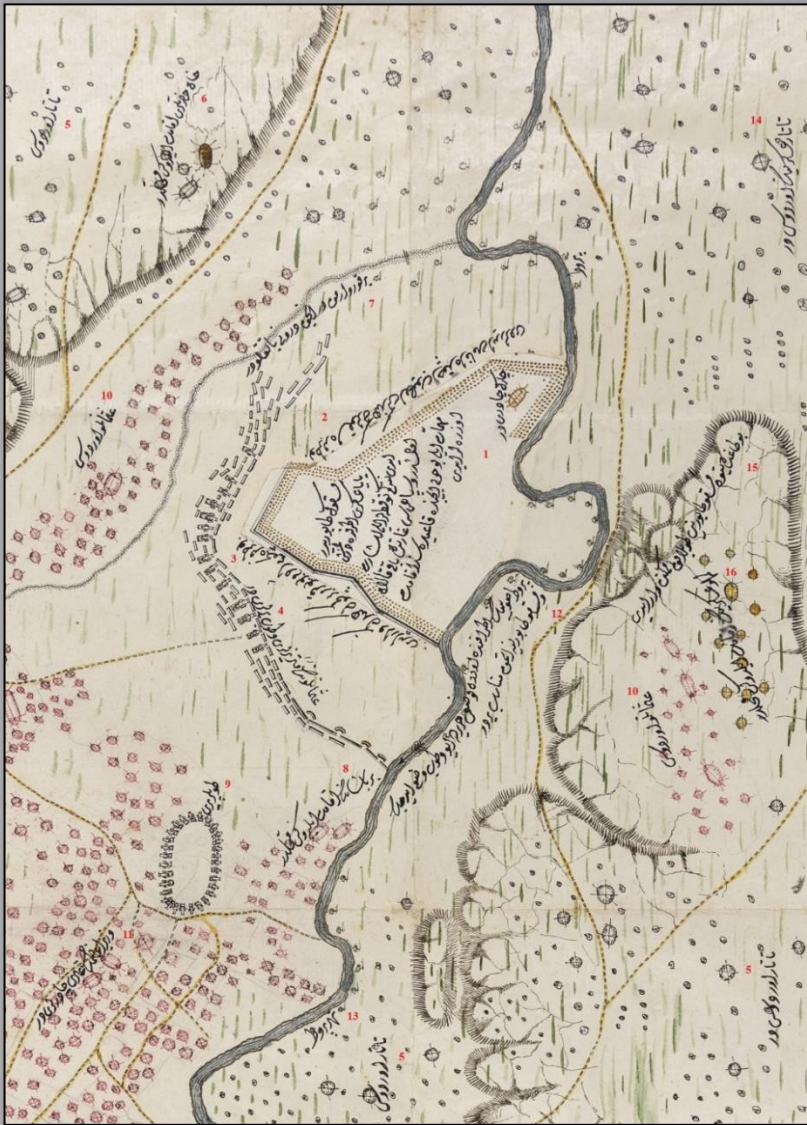
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<sup>1</sup> Oleksandr Sereda, *XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı-Ukrayna Bozkır Serhattı*, (Odessa: Tika, 2015), p. 152-154.

Konstantin Brynkovian, to take a neutral position of waiting. Tsar Peter I of Moscow decided to personally take part in this military campaign, hoping for a quick campaign and massive support from the Balkan peoples. At the first stage, a 15,000-strong advance army unit under the command of Field Marshal General Boris Sheremetyev was to reach the Danube and prevent Ottoman troops from crossing the river. In the second stage, after the annexation of Wallachia, the offensive was to continue across the Danube and Dobrudzha to Istanbul. In this context of planning, the Prut campaign of Tsar Peter of Moscow began on March 17, 1711. Soon after, the Moscow army marched from Kyiv through the lands of the Ukrainian Right Bank to Moldova. Upon entering the territory of Right-Bank Ukraine, the tsarist units, on the orders of Peter I, destroyed Ukrainian towns and villages that supported Hetman Pylyp Orlyk, tortured the local population, and drove tens of thousands to the left bank of the Dniro.

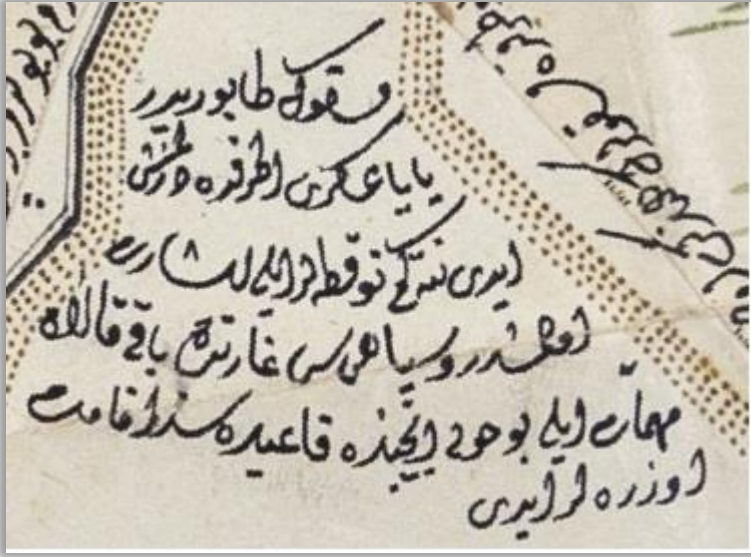
On June 7-10, the Muscovites crossed the Dniester into Moldova. On July 6, the main forces of the Moscow army (46,000 soldiers, 120 guns) under the command of Peter the Great and the units of his ally D. Cantemir (5,000 soldiers) approached the capital of Moldova, the city of Iasi, along the right bank of the Prut River. On June 27, the Ottoman army of Grand Vizier Batalji Mehmed Pasha (about 120,000 soldiers, more than 440 guns) crossed the Danube at Isakce and, after staying there for two weeks, joined the 70,000-strong cavalry of Crimean Khan Devlet II Geray, Swedish troops led by Charles XII, and the Cossacks of Pylyp Orlyk. Peter I, having sent a 7,000-strong cavalry detachment of General Carl Renne to Braila, moved along the right bank of the Prut on July 10 with the main forces (38,000 Muscovites, 5,000 Moldovans, 114 guns) and reached the village of Stănilăești on July 18. The Ottomans crossed the Prut River on July 18 near the village of Fălciu, defeating the advance guard of General Janus von Eberstedt. On July 19, the Janissaries attacked Moscow troops south of Stănilăești but were repulsed with significant losses. The Moscow troops retreated to a fortified camp near New Stanilești, which was surrounded by the enemy on July 20. The situation of the surrounded Moscow troops was critical, and their surrender was inevitable. The Ottoman troops stopped the assault thanks to a huge bribe paid by Moscow parliamentarian Pyotr Shafirov to the Ottoman commander-in-chief. The treasury allocated 150,000 rubles to bribe the vizier, and smaller amounts were allocated to other Ottoman military leaders and even secretaries. By sending Shafirov to peace talks, the tsar was ready to accept any Ottoman conditions in order to save himself. The Grand Vizier decided to start peace talks with Peter the Great, although the Tatars, Cossacks, and Swedes were

categorically against it. The events of the Prut campaign were also described in detail in cartographic images. In particular, one of the most detailed maps of the Battle of Stănilești is represented by a fragment of an image from the Topkapı palace archive<sup>2</sup>:

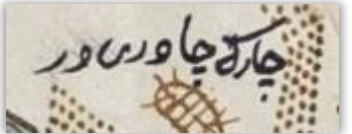


<sup>2</sup> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (Presidency of Türkiye Ottoman Archives) (BOA), Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi Evrakı (TS.MA.E), Nr. 1551-2.

Detailed information from the map provides new information about the decisive battle and its participants. In particular, the central part of the map is represented by a Muscovite defensive triangle with the designation of their camp with inscription number 1:

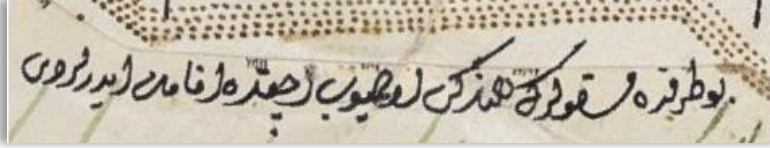
	<p>Moskov'un taburudur</p> <p>Yaya askeri etrafta durulmuş idi nitekim noktalar ile işâret olmuşdur ve sipâhisi gârette bâkî kalanmühimmât ile bu havâli içinde kâidesiz ikâmet üzereler idi.</p>
<p>Moscow camp</p> <p>The infantry troops were scattered around. Their locations marked with dots and the cavalry remained behind with the ammunition left behind from the raid.</p>	

The lower part of the Muscovite defense camp marks the location of Peter I's tent:

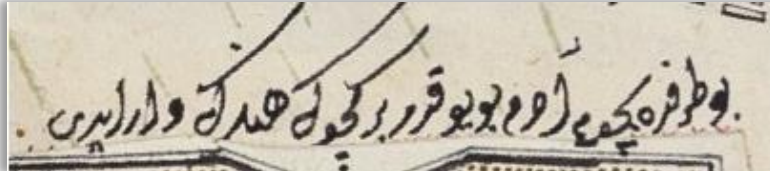
	<p>[Çarın çadırıdır]</p> <p>Tsar camping tent</p>
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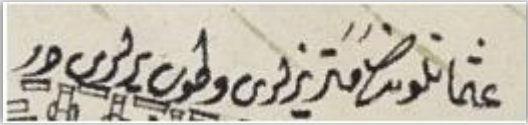
Number 2 indicates the northern line of defense of the Muscovites:


<p>[Bu tarafta Moskovların hendeği olmayub açıkta ikâmet ederlerdi] On this side, due to the absence of a redoubt, the Muscovites settled in an open space.</p>

Number 3 marks the southern line of the Muscovite defense:


<p>[Bu tarafta çoğ adem yokdur. Bir küçük hende var idi] There are not many men on this side. There was a small ditch</p>

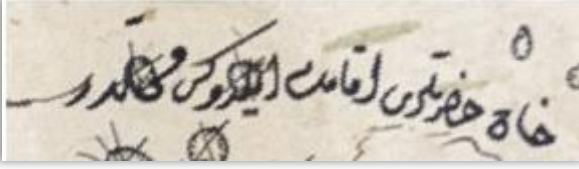
Number 4 marks the line of advance of the Ottoman army:

	<p>[Osmanlunun metrizleri ve top yerleridir] Ottoman fortifications and gun emplacements.</p>
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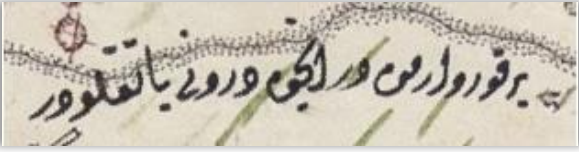
Number 5 marks the location of the Tatar army:

	<p>[Tatarlu ordusu] Tatar army</p>
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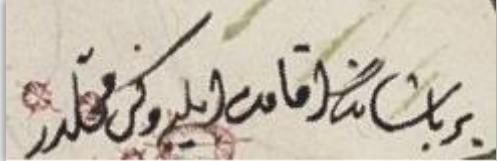
Number 6 marks the location of the Crimean Khan:

	<p>[Han hazretleri ikâmet eylediği mahaldır]</p> <p>The location of His Majesty the Khan's cantonment.</p>
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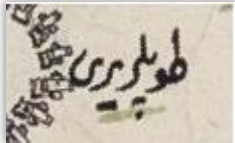
Number 7 indicates the location of the deployment of the Zaporozhian Cossacks:

	<p>[Bir kuru ırmaktır ancak derunu batakludur]</p> <p>It is a dry river but its bottom is swampy.</p>
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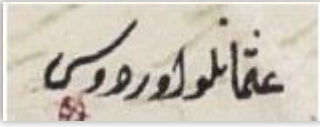
Number 8 indicates the location of the deployment of the Hetman's Cossacks:

	<p>[Barabaş'ının ikamet eylediği mahaldır]</p> <p>The location of Hetman's cantonment.</p>
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Number 9 indicates the gun arsenal of the Ottoman army:

	<p>[topları]</p> <p>A gun arsenal.</p>
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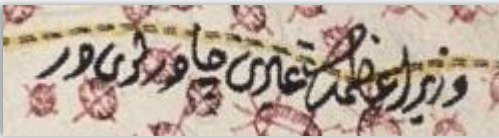
Number 10 marks the location of the Ottoman army:



[Osmanlı ordusu]

## The Ottoman Army.

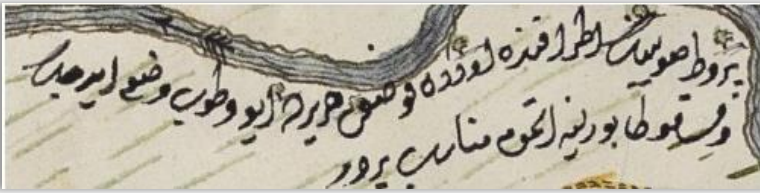
Number 11 marks the location of the tents of the grand vizier:



[Vezir azamın gayri  
çadırlarıdır]

Separate tents of the  
grand vizier.

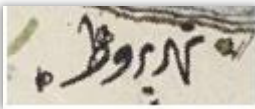
Number 12 indicates the deployment of Moscow troops on the left bank of the Prut:



[Prut suyunun etrafında olan mevzi her yerde eyü ve top vaz edecek ve Moskov taburuna atmak münasib yerdirdir]

A good military position around the Prut River and a suitable location to position the guns and fire the Moscow camp.

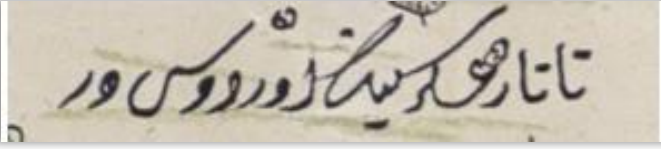
The number 13 marks the Prut River in the southern direction of its flow:



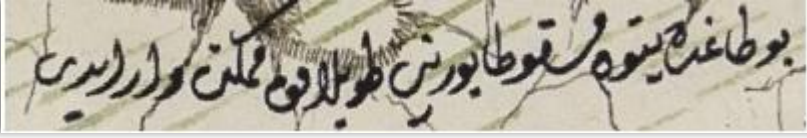
[nehr-i Prut]

Prut River

Number 14 marks the location of the Tatar army:

	<p>[Tatar askerlerinin ordusudur]</p> <p>The army of the Tatar forces.</p>
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Number 15 indicates the deployment of Moscow troops on the left bank of the Prut:

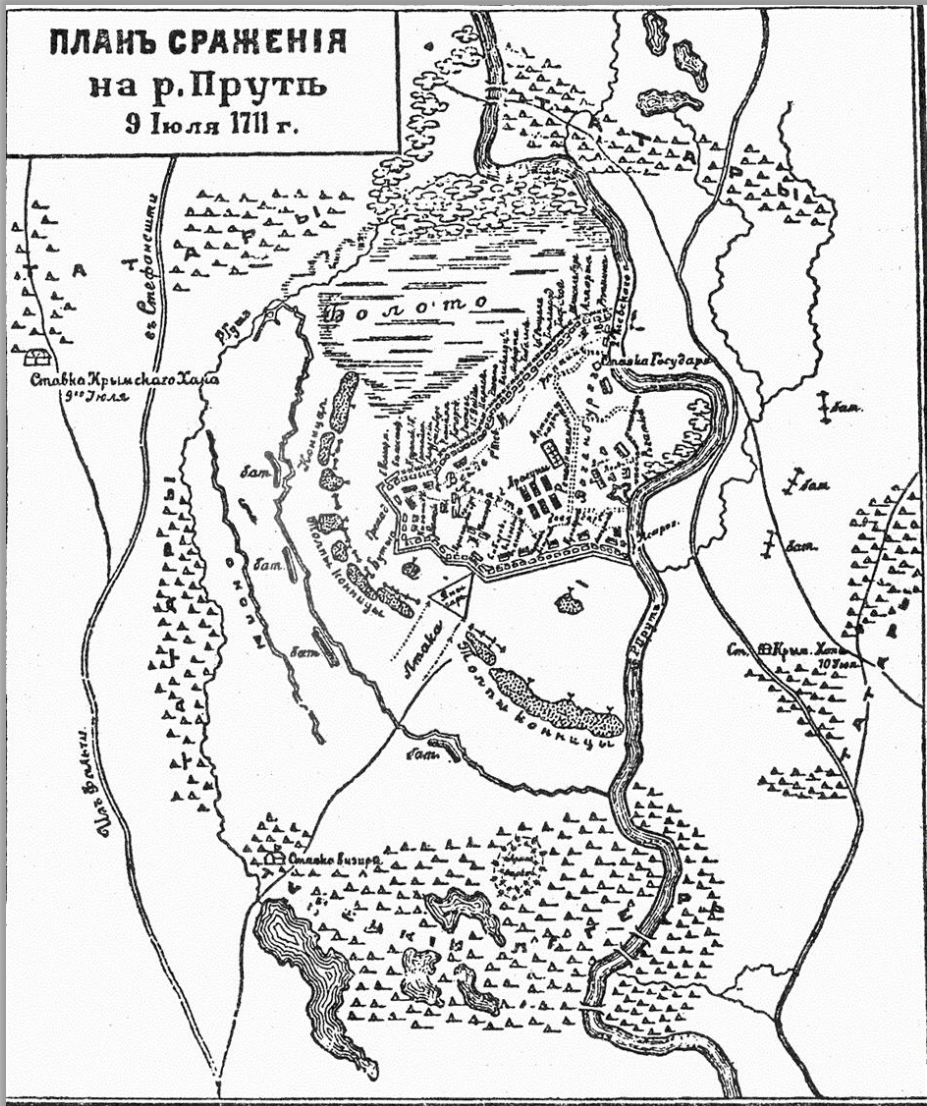
	<p>[Bu dağda Petro, Moskov taburunu toplamak mümkün var idi]</p> <p>This hill was a possible site for the formation of the Moscow camp.</p>
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Number 16 indicates the location of the Polish army:

	<p>[Lehlü askerinin ikâmet eyledüğü mahaldır]</p> <p>The location of the Polish military cantonment.</p>
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The Ottoman map of the Battle of Prut specifies the participants in the confrontation and provides detailed locations of individual units of the Ottoman army and its allies.

Russian maps, on the other hand, do not provide such a detailed depiction of the battle line. As a rule, the location of the Moscow army camp is more informative on Russian maps, as shown below.



As a result of the blockade by the Moscow tsar's troops, the Prut Peace was signed. The tsar had to stop interfering in the internal affairs of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the affairs of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, who were allied with the Crimean Khan. Thus, the Moscow state recognized the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire over the Zaporozhian Army.



On July 23, 1711, the peace treaty was sealed, and on the evening of the same day, the Moscow army with a wagon and cannons set off for Yass. The Vaser provided a “corridor” for retreat. The Tatars, Swedes, and Cossacks considered the signing of the treaty a mistake, so they threatened to attack the Moscovites.

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SEREDA, Oleksandr, *XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı-Ukrayna Bozkır Serhattı*, (Odessa: Tika, 2015), p. 152-154.

# RUSSIAN THREATS TO MOLDAVIA: MEASURES TAKEN AND THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION OF MOLDAVIA (1739)

*Yusuf HEPER\**

## Abstract

The year 1711 was an important crunch time for Moldavian Principality because the Russian troops for the first time arrived in Jassy after the voivode of Moldavia, Dimitrie Cantemir, defected to the Russian side under Tsar Peter I. On the other hand, taking advantage of the Iranian wars during the reign of Sultan Mahmud I, Russia intervened in the Polish elections. Later, the Russian army under the command of General Munnich headed towards Crimea in 1738. The Russians' next target after Crimea was the Principality of Moldavia. However, due to the epidemic that broke out in the Russian army, General Munnich had to delay his plans to attack the Moldavia region until the following year. In particular, the Ottoman sultan Mahmud I learned from spies which was sent to the region that the Russians were preparing to attack Kamenice or Khotyn. In response, the Ottoman Empire assigned the task of guarding the Dnieper passes to Kolchak Ilyas Pasha, the guard of Khotyn, and Ghika II, the voivode of Moldavia. Meanwhile, Field Marshal Burkhard Christoph von Münnich, who received full authorization from Empress Anna of Russia, marched with a large Russian army from Kiev through Medjiboj and Kamieniec to Khotyn to invade Moldavia. Veli Pasha took part together with many sanjak beys to prevent the Russians from crossing the Dynester River. However, the Ottoman forces were defeated by the Russians at the Battle of Stavuchany (August 17, 1739) and retreated, leaving Khotyn undefended. After Khotyn, the Russian troops marching to Iasi crossed the Pruth River and entered Moldavia. After the occupation of Jassy, the capital of Moldavia by the Russian army, the Ottoman military prepared in this region against a possible Russian attack on Tighina and Braila. However, with the conclusion of the Belgrade Peace, the Russian threats in the Ottoman lands were over.

**Keywords:** Iași, Khotyn, Kolchak Ilyas Paşa, Grigore Ghika II, Burkhard Christoph von Münnich.

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## Introduction: The Historical Course of Ottoman-Russian Relations

Crimean geography has been the center of attention and interest throughout history due to its strategic importance, has never lost its mobility<sup>1</sup>. The transition of the Crimean Khanate to the Ottoman vassalage in 1475 led to a new situation in Eastern Europe. The Ottoman and Moscow spheres of influence came face to face at the Don River<sup>2</sup>. The first contact between Moscow and the Ottoman Empire began during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II, when Mengli Giray became a protectorate of Istanbul. These friendly relations continued with Tsar Ivan III's determination to maintain these relations by sending Pleşcheyev as an envoy to Istanbul. During this period, Eastern Europe underwent distinctive changes. Mengli Giray now found it difficult to control the Tatars loyal to him. The Tatars organized raids into Russian territory to capture captives, and relations between Moscow and Bakhchisaray deteriorated after the death of Mengli Giray (1512)<sup>3</sup>. Later, the Crimean Khan Sahib Giray (1532-1551) managed to convince the Sultan to annex Kazan and Astrakhan to the Crimean Khanate under Ottoman protection. Thus, the Kazan-Astrakhan conflict brought a new step in Ottoman-Russian relations. The Russians' control of the lower Volga and their efforts to expand into Central Asia posed a political and economic threat to the Ottoman Empire. Sokullu Mehmed Pasha responded to these threats with the Astrakhan Expedition in 1569, but without success. Tsar Ivan IV sent envoys one after another in order not to draw the Ottoman-Crimean reaction to Moscow<sup>4</sup>.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Cossacks grew stronger in the north of the Black Sea and started to pose a threat there by adopting modern warfare methods. Indeed, the Cossack uprising that broke out in 1648 changed the balance in Eastern Europe once again. During this period, the Ottomans could not pursue an active policy in the north due to internal problems and

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<sup>1</sup> Aybüke Güzay, "Alfred Rosenberg'in Görev Birliği ve Kırım'daki Faaliyetleri", *KAREN*, 9/20, (2023), p. 622.

<sup>2</sup> Omeljan Pritsak, "1491-1532 Yıllarında Osmanlı-Moskova ilişkileri", *Türk-Rus İlişkilerinde 500 Yıl 1491-1992*, (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1992), p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> A.P. Novoseltsev, "XV. Yüzyıl ile XVI. yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Rus-Türk İlişkileri", *Türk-Rus İlişkilerinde 500 Yıl 1491-1992*, (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1992), p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> Halil İnalcık, "Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri 1492-1512", *Türk-Rus İlişkilerinde 500 Yıl 1491-1992*, (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1992), p. 28-30; Akdes Nimet Kurat, 1569 Astrahan Seferi, Ten-İdil Kanalı ve XVI-XVII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı-Rus Münasebetleri, (Ankara: TTK Yayınları, 2011), p. 148-150.

left the control of this region to the Crimean Khanate. In 1653, the Russians decided to enter Poland under the pretext of protecting Ukraine<sup>5</sup>. The following year, the Russians annexed the "*Smolensk region*" and the central and eastern parts of present-day Ukraine, forcing Poland and the Ottomans to officially recognize this annexation. This gave Russia a very good base of attack for the invasion and annexation of the northern Black Sea strip. In response, in early 1654, the Ottoman Empire worked hard to create an anti-Russian bloc that included Crimea and Moldavia, just beyond the Polish and Ukrainian Cossacks. However, this proved fruitless as Poland and Ukraine were often indecisive and allied with the Russians in their own interests. Even Moldavia, a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, helped the Porte only out of necessity and often did not hesitate to ally with the Russians against the Ottomans. The years 1654-1686 were therefore the first stage of Russian expansion into the Black Sea, Moldova and the Straits<sup>6</sup>.

While the Ottoman Empire was marching on Vienna and trying to dominate the entire European geography, for the first time it had to engage in activities aimed at eliminating the Russian danger that emerged in the north of the Black Sea<sup>7</sup>. In this respect, Kara Mustafa Pasha, who was aware that the Russians could be a great danger in the future, organized two expeditions to Chyhyryn (Tr. Çehrin) (1677-1678). Thus, Russia and the Ottoman Empire faced each other militarily for the first time<sup>8</sup>. After this war, which resulted in a decisive victory of the Ottoman army, the Treaty of Bakhchisarai signed between the Crimean Khan and the Russian Tsar confirmed that the Russians would continue to pay taxes to Crimea. Since the Ottoman Empire did not accept the Russians as an interlocutor in this period, relations were carried out through the Crimean Khanate<sup>9</sup>. As

<sup>5</sup> Victor Ostapchuk, "1648-1681 Yılları Arasında Doğu Avrupa'da (Ukrayna, Rusya, Polonya, Türkiye), Yeni Bir Düzen Kurulma Yolunda Yapılan Mücadeleler", *Türk-Rus İlişkilerinde 500 Yıl 1491-1992*, (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1992), p. 102-107.

<sup>6</sup> Adrian Tertecel, "Expansiunea Rusiei Spre Marea Neagră și Țările Române (1654-1829)", *Basarabia 1812-2012 Documente și Cercetări*, Lucrare Coordonată și Posteață Victor Crăciun, Liga Culturală Pentru Unitatea Românilor de Pretutindeni și Editura Semne, (București: 2012), p. 99-100.

<sup>7</sup> Osman Köse, "XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı-Rus Münasebetleri", *Osmanlı*, I, ed. Güler Eren, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), p. 537.

<sup>8</sup> Kahraman Şakul, *Çehrin Kuşatması 1678*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2022), p. 20, 30-31. Also, some historians argue that the first Ottoman-Russian war started in 1674. See *İbidem*, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> İlyas Topsakal, "Tarihi Süreçte Rusya-Türkiye İlişkileri", *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. III, Nr. 2, (2016), p. 36.

a matter of fact, the decline of the Ottoman Empire after the defeat in Vienna in 1683 immediately mobilized the Russians. Tsar Peter, “*with the aim of reaching the warm seas*” He began preparations for an expedition to take the Azov Fortress located near the Don River. In the spring of 1695, a large Russian army laid siege to the Azov fortress. However, the Ottomans put up a good resistance. In addition, the aid sent to Azov Castle by sea prevented the Russians from taking the castle. After this unsuccessful move, Peter realized that he needed a navy. The following year, with a fleet of 30 pieces, he laid siege to the Azov Fortress both by sea and land. The Ottomans, in particular, were caught unprepared as they did not expect the Russians to come so fast. Tsar Peter the Great personally led the siege as an artilleryman and in July 1696 Azov Castle fell to the Russians<sup>10</sup>. On the occasion of the capture of Azov, the Russians organized a magnificent victory festival in Russia. The army formed a mile-long convoy and marched triumphantly past Moscow<sup>11</sup>. The Ottoman Empire, worn out from its struggles with the Holy Alliance Powers was forced to sign the Peace of Karlowitz (1699) with Austria, Poland and Venice, with the mediation of England and the Netherlands, even during these negotiations, the Russians sent a delegation and demanded the Kerch Castle. However, the Russians failed to convince the Austrians, and the negotiations were left to Istanbul<sup>12</sup>. Russia, which had signed a two-year agreement with the Ottoman Empire in Karlowitz but was left alone afterwards, signed the Treaty of Istanbul on 13 June 1700, which consisted of fourteen articles. With this treaty, the Russians, who took Azov, could not sail to the Black Sea since they could not capture the Crimean Peninsula, and instead turned towards the Baltic Sea. King Charlemagne XII of Sweden, who did not want the Russian influence to reach Poland, was defeated in the battle of Paltova with the Russians and took refuge in the Ottoman Empire. This event was the harbinger of a new Ottoman-Russian war<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Nimet Akdes Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi: Başlangıcından 1917'ye kadar*, (Ankara: TTK Yayınları, 2023), p. 272-273.

<sup>11</sup> A. B. Şirokevad, *Rusların Gözünden 240 Yıl Kıran Kıran Osmanlı-Rus Savaşları, Kırım-Balkanlar-93 Harbi ve Sarıkamış*, Trans. by Ahsen Batur, (İstanbul: Selenge Yay., 2024), p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Mehmet Saray, “Başlangıcından Petro’ya Kadar Türk-Rus Münasebetlerine Genel Bir Bakış”, *İ.Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi*, Prof. Dr. Hakkı Dursun Yıldız Hatıra Sayısı, Nr. 35, p. 219-220.

<sup>13</sup> Uğur Kurtaran, “Sultan Birinci Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı-Rus Siyasi İlişkileri”, *Belleten*, Vol. 79, Nr. 285, (2015), p. 592-593; İlber Ortaylı, “XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri”, *Türk-Rus İlişkilerinde 500 Yıl 1491-1992*, (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1992), p. 127.



The Russian victory at Paltova marked the beginning of a new era in the history of not only north-eastern but also south-eastern Europe. The Russians had solved one of their most important problems, which was to access to the Baltic Sea, and thus became a major European power. After Sweden, Russia intervened in the elections in Poland and established a serious sphere of influence in this region. The beginning of Russian influence in Poland changed the balance of power in Eastern Europe and put Wallachia-Moldavia under Russian threat<sup>14</sup>. The first serious attempt of the Ottoman Empire to stop the Russian advance took place in 1711 when the Ottoman army under the command of Baltacı Mehmed Pasha took Tsar Peter the Great under siege at Pruth. While Baltacı Mehmed Pasha had an advantageous position by squeezing the Russians to Pruth, the war ended upon Peter's request for peace and the Pruth Treaty was signed between the two sides on 21 July 1711. According to this agreement, Azov Castle was returned to the Ottomans<sup>15</sup>.

### 1. Beginning of the Ottoman-Russian Wars (1736-1739)

At the time when Mahmud I came to power in the Ottoman Empire, Tsarina Anna Ivanovna (1730-1740), daughter of Peter II, who died in 1730, was in power in Russia. In this period, Russia continued to follow Peter the Great's foreign policy. In this direction, Russian influence was strengthened in Poland and the policy of reaching the Black Sea was put back on its agenda<sup>16</sup>. Russia's minimum goal was to recapture Azov and its surroundings, which had been recaptured by the Ottomans in 1711. Therefore, Russia insisted on a new war with the Ottomans. Especially Russian envoys were calling for war against the Ottoman Empire. The main argument they defended was that the Ottoman Empire did not have the power to start a war against Russia because of its internal problems and the Persian wars. However, some internal and external issues forced the Russian rulers to make peace with the Ottomans until 1735<sup>17</sup>. Meanwhile, the Russians, taking advantage of the Ottoman wars in Persia, wanted to settle on the Black Sea coast again. For this purpose, the Russians made a

<sup>14</sup> *Istoria Românilor, Vol. VI (Românii între Europa Clasică și Europa Luminilor (1711-1821))*, Cord. Paul Cernovodeanu, Nicolae Edroiu etc, (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2002), p. 602.

<sup>15</sup> İlyas Topsakal, "*Tarihi Süreçte Rusya-Türkiye İlişkileri*", p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Uğur Kurtaran, "*Sultan Birinci Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı-Rus Siyasi İlişkileri*", p. 594.

<sup>17</sup> Adrian Tertecel, "*Expansiunea Rusiei Spre Marea Neagră*", p. 103; Sinan Yüksel, "*Çariçe Anna Zamanında Rusya'nın Karadeniz Politikası*", *Mukaddime*, 8/2, (2017), p. 356.

secret agreement with Austria in 1733. According to this agreement, While the Russians were to attack Crimea, Austria was trying to distract the Ottoman's attentions as a mediator for a while. Then Austria would complete the necessary military preparations, and they would enter the war as an ally of Russia, thus the Ottoman Empire would be forced to fight on two fronts<sup>18</sup>. During this period, the Russians made good preparations for a new Ottoman war. Especially in foreign policy, the Russians reviewed their relations with Austria, Denmark, Sweden and England. They renewed their peace treaties in order to avoid being attacked from these regions<sup>19</sup>.

The Ottomans, on the other hand, refrained from fighting the Russians as much as possible. Because they did not want to open a front against the Russians in addition to the ongoing Iranian wars. In fact, the sultan sends so many orders to the Crimean Khanate they should act in accordance with the peace with Russians and Tatars should not enter the borders of Russia during this time<sup>20</sup>. As a matter of fact, in September 1735, the Russians attacked the Ottoman-Tatar defence line in North Crimea (Prekop), considering the Tatars' violation of the Russian borders while advancing from the Caucasus towards Iran as an act of war<sup>21</sup>. After the Crimean Campaign, the Russian parliament discussed whether the war should continue or not. General Münnich succeeded in convincing Tsarina Anna to authorise an expedition to Crimea and Azov<sup>22</sup>. After completing their preparations, the Russians launched an attack from two arms, Azov and Crimea. As a matter of fact, the Russians attacked Crimea and Azov on 24 March 1736 with an army of 90 thousand men<sup>23</sup>. In response to the movements in Crimea, the Ottoman Empire declared war against Russia with the encouragement of France. Meanwhile, the ongoing war with Iran was terminated and the forces on the eastern front were shifted to Crimea.

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<sup>18</sup> Midhat Sertoğlu, *Mufasssal Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol. 5, (Ankara: TTK, 2021, p. 2488.

<sup>19</sup> Adrian Tertecel, "1735 Yılında Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri (iki Rus Belgesi)", *Türk Dünyası Tarih Dergisi*, Nr. 192, (1999), p. 58.

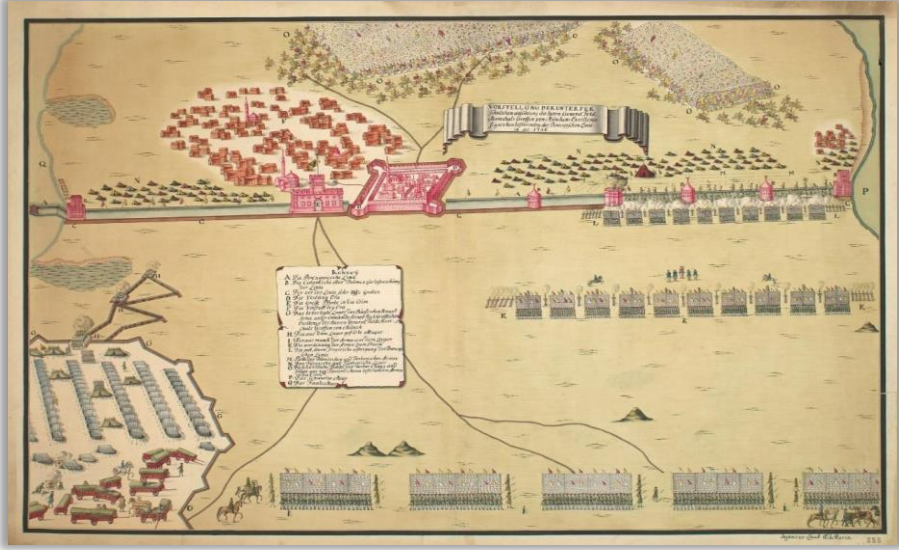
<sup>20</sup> Sinan Yüksel, "Çarice Anna Zamanında Rusya'nın Karadeniz Politikası", p. 357.

<sup>21</sup> Adrian Tertecel, "The Russian-Ottoman Peace Treaty of Belgrade (1739) and its consequences", *Enjeux Politiques, Economiques et Militaires en Mer Noire (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XXI<sup>e</sup> Siècles)*, Sous la direction de: Faruk Bilici, Ionel Candea etc, (Braila: Musée de Braila Editons Istors, 2007), p. 224.

<sup>22</sup> Ömer Çağatay, *1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı ve Sefer Organizasyonu*, Phd Thesis, (Kayseri: Erciyes University Social Science Institution, 2022), p. 21; Adrian Tertecel, "1735 Yılında Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri", p. 60-61.

<sup>23</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi Vol 4, 1. Kısım (Karlofça Andlaşmasından XVIII. Yüzyılın Sonlarına Kadar)*, (Ankara: TTK, 2023), p. 253-256; Mustafa Güler, "1737 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı'nda Özi'nin Elden Çıkması", *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, Nr. 1, XXIII, (2008), p. 141.

Silahdar Mehmed Pasha was sent to the front as a *Serdar-ı Ekrem*, while Canım Mehmed Pasha was sent to the Black Sea as a precaution against Russian threats<sup>24</sup>.



**Picture I:** A map of the lines of Perekop with the attack on 17 June 1736 of the Russian army, commanded by Field Marshal Burkhard Christoph von Munnich<sup>25</sup>

The Russians were preparing for all the winter. General Münnich had assembled a land army of 40,000 men, while ships were built in the shipyard in Briansk<sup>26</sup>. In the meantime, the Austrians, who had made an agreement with the Russians, attacked the Ottoman lands from three sides (Bosnia-Serbia-Wallachia) on 12 July 1737<sup>27</sup>. Parallel to these developments on the Austrian front, the Russians also planned to attack the Ottoman lands from two arms. According to this plan, Marshal Lassi was to attack Crimea and Marshal Münnich was to attack Oçakov<sup>28</sup>. In line with this plan, an army which consists of 70.000 men under the command

<sup>24</sup> Uğur Kurtaran, “Sultan Birinci Mahmud Dönemi Osmanlı-Rus Siyasi İlişkileri”, p. 595-596.

<sup>25</sup> <https://militarymaps.rct.uk/russo-turkish-wars/perekop-1736-perekop-avtonoma-respublika-krym-ukraine-46deg0941n-33deg4135e> (Accessed: 16.08.2024)

<sup>26</sup> Dukakin-zâde Feridun, *1736-1739 Türk-Avusturya Rus Seferi*, (İstanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1278), p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> İsmail Hami Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, Vol. 4, (İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2011), p. 35.

<sup>28</sup> A. B. Şirokorad, “Rusların Gözünden 240 Yıl Kıran Kırana Osmanlı-Rus Savaşları”, p. 97.

of General Münnich was sent to Oceakov in early July. The Russian army also brought with them 62 heavy field guns, 17 mortars, 16 howitzers and 165 field guns for the siege of the fortress<sup>29</sup>. On the other hand, Lassi's army, which was preparing to attack Crimea, consisted of 13 Dragon troops, 20 infantry units and 10-12.000 Cossack soldiers, Russian army reached 40.000. Lassi's attacks up to the Karasubazar region were successful. However, the war council convened by Lassi decided to withdraw from Crimea. After this expedition, which was intended to punish the Tatars, achieved its goal, the Russian army withdrew<sup>30</sup>. Yahya Pasha was the guard of the Oceakov Fortress. Although Yahya Pasha made the necessary preparations for the defence of the fortress months in advance, that was inadequate against the strong Russian army. Yahya Pasha learned through spies that the Russian army had reached Kodak near the Aksu (Buğ) River. However, despite intensive attempts, he could not obtain the necessary assistance. As expected, the Russian army reached the Oceakov Fortress on 7 July and began a fierce siege of the fortress<sup>31</sup>. Yahya Pasha, the defender of the Oceakov Fortress, defended the fortress with great devotion despite not receiving the necessary support from the Ottoman government in the hope that peace would be made anyway. However, in the face of this successful defence, Oceakov Castle could not be saved from falling into the hands of the Russians<sup>32</sup>.

## **2. Russian Plans for Tighina and Kamianets and the Struggles (1738)**

Upon the success of the Ottoman army in Austria, a peace negotiation was held with the mediation of France. However, the Grand Vizier Yeğen Mehmed Pasha's insistence on the Treaty of Passarowitz did not yield any result<sup>33</sup>. In this respect, the Ottoman war council convened under the leadership of Sultan Mahmud I decided to start preparations for the expedition in the spring of 1738. The most noteworthy issue in this meeting was the appointment of a serasker for each region such as Vidin-Crimea and Tighina and shifting the center of gravity of the army from

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<sup>29</sup> Dukakin-zâde Feridun, "1736-1739 Türk-Avusturya Rus Seferi", p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> A. B. Şirokorad, "Rusların Gözünden 240 Yıl Kıran Kıran Osmanlı-Rus Savaşları", p. 97-99.

<sup>31</sup> Mustafa Güler, "1737 Osmanlı-Rus Savaş'ında Özi'nin Elden Çıkması", p. 142-147.

<sup>32</sup> Hakan Karagöz, *1737-1739 Osmanlı-Avusturya Harbi ve Belgrad'ın Geri Alınması*, Phd Thesis, (Isparta: Süleyman Demirel University, 2008), p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi Vol 4, 1. Kısım*, p. 277-281.

Tighina region to Belgrade and Vidin front<sup>34</sup>. On the Russian front, Russian leaders launched a new military operation in the spring of 1738 with the understanding that they could impose peace on the Ottoman Empire only by force of arms. These operations were to be two-fronted, as in the previous year. Troops under the command of Marshal Laski were to attack Crimea and capture the port of Caffa. On the other hand, the corps under Field Marshal Münnich was to advance westwards towards the Russian part of Ukraine, cross the Dnieper and Boug Rivers and enter the Tighina<sup>35</sup>. In response to this plan, the Russian army assembled at Prolovochka in April 1738. After a while, the Dnieper River was crossed by bridges built over it. The Russian army had a total of 108,000 soldiers, 60 field guns and 15 howitzer guns<sup>36</sup>.

The Ottoman statesmen had learned about these plans in detail on 5 January 1738, before the Russians took action. As a matter of fact, a spy sent to the interior of Russia had already reported this situation to Porte. According to this report, the spy, who was travelling without moving from the interior of Poland, stopped in Kiev and came to Poltava. He saw that soldiers in the winter quarters were on the other side of the river until they reached a place called Samaz. Field Marshal Münnich was also on his way to Poltava and his troops were in winter quarters until they reached Kharkov. It is also stated that around 15,000 horsemen troops were dispatched to Poltava, while 12,000 Russian and 2,000 Cossack soldiers were distributed among the villages, and they were waiting for orders to enter the Polish territory. It is emphasised that the main target of the Russian army was Kamianets and Tighina. The information was also about the Russian armies exceeding one hundred thousand would move in two battalions<sup>37</sup>. Upon receiving this news, Vizier Numan Pasha was ordered to meet the enemy beyond the Boug River, and together with Serasker of Bucak Safa Gürkan and Veli Pashas were assigned to protect Tighina Castle<sup>38</sup>. In accordance with this plan, the Ottoman army started to advance in the direction of Kodima at the end of May. Three different bridges were

<sup>34</sup> Cevat Erbakan, *1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları*, (İstanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1938), p. 40.

<sup>35</sup> Adrian Tertecel, *Russia and The Black Sea-The Campaign of 1738 in Crimea (A Report by The Russian Field Marshal Lacky)*, *Historical Yearbook*, Vol. III, (2006), p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> Dukakin-zâde Feridun, “1736-1739 Türk-Avusturya Rus Seferi”, p. 32-33.

<sup>37</sup> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (Presidency of Türkiye Ottoman Archives) (BOA), A.ŞAMD, 4/25.

<sup>38</sup> Subhî Mehmed, *Subhî Tarihi Samî Şâkir Tarihleri ile Birlikte 1730-1744*, ed. Mesur Aydın, (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yay, 2007), p. 485.

built across the Boug River. The Ottoman-Russian forces confronted each other in the vicinity of Kodima and separated without any result<sup>39</sup>. Field Marshal Münnich and his army reached the Dnestr (near Râbnîța) on 23 July/3 August 1738, intending to take Tighina. However, Marshal Münnich did not attempt to cross the river due to the rocky shores in the area. Because the geographical constraints in the area prevented a military operation to Tighina. In addition, many factors such as serious disruptions in the supply of Russian troops, the increasing number of Russian soldiers who succumbed to the heat and lack of food, and the plague epidemic in Moldavia and the Kamieanets region of Poland prevented Münnich from going forward. Thus, on 31 July/11 August 1738, the Russians began to retreat towards the Boug River<sup>40</sup>. The Russians retreated as far as the Boug River and were constantly pursued and attacked by the Ottomans and Tatars. In addition to this failure, the Russians were forced to abandon the fortresses of Oeakov and several days later they did the same with the fortress of Kılburun<sup>41</sup>. Field Marshal Münnich managed to convince Queen Anna that “*God’s intervention was responsible*” for this failure. According to Münnich, if the Russian army had travelled through to Tighina, it would have been a great disaster for the Russians, as it would have passed through plague-ridden lands. Therefore, towards the end of September, the Russian army returned to Ukrainian territory and wintered in Kiev<sup>42</sup>.

### 3. The Emergence of the Russian Threat to the Moldavia and the Measures Taken by Ottomans (1739)

The year 1711 was an important turning point for Moldavia. Because Dimitrie Cantemir, the voivode of Moldavia, changed his side with the Russian Tsar Peter the Great, thus Russian troops arrived in Jassy for the first time<sup>43</sup>. Even during this period, the Russians tried to turn Wallachia and Moldavia into their own vassal states. In response to this situation, the Ottoman Empire wanted to strengthen its influence in this region by appointing Phanariot voivods<sup>44</sup>. In particular, the attempts of the

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<sup>39</sup> Dukakin-zâde Feridun, “1736-1739 Türk-Avusturya Rus Seferi”, p. 33.

<sup>40</sup> Adrian Tertecel, “Russia and The Black Sea”, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Adrian Tertecel, “Russia and The Black Sea”, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> A. B. Şirokorad, “Rusların Gözünden 240 Yıl Kıran Kırana Osmanlı-Rus Savaşları”, p. 101-102

<sup>43</sup> Laurentiu Radvan, “Din urmările ocupație ruse în moldove (1739)”, cel mai vechi plan al Iașilor, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, Vol. XXXV. 2017, p. 195.

<sup>44</sup> Adrian Tertecel, “Expansiunea Rusiei Spre Marea Neagră”, p. 103.



Russians to exert influence over Moldavia in the later periods failed due to the loyalty of Gika II, the voivode of Moldavia, to the Porte<sup>45</sup>. In the plan they prepared for 1739, the Russians wanted to accelerate this policy they wanted to implement in Wallachia-Moldavia. As a matter of fact, in the spring of 1739, Marshal Münnich, in his report to Queen Anna, determined the Russian strategy for this year as going directly to Khotin through Poland with the main army and preventing the Ottomans' activities, and mobilising another army on Crimea and Kuban and capturing this region<sup>46</sup>.

In response to these plans of the Russians, Ottoman statesmen took some measures in the direction of Tighina and Moldavia. As a matter of fact, in a order sent to other Anatolian Beys, especially Niğde and Çorum, it was mentioned that the ensigns were sent on 20 February 1739 for the campaign to be carried out in several arms against Austria and Russia, and they should participate Veli Pasha, who was already in the Tighina region<sup>47</sup>. On the other hand, the Moldavian region was not left undefended, and Sarı Ahmed Pasha and his troops were ordered to winter in the Moldavian region in 1739. It was necessary for 1000 soldiers from Yenisehir and Tırhala to join Ali Bey in order to join the troops in the region. On the other hand, it was given a task to Sarı Ahmed Pasha that he should act according to the situation in Khotin, and he should send soldiers to necessary places. Also due to the close proximity of Moldavia to Khotin, it is seen that strict instructions were made to send the requested ammunition for Khotin Castle on time<sup>48</sup>. In fact, if the guard of Alacahisar, Sarı Ahmed Pasha, and the voivode of Moldavia Gika II, asked for help from the guard of Khotin, Kolçak İlyas Pasha, would send them help immediately<sup>49</sup>. Finally, in order to prevent escape of the soldiers in the region of Tighina, Khotin, Akkerman and Wallachia-Moldavia, they should put some people at the passes and derbents and not to let the troops out of this region<sup>50</sup> it shows that a strong military force wanted to be kept here in order to avoid any surprises in case of a Russian attack on the region.

<sup>45</sup> Rüçhan Budak, *1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus-Avusturya Savaşları ve Kırım Hanlığı*, Phd Thesis, (İstanbul: Yeditepe University Social Science Institution, 2023), p. 319.

<sup>46</sup> A. B. Şirokorad, "Rusların Gözünden 240 Yıl Kırım Kırana Osmanlı-Rus Savaşları", p. 103-104.

<sup>47</sup> BOA., A. {DVN. MHM. d, nr. 145, p 366, order number 1513-1551.

<sup>48</sup> BOA., A. {DVN. MHM. d, nr. 145, p. 82, order number 371.

<sup>49</sup> BOA., A. {DVN. MHM. d, nr. 145, p. 80, order number 363.

<sup>50</sup> BOA., A. {DVN. MHM. d, nr. 145, p. 37, order number 166.

Following these measures taken in Tighina and Khotin, the Ottoman army, after staying in Davud Pasha field for a few days, set off for Adrinapol in the first week of April 1739 and embarked on the Russian and Austrian campaign. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Ottoman army's departure, when they reached Hafsa range, Serdar-ı Ekrem joined the army in *Sulakçeşme* near Adrinapol. It was ordered to enlist 35 flags of janissary soldiers from Erzurum, Kars, Trabzon, Azerbaijan and the Black Sea coast under the guidance of İbrahim and Turnacı Mehmed in the left arm of Anatolia to be send in the Tighina army. Eight flags of janissaries from İskenderun, İznik and Sapanca were to be recruited and delivered to the officers in charge in the regions from Osmancık to Üsküdar and then to be dispatched to the front. After staying in Adrinapol for 15 days for the recruitment of troops, they set off towards Sofia<sup>51</sup>. Russian General Münnich ordered the Russian army to come out of winter quarters in March 1739 in order to carry out the military operation against Khotin and Moldavia, and in April the Russian army started to gather in Kiev. Since the Dnepr River had overflowed, it took a month to transfer the army's artillery, cannon, etc. to the other side of the river. The strength of the Russian army consisted of 49 battalions, 100 dragon troops, 6 hussar regiments and volunteer corps, 291 cannons and 70.000 soldiers<sup>52</sup>. In May, Marshal Münnich convened a war council in the district of Levah, where he declared that the first goal was to capture Khotin and then enter Wallachia-Moldavia to open the road to Istanbul<sup>53</sup>. Münnich's aim was to reduce the distance as much as possible by passing through the territory of Poland and to avoid the troubles that the Russian army had previously experienced<sup>54</sup>. In line with the new goals set by Münnich, the Russian army, after advancing from Levah on 25 May 1739, camped at the Kamenka River on 3 June. Meanwhile, the news from Moscow ordered the army to advance rapidly without wasting too much time. On 27 June, the Russian army quickly crossed the Boug River in two different places<sup>55</sup>. The Ottoman spy sent to the region at this time witnessed the crossing of the Boug River by the Russian armies and reported that the enemy had

<sup>51</sup> Erdoğan Bilgin, *1148-1152/1736-1739 Savaşı Tarihçesi (Subhi Mehmed'in Müzâkerât-ı Sulhiyye Tarihçesi Adlı Eseri)*, Master Thesis, (İstanbul: Marmara University Research Institute of Turcology, 2003), p. 98-101.

<sup>52</sup> Dukakin-zâde Feridun, "1736-1739 Türk-Avusturya Rus Seferi", p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> Cevat Erbakan, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları", p. 56-57.

<sup>54</sup> A. B. Şirokorad, "Rusların Gözünden 240 Yıl Kıran Kıran Osmanlı-Rus Savaşları", p. 104-105.

<sup>55</sup> Sergey Mikhaylovicha Solovyev, *History of Russia: The Rule of Empress Anna*, Trans. by Richard Hantula, Vol. 35, (Academic International Press, 1982), p. 62.

travelled ten hours from Kamanica and they intended to come Khotin. He added in his notes that General Romanchof had advanced upstream from Boug, and he joined forces with General Münnich<sup>56</sup>.

According to the Ottoman sources, when the Russians intended to go in three divisions on the territory of Moldavia and Sorika, it was necessary for the former Governor of Ocekav Mehmed Pasha, as well as the troops stationed in Braila and Tighina should go there<sup>57</sup>. For this purpose, Ahmed Pasha was assigned to guard the region of Moldavia and Soroka and he had to come to that region urgently<sup>58</sup>. In the order given to *mir-i miran* and majors of sanjak and cavalry sent from Anatolia to Tighina upon the forward movement of the Russians, it was requested that they should come in a hurry for the protection of the region since the enemy was coming to the vicinity of Moldavia and Soroka. After arriving at a suitable place in Moldavia, they had to be ready according to the direction in which the army was required to go<sup>59</sup>. On the other hand, Katıcioğlu Mustafa was asked to go with 500 cavalymen to the neighbourhood of the voivode of Moldavia and stay in the defence of Moldavia and Soroka<sup>60</sup>. The duty of Gika, the voivode of Moldavia, was to make the necessary appointments upon the arrival of these forces and to dispatch the troops to their posts<sup>61</sup>. Indeed, after the Russian army crossed the Boug River, General Münnich sent the Cossacks to the Soroka and Mogilev regions<sup>62</sup>. General Münnich drove the Cossacks ahead because rumours that the main Russian army was coming to Tighina after the Cossacks had gained importance<sup>63</sup>.

It seems that this diversionary move of the Russian army marching to Tighina was effective and Serasker of Tighina Veli Pasha, Khotin Guard Ilyas Pasha and Moldavian Voivode Gika II sent a message to the Porte

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<sup>56</sup> BOA., A.{AMD, 5/5.

<sup>57</sup> Ahmed Cavid Bey'in Muntehabâtı, *Osmanlı-Rus ilişkileri Tarihi*, ed. Ahmed Baycar, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2004), p. 238; *Subhî Tarihi*, p. 529.

<sup>58</sup> BOA., C.DH., 23/1114.

<sup>59</sup> BOA., C.ASK, 188/81088-1.

<sup>60</sup> BOA., C.ASK, 188/81088-2. In the history of Subhi, it is written that Katırcızade, who had previously been appointed to the Tighina Guard with 500 soldiers, was assigned to the guard of Moldavia upon the emergence of the Russian danger. See also *Subhî Tarihi*, p. 530.

<sup>61</sup> BOA., C.ASK, 188/81088-3.

<sup>62</sup> Sergey Mikhaylovicha Solovyeu, *History of Russia*, p. 62.

<sup>63</sup> *Călători Străini Despre Țările Române*, (partea I îngrijit de Maria Holban, M. M Alexandru-Dersca Bulgaru), Vol. IX, (București: Editura Academiei Române, 1997), p. 239.

informing that the Russians were marching on Akkerman and Tighina and requested troops from the centre<sup>64</sup>. General Münnich's forward operation plan continued as follows. 20.000 elite troops set off with only field artillery and they will take only ten days of food with them. Siege equipment and ammunition for Khotin were left under the protection of General Rumiantov<sup>65</sup>. This Russian advance was carefully followed by the Ottomans. The Russians had to change their plan when the Tatars, together with some Ottoman troops, crossed to the other side of Kamianets and crossed to the other side of Kamianets while the Russian troops were so close to Kamianets. The Russians then travelled a little to the north and reached the Tarnaruda and Terebovlea region beyond the Zbruch River and waited for fifteen days. Then they divided into three parts and travelled ten hours from Horodinka to the town of Girmenli and crossed the Dniester River at a place called Pucac and entered the borders of the Moldavia<sup>66</sup>. From there the Russians marched in the direction of Chernivtsi (Rom. Cernăuți). A Russian group attacked Chernivtsi at night and destroyed the garrison there. Other Russian troops sacked the Chernivtsi area, partly Suceava, destroyed a Romanian detachment on the Prut and returned to camp with rich booty<sup>67</sup>. Meanwhile, the Russian army faced a serious Turkish attack near the village of Sinkovsty. Münnich stated that his troops fought with great sacrifice in this attack, and after overcoming this adversity, he started to advance towards Pruth<sup>68</sup>.

#### 4. Battle of Stavuchany and the Fall of Khotin

After the Russian army crossed the Boug River, General Münnich convened a war council on 3 August 1739 and found it appropriate to advance towards the Khotin Fortress on the Pruth River. In order to realise this operation plan, it was decided to go through a mountain pass called Prekop. On 6 August, the fortified position of Okop fell into to the Russian hands, and on 7 August, after a 7 km march, the Russian army was deployed in three groups in the area on the Staniger mountain. The right side of the Russian camp was bordered by the Pruth River and the left side by the Khotin Mountains<sup>69</sup>. General Mannstein, in his memoirs, comments

<sup>64</sup> Rüçhan Budak, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus-Avusturya Savaşları ve Kırım Hanlığı", p. 368-369; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi Vol 4, 1. Kısım*, p. 219.

<sup>65</sup> *Călători Străini*, IX, p. 239.

<sup>66</sup> BOA., A. {AMD, 5/7.

<sup>67</sup> Andrei Pogăciaș, "Războiul Ruso-Austro-Turc din 1736-1739", *Identitate și Alteritate*, V, Studii de Istorie Politică și Culturală, Presa Universitară Clujeană, (2011), p. 344.

<sup>68</sup> *Călători Străini*, IX, p. 239; Sergey Mikhaylovicha Solovyev, *History of Russia*, p. 62.

<sup>69</sup> Cevat Erbakan, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları", p. 58.

on the failure of the Russian army to be stopped by the Turks at the Prekop Gorge as a great strategic mistake. According to Mannstein, if the Ottoman troops had attacked the Russians at the Prekop Gorge, they could have inflicted a serious defeat on them<sup>70</sup>. According to the Moldavian chronicles, when Serasker Veli Pasha sent the Tatars and Lipkas to the Prekop Pass, the Russians had already passed through it<sup>71</sup>. In this respect, the Ottoman army was waiting for the Russians at the Zbruc River, which made them crossing there easy<sup>72</sup>. Therefore, this opportunity was missed and the Russian army started to move on. Meanwhile, the Tatar cavalry attacked but retreated due to artillery fire from the Russian side. After this attack was repulsed, Münnich, after deciding at a war meeting to leave the bridge material and the regimental weights under the protection of Bahmenchef, started an operation in three columns. On the first day of the operation, the Russians crossed the Gukof River without encountering any obstacles and reached Rakitna. The Ottoman troops in Tighina attempted to raid the concentrations of the Russian army without engaging in a pitched battle, but without success<sup>73</sup>.

Upon the emergence of the Russian danger in Khotin, Veli Pasha, the serasker of Tighina, gathered his forces in Khotin. The Russian army, on the other hand, was approaching Hotin at a distance of three hours<sup>74</sup>. Serasker Veli Pasha had taken a strong position at Stavuchany (Rom. Stăuceni) on the main road to Khotin with 90,000 troops<sup>75</sup>. Here the Russians were surrounded by the Ottomans. Veli Pasha's position was on top of a high hill and protected by several batteries. Kolchak Ilyas Pasha, the governor of Khotin, with his serjeants, was on the left flank, with his back to the impassable mountains and forests, while Genc Ali Pasha, commanding the cavalry, was on the right flank, using the mountains as far as Pruth. The Crimean Tatar armies provided support from the rear<sup>76</sup>. In this situation, the Ottomans organised the battle according to the dominant hills. Thus, the armies were in a strong position on both sides of

<sup>70</sup> *Călători Străini*, IX, p. 242.

<sup>71</sup> *Cronica Ghiguleștilor Istoria Moldovei între anii 1695-1754*, Ediție îngrijită de Nestor Camariano și Ariadna Camariano-Cioran, (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1965), p. 443.

<sup>72</sup> Ömer Bıyık, *Osmanlı-Rus Hududunda Bir Kale: XVIII. Yüzyılda Hotin, Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, XXIX/2, (2014), p. 503.

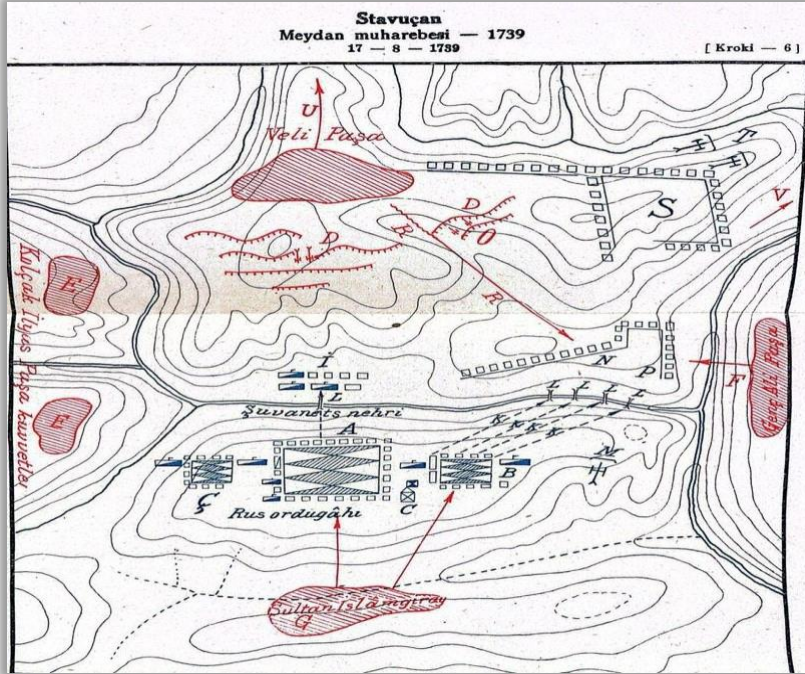
<sup>73</sup> Cevat Erbakan, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları", p. 58-59.

<sup>74</sup> Dukakinzâde, "1736-1739 Türk-Avusturya Rus Seferi", p. 41.

<sup>75</sup> Sergey Mikhaylovicha Solovyeu, *History of Russia*, p. 62.

<sup>76</sup> *Călători Străini*, IX, p. 243.

the river<sup>77</sup>. According to Mannstein, the Ottomans attacked the Russians day and night from all directions, but the Russians managed to repel the attacks<sup>78</sup>. It seems that Serasker Veli Pasha was trying the same tactic that Grand Vizier Baltacı Mehmed Pasha had once used against Peter the Great at Pruth in 1711. According to this plan, the Russian army was to be surrounded from all sides and the soldiers were to be forced to lay down their arms and be captured<sup>79</sup>.



Map I: Battle of Stavuchany<sup>80</sup>

The next day, the Russian army was ready to fight. Münnich's plan was for a surprise attack. In line with this plan, Lieutenant General Leowendal and Gustav Biron attacked the Ottoman right flank with three infantry battalions, two horse battalions, some light troops, thirty guns and four mortars<sup>81</sup>. The aim was to launch a diversionary attack on the right flank and strike the main blow on the left. The Russian forces crossed the Shuvanets (Shulanets) River, captured the hills 2 kilometres from the

<sup>77</sup> Ömer Çağatay, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı ve Sefer Organizasyonu", p. 44.

<sup>78</sup> Călători Străini, IX, p. 243.

<sup>79</sup> Cevat Erbakan, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları", p. 59.

<sup>80</sup> Cevat Erbakan, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları",

<sup>81</sup> Călători Străini, IX, p. 243.



Ottoman batteries and began shelling the Ottoman positions. As the Ottoman artillery shelled these forces, the shelling of both sides continued until noon. This action led Veli Pasha to believe that the Russians were attacking the right flank with all their might, and the troops on the left flank were shifted to the right<sup>82</sup>. Marshal Münnich was given the task of deploying two field artillery regiments under the command of Prince Dadian near the ford in order to stop the cavalry of Genc Ali Pasha, who wanted to meet the Russian army from the front and to prevent its advance, and to secure the passage of the Russian army across the Shuvanets River for an attack on the left flank of the Ottoman army. The Russian army moved in three groups in a fortress formation with heavy artillery<sup>83</sup>. Mannestein states in his memoirs that many bridges were built across the Shuvanets River, and the swampy area was covered with thick planks, then Russian troops safely crossed to the opposite bank with the protection of heavy artillery. It was after this advance that the Russians captured the hills where the Turks were entrenched<sup>84</sup>.

This organisation and activity of the Russian army enabled the main Russian army to cross the Shulanet River and the army crossing the river advanced by taking the weights with it<sup>85</sup>. According to Ottoman sources, the reason for the loss of the war is attributed to Genç Ali Pasha's pride and attacking without even listening to the serasker. This unnecessary action of Genç Ali Pasha against the Russian army consisting of hundreds of thousands of soldiers was ineffective with the cannon fire of the Russians and resulted in the Ottoman troops being besieged. When Serasker Veli Pasha retreated to Tighina instead of helping the army in this difficult situation, the Ottoman army was completely defeated and Khotin Castle was left undefended<sup>86</sup>. As a matter of fact, according to Ion Nekulçe, Münnich did not allow the pursuit of the Turkish army because he was not sure of the victory. Because he thought that the Turkish army might pretend to be defeated and return, he kept his army on the battlefield for a whole day<sup>87</sup>. As a result, the Russian army captured 48 cannons, more than

<sup>82</sup> Cevat Erbakan, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları", p. 60.

<sup>83</sup> Cevat Erbakan, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları", p. 60-61; Çağatay, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı ve Sefer Organizasyonu", p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> *Călători Străini*, IX, p. 244.

<sup>85</sup> Cevat Erbakan, "1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus ve Avusturya Savaşları", p. 61.

<sup>86</sup> Erdoğan Bilgin, *1148-1152/1736-1739 Savaşı Tarihçesi*, p. 107-108; *Subhî Tarihi*, p. 599-600.

<sup>87</sup> Ion Neculce, *Letopiseșul Țării Moldovei și O samă de Cuvinte*, Ediție critică și studiu introductiv de Gabriel Ștrempel, (București: Editura Minerva, 1982), p. 821.

1000 tents and an enormous amount of ammunition and war material. After the victory of the battle, Münnich arrived in Khotin at the head of an army of 30,000 men with all the siege artillery. However, the castle, which was in such a strong position, was not in a position to resist the enemy. This was because the 10,000 men guarding the castle had fled after the defeat at Stavuchany. Therefore, the fortress commander Kolçak İlyas Pasha surrendered the fortress to the Russians on 30 August 1739<sup>88</sup>. According to Kolçak İlyas Pasha, the reasons for the defeat were Veli Pasha's prolonged delay of his army in the vicinity of Akkerman and Tighina and the Russian inaction during the Prekop Pass. Veli Pasha's aim was to be victorious against the Russian army. For this purpose, he was to harass them continuously and prevent the supplies in the Russian army from passing through. However, Veli Pasha did not consider that the Russians had an experienced artillery unit<sup>89</sup>.

## 5. Russian Occupation of Jassy and Retreat

After the surrender of Khotin Fortress, Marshal Münnich issued a manifesto on 23 August addressed to the provinces, clergy and nobility of Moldavia, informing them that the emperor would protect them. The next day he decided to march to Jassy, and thus on 26 August the bulk of the Russian army reached the Pruth River near the village of Zaluci, today part of the village of Drepcăuți (Edineț, Republic of Moldova). The troops advanced about 8,5 km further up the river, and two pontoons and a bridge were built near the village of Jașcoveț (Ișnovăț). General Biron crossed the Prut on 27 August, followed the next day by Alexander Rumyantsev. The last detachments entered the territory of Moldavia on 29 August. On the same day Münnich began his march towards the capital<sup>90</sup>. Indeed, the report sent to the Porte by Gika, the voivode of Moldavia, included a request for 12,000 troops to be sent for the defence of Moldavia, Brălia, Chilia and Ismail, as the Russians were targeting these areas<sup>91</sup>.

In response, Gika and Mehmed Pasha, the voivode of Moldavia, were tasked to stop Russians at the Dnepr River. They went to Chernivtsi with this aim. The troops, consisting of approximately 4-5.000 Ottoman-Moldavian soldiers, travelled to Leorda. However, when they realised that

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<sup>88</sup> Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi (1669-1774)*, Trans. by Nilüfer Epçeli, Vol. V, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2011), p. 555-556.

<sup>89</sup> *Călători Străini*, IX, p. 245.

<sup>90</sup> Laurentiu Radvan, *ibidem*, p. 197-198.

<sup>91</sup> *Subhî Tarihi*, p. 601.

they could not stop the Russians, they retreated back to Bogdanesti without a fight<sup>92</sup>. In fact, Voivode Gika, in a meeting with the boyars one evening, decided not to resist the Russians and to retreat, since he did not receive any help from the Ottoman Empire. Then he appointed the Grand Logofat Sandu Sturza and the Grand Vornik Iordachi Cantacuzino as district governors and he went to Scînteia. Voivod Gika could escape to Galați, although he was pursued by a military group led by Constantin Cantemir<sup>93</sup>. On 3 September, Marshal Münnich entered Jassy, the capital of the Moldavia, and he sent a message to the boyars that *'these lands are no longer under Turkish sovereignty, but now Moldavia is under Russian sovereignty, and that he will not agree to any treaty without establishing sovereignty over these lands'*<sup>94</sup>. The boyars complained that they could not fulfill the demands of the Russians except for agricultural goods. Especially the devastation of the country due to the war and the dispersal of the population made it difficult to fulfill these demands. Nevertheless, the Russians sent a letter to the boyars via Constantin Cantemir for the fulfilment of all their demands and threatened that the Cossacks would plunder the whole of Moldavia if the demands were not fulfilled. According to the Moldavian Chronicles, when the Russians entered the territory of Moldavia, there was already looting and pillaging all over the country<sup>95</sup>.

On 18 September 1739, under the threat of expulsion from Moldova, Marshal Münnich signed a contract with the court of the country, and he imposed 12 conditions. According to this agreement, the boyars would recognise Queen Anna as the protector of Moldavia. The Moldavian people were to remain wholeheartedly loyal to the Russians and never associate with the enemies of the Russians. The 20,000 Russian troops arriving in Moldavia were to be provided with food and a certain number of laborers were to be provided to the Russians for the fortification of the city of Jassy. On the other hand, the sick and wounded soldiers and officers of the Russian army were to be cared from Moldavia<sup>96</sup>. For Moldavia, this

<sup>92</sup> Ion Neculce, *Letopiseșul Țării Moldovei*, p. 822

<sup>93</sup> Gh. Bezviconi, *Contribuții la Relațiile Româno-Ruse din cele mai vechi Timpuri până la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea*, (București: Academia Română, 1962, p. 75; *Cronica Ghiguleștilor*, p. 449.

<sup>94</sup> Demir Dragnev, "Grigore II Ghica", *Domnii Țării Moldovei*, (Chișinău: CIVITAS, 2005, p. 241.

<sup>95</sup> *Cronica Ghiguleștilor*, p. 453.

<sup>96</sup> *Relațiile Externe Ale Țării Moldovei în documente și materiale (1360-1858)*, Ediția a III-a. Revăzută și adăugată (Editor: Ion Eremia), Chișinău 2020, p. 634-637.

agreement envisaged its transformation into a privileged province of Russia<sup>97</sup>. Marshal Münnich wrote to Anna that after the conquest of Moldavia new avenues of attack had been opened. According to him, it was necessary to make the most of the recent victories by continuing the campaign towards the Danube, liberating the Balkans and finally marching on Istanbul. Münnich's aim was to strengthen Moldavia in every way and defend it against the Ottomans<sup>98</sup>.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman forces had gathered all their troops in Tighina after the Battle of Stavuchany. Because the Russian danger was likely to move forward. Münnich's aim was to seize Wallachia, the lands of the Bucak Tatars and Tighina after Moldavia<sup>99</sup>. In this regard, news from Moldavia and Braila informed that the Russians had captured the city of Jassy<sup>100</sup>. After the Russians captured the centre of Jassy, the protection of the borders of Moldavia and Tighina became more important. A Firman given to Genç Ali Pasha, the governor of Ocekov, it was ordered to keep in touch with Veli Pasha, who remained in the defence of Tighina, and to act according to the situation<sup>101</sup>. As a matter of fact, upon the endangerment of the borders of Tighina and Moldavia, İvaz Mehmed Pasha was assigned to remove the Russian troops in Jassy<sup>102</sup>. As far as it is understood from the Ottoman documents, the new operation plan prepared against the Russians was to remove the Russian army from Jassy. According to this plan, Islam Giray who is Serasker of Bucak Region was ordered to go to Jassy. On the other hand, Diyarbakır Governor Memiş Pasha had to reach Silistre as soon as possible, communicate with İvaz Mehmed Pasha and act together against Russians<sup>103</sup>. Sarı Ahmed Pasha, on the other hand, has to communicate with Gika, the Voivode of Moldavia to keep the borders of Moldavia under surveillance and to endeavour to drive the enemy out of Jassy<sup>104</sup>. As a matter of fact, Münnich's plans for Tighina came to an end with an order from Queen Anna. Because the

<sup>97</sup> Adrian Tertecel, "*Expansiunea Rusiei Spre Marea Neagră*", p. 104.

<sup>98</sup> Laurentiu Radvan, "Din urmările ocupație ruse în moldove (1739)", cel mai vechi plan al Iașilor", p. 199.

<sup>99</sup> Rüçhan Budak, "*1736-1739 Osmanlı-Rus-Avusturya Savaşları ve Kırım Hanlığı*", p. 380.

<sup>100</sup> BOA., A./DVN. MHM. d, nr. 147, p. 6, order number 17.

<sup>101</sup> BOA., A./DVN. MHM. d, nr. 147, p. 7, order number 23.

<sup>102</sup> BOA., A./DVN. MHM. d, nr. 147, p. 8, order number 30.

<sup>103</sup> BOA., A./DVN. MHM. d, nr. 147, p. 10, order number 35.

<sup>104</sup> BOA., A./DVN. MHM. d, nr. 147, p. 9, order number 32.

Russians had received the news that Austria had already made peace with the Ottomans<sup>105</sup>.

As a matter of fact, with this news, the Ottomans had given up on a new military operation against Jassy. This is because the Crimean Khanate's detailed report on the Jassy operation, which it submitted to the Porte, provides interesting details about this process. Accordingly, while the soldiers of the Crimean Khanate were travelling from Galați to Fokshani, the Cossacks sent 300 men to the region and wanted to take prisoners or reporters. Upon this, the Crimean Khan immediately sent some Tatar soldiers to investigate the area. However, when he came across the Cossacks, they attacked the Tatars, and since they were not resilient, six soldiers of Cossacks escaped wounded and escaped to the mountains. While 52 of these soldiers were put to the sword, the other 255 showed signs of disintegration. As the soldiers of the Crimean Tatars were advancing towards Jassy, a French gentleman named Monsieur Tott arrived from Khotin with the news that the Belgrade Peace had been signed by the Moscow government. Then General Münnich retreated from Jassy to Khotin on 23 October 1739. Upon the request of the people of Moldavia for the protection of country, Sarı Ahmed Pasha went straight to the town of Jassy also the Crimean Khan would go there soon. In the meantime, messengers were sent to Marshal Munnich to withdraw all his troops from Moldavia, to demolish the palandas built every four to five hours from Khotin to the town of Jassy, and to withdraw around 4000 Cossack soldiers from Wallachia. Spies from Khotin reported that the Russian troops had crossed the Dniester River, and they would winter in Ukraine this winter, and that Münnich would cross to Poland before November<sup>106</sup>.

As a result, Austria's entry into the war with the Russians in 1737 did not bring the expected success. The mismanagement of the war by the Austrian generals, especially after the death of Prince Eugene, forced Austrian diplomats to seek mediation from France to ensure peace. Thus, it was signed a peace agreement in Belgrade on 18 September 1739 by means of French ambassador in Istanbul, De Villeneuve. The Belgrade peace was unfavourable to Russia, which had not been defeated in the war but had lost the diplomatic conflict. For the conquered territories (including the fortress of Azov, which had to be destroyed) were returned to the Ottomans, and the Russians lost the right to have a fleet in the Black Sea but could only trade through Turkish ships. However, they retained the

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<sup>105</sup> Sergey Mikhaylovicha Solovyev, *History of Russia*, p. 64.

<sup>106</sup> BOA., A.{AMD, 5/10.

property they had acquired in Persia and were given the right to have a permanent representative in Istanbul with the same status as the ambassadors of other powers<sup>107</sup>.

### Conclusions

Queen Anna, who took power after the death of Tsar Peter I, started the Ottoman-Russian Wars (1636-39) by adopting the policy of reaching the Black Sea coast in foreign policy. In the first years of the war, the military operations of the Russian armies were directed towards Crimea and Ocekov. While Marshal Lassi failed to achieve the desired success in Crimea, the armies of Münnich succeeded in capturing Ocekov. In 1738, the Russians again launched a two-front attack. General Münnich, advancing towards the interior of Tighina, could not go any further due to geographical constraints and the epidemic in the army. The Russian army decided to retreat to Ukraine and winterise for the following year's campaigns. Among the plans of the Russians in 1739 was to establish dominance over the Wallachian-Moldavian voivodeships, also captured to Khotin. The Istanbul administration, which learned about this situation through spies sent to the region, assigned Voivode Gika and Sarı Ahmed Pasha for the defence of Moldavia and Kolçak İlyas Pasha to Khotin. With a strategy of General Münnich, the army's march towards Khotin was concealed and the Ottoman forces were made to wait in Tighina. The Russian army entered Moldavia via the Dnepr River and plundered many places, especially Sorika. In fact, according to the Moldavian Chronicles, this action led to the impoverishment of the Moldavian people. Finally, the two armies met in the town of Stavuchany, three hours away from Khotin. The loss of this battle not only cost Khotin, but also opened the road to Moldavia to the Russians. As a matter of fact, the Russian army arrived in front of Jassy and forced the boyars to accept what they wanted with a treaty. This agreement envisaged the transformation of Moldavia into a Russian province. Realising the seriousness of the situation, the Ottoman rulers, especially the Crimean Khan and Sarı Ahmet Pasha, planned to organise a military operation towards Jassy. While the armies of the Crimean Khanate advancing towards Jassy they learned that the Peace of Belgrade signed between the Ottoman-Austria had been ratified by the Moscow government. According to this treaty, the Russian armies withdrew from Jassy, and the Russian threat ended in Moldavia.

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<sup>107</sup> Gh. Bezviconi, "Contribuții la Relațiile Româno-Ruse din cele mai vechi Timpuri până la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea", p. 77; *Istoria Românilor*, Vol. VI, p. 611.



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# YERGÖĞÜ (GIURGIU) FORTRESS AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE DURING THE OTTOMAN-RUSSIAN WAR OF 1828-1829

*Salim AYDIN\**

## Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the Yergöğü (Giurgiu/Giurgevo) fortress, located on the left bank of the Danube River in present-day Romania. The primary focus will be the strategic role of the fortress and its defense systems during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-1829. Following the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-1774, the Balkans increasingly became a strategic target for the Russian Empire. This war marked the beginning of direct Russian assaults on Ottoman-controlled Balkan territories, including Yergöğü. The fortress endured repeated sieges. The first one was during the Austro-Russian alliance's campaign in the 1787-1792 war and again during the 1806-1812 Ottoman-Russian war. Under these circumstances, the Ottoman decision makers fully recognized the Russian threat and conducted fortification preparations throughout both right and left banks of the Danube River to enhance defensive capabilities. Of course, Yergöğü played a critical role as one of the most formidable fortresses against the Russian advance. This article will examine several key aspects of the fortress: the Ottoman preparations in Yergöğü before the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-1829, the defense of the city during the war, the garrison size and amount of ammunition, and ultimately, the surrender of Yergöğü following the Treaty of Edirne in 1829.

**Keywords:** Giurgiu, Yergöğü, Balkans, Ottomans, Russia, Romania, 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War.

## Introduction

During the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia not only aimed to expand its influence by advancing to the Mediterranean through the Ottoman Empire but also began intervening in the internal affairs of the

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Ottoman Empire. A significant example of such intervention occurred in October 1827, when Russia played a key role in the destruction of the Ottoman Navy at the Battle of Navarino during the Greek uprising. This was a turning point in the conflict because growing Russian ambitions in the region raised concerns among both Britain and France. These European powers feared that increasing Russian influence would jeopardize their economic and political concessions within the Ottoman Empire. In this period, the Ottoman Empire recently abolished the Janissary corps, which had been the backbone of Ottoman military power. This left the empire in a weak position to effectively counter the Russian threat. Therefore, Britain and France sought to delay an inevitable war between the Ottomans and Russians. They were concerned about the balance of power in the region. However, persistent Russian demands, particularly insistence on enforcing the Akkerman Convention of 1816, resolving the Greek problem, and pursuing its “southern expansion” policy, eventually increased the tension and paved the way to an Ottoman-Russian War in 1828.

The Russian actions following the Battle of Navarino sparked extensive anger toward Russia in Istanbul. Although the Ottomans decided to fight with Russia, the empire was unprepared for such a conflict. The newly established army, the “Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammadiye”, which replaced the Janissary Corps, was not yet ready for battle. Moreover, relations with Britain and France almost collapsed during this period. After securing victory over Iran by signing the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828, the Russian Empire shifted its focus toward the Ottoman Empire. The ongoing Greek issue offered Russia a suitable excuse to realize its regional ambitions. With the help of the internal struggles and weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire, Russia attacked Ottoman territories on 14 April 1828. Meanwhile, the Ottomans officially entered the war on 20 May 1828 after Pertev Pasha persuaded Sultan Mahmud II to declare war.

### **Yergöğü Fortress and the Russian Occupation of Wallachia (Southern Romania)**

Yergöğü, like other key cities along the Danube River such as Niğbolu (Nikopol), Zıştovi (Svishtov), Rusçuk (Ruse), Tutrakan, Silistre, İbrail (Braila), Tulca (Tulcea), Harşova, Maçın and İsağça<sup>1</sup> (Issaccea), held

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<sup>1</sup> Baron Von Moltke, *The Russians in Bulgaria and Rumelia in 1828 and 1829*, (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1854), p. 40; Fatih Yeşil, “Osmanlı-Rus Harplerini (1710-



a strategic position for crossing the Danube. Like these cities, a fortress was eventually built in Yergöğü, on the opposite side of Rusçuk. As it was situated on an important route between Wallachia and Rusçuk, it was always considered a critical point for the defense or control of Wallachia, and therefore control of the fortress was essential for the security of the region. On 14 April 1828, a Russian army consisted of 105,000 soldiers entered Ottoman territory by crossing the Prut River. The Russians first captured İbrail<sup>2</sup> and after controlling Wallachia, they occupied Bucharest, which had 80.000 inhabitants at that time<sup>3</sup>. The Russian advance could be halted only in October 1828 near Silistre, another strategic city along the Danube River in present-day Bulgaria. The war took place on two fronts. On the Caucasus front, on the other hand, the Russians captured Anapa, Poti, Ahıska and Kars through the summer<sup>4</sup>.

The Yergöğü fortress, located 65 kilometers south of Bucharest, was one of the most significant Ottoman strongholds on the Balkan front during the 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War. Russian sources refer to Yergöğü as “Zhurzhev,”<sup>5</sup>. The city was originally founded during the reign of Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian I (527-565) and later commercially revitalized under the Genoese. They named the city as San Giorgio in honor of their patron. The Ottomans gained control in 1420, but full Ottoman domination could not be established until 1545. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century and 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman documents, Yergöğü was referred in two different ways: “Yergöğü beri yaka” (the near side) for Rusçuk on the right bank of the Danube, and “Yergöğü öte yaka” (the far side) for Yergöğü on the left bank. By the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the borders of the Yergöğü Fortress encompassed the Tuna Hisarlığı, Karanlık Forest, Kadı Spring, Turhan Bey Spring, Ayas Bey Spring, Mihve Spring, Maradin Village, Papas Village and Gospodin River<sup>6</sup>. The fortress faced numerous challenges

1829) Etkileyen Faktörler Üzerine”, *Türk Savaş Çalışmaları Dergisi*, Vol 2, No 2 (2021), p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Bitis, “1828-1829 Türk-Rus Savaşı ve Edirne Antlaşması”, Vol. 12. (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), p. 1182.

<sup>3</sup> Ana-Maria Lepar, *Bucharest During the Russo-Turkish War 1828-1829, Hiperboreea Journal. Journal of History*, Vol. II, No.1 (June 2015), p. 86-87.

<sup>4</sup> Fahir Armaoğlu, *19. Yüzyıl Siyasî Tarihi (1789-1914)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), p. 183; Rifat Uçarol, *Siyasi Tarih (1789-1994)*, (İstanbul: Filiz Kitabevi, 1995), p. 151.

<sup>5</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. xii.

<sup>6</sup> Meryem Kaçan Erdoğan, “XVI. Yüzyılda Kuzey Sınırında Bir Osmanlı Kalesi: Yergöğü”, *Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol 11, No 1 (2022), p. 147.

under Ottoman rule. It was first besieged in November 1594 by the Wallachian army led by Voivode Michael, but the siege was unsuccessful<sup>7</sup>. The fortress was originally situated on an island of the Danube River. In July 1595, a bridge was constructed between the fortress and the city upon the arrival of the army under Ferhad Pasha. This bridge was built using timber transported from Niğbolu and took advantage of the Danube's receding waters in the summer<sup>8</sup>. However, the Wallachian army destroyed this bridge during their raids in the same year<sup>9</sup>.



**Photo 1:** A Drawing Depicting the 1595 Conflict between the Wallachian Voivode Michael's Army and the Ottoman Forces<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Yusuf Heper, "Osmanlı-Rumen Kaynakları Perspektifinden Ferhad Paşa'nın Eflâk Seferine Tayini ve Yapılan Askerî Hazırlıklar (1595)", *Genel Türk Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 5, No 10 (2023), p. 635.

<sup>8</sup> Yusuf Heper, "Osmanlı-Rumen Kaynakları Perspektifinden Ferhad Paşa'nın Eflâk Seferine Tayini ve Yapılan Askerî Hazırlıklar (1595)", p. 640.

<sup>9</sup> Yusuf Heper, "Tuna Yalılarında Mihai Viteazul Tehdidi (1598): Osmanlı-Romen Kaynakları Işığında Yeni Bir Değerlendirme", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, Vol. XVII, No. 68 (2020), p. 892.

<sup>10</sup> Radu Oltean, *Cetati, castale și alte fortificații din România*, Volumul II, Secolul Al XVI-Lea, (București: Humanitas, 2015), p. 104-105.

During the tenure of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha as grand vizier under Mehmed IV (1648-1687), a significant rebellion broke out in Moldavia, led by Constantin. Shortly thereafter, Wallachian Voivode Mihne Çelebi, who was raised by Kenan Pasha's wife Âtika Sultan, also launched a rebellion in Wallachia. Mihne's force massacred between 40.000-50.000 Muslims in the vicinity of Wallachia, and forced Ottoman pashas such as Fazlı Pasha, Can Arslan Pasha and Konakçı Kara Ali Pasha to remain idle in the Yergöğü Fortress. In response to these developments, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha assembled the army to suppress the revolt. According to Evliya Çelebi, Ottoman forces punished 40.000 of Mihne's soldiers in front of the Yergöğü Fortress<sup>11</sup>.

Evliya Çelebi also provides information about Yergöğü Fortress in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He notes that Rusçuk was first captured by Yıldırım Bayezid but was lost after the Battle of Ankara. According to Evliya Çelebi, upon ascending the throne, Sultan Mehmed Çelebi regained the control of Rusçuk, crossed the Danube and took back the Yergöğü Fortress in 1413 from the kings of Wallachia and Moldavia. Evliya describes the fortress as situated on a plain along the Danube River, square in shape, constructed of stone and fortified. It had an iron gate on the eastern side surrounded by a moat filled with Danube water and a drawbridge in front of the gate with a spring mechanism. Within the fortress, there was Sultan Mehmed Çelebi Mosque, 50 cannons of various sizes, a castellan, 300 guards and an arsenal. Evliya Çelebi also notes that there was a large port near the fortress, and in the east of the fortress a village with 600 Wallachian inhabitants. This village was also surrounded by a moat<sup>12</sup>. The Yergöğü Fortress underwent significant expansion in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially after the first Russian attacks in 1771 during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-1774. In response to this threat, the Ottomans fortified and expanded Yergöğü fortress. An additional fortress was built on the opposite side of the river in 1790. Also, a redoubt was added to the old fortress on the island between 1812 and 1828. The city was a key target for the Russians seeking to cross the Danube. Because of

<sup>11</sup> *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: Viyana, Eflak-Boğdan, Bükreş, Ukrayna, Kırım, Bahçesaray, Çerkezistan, Dağıstan, Kalmukistan, Saray, Moskova*, Book 7, Vol. 3, Cilt, ed. Seyit Ali Kahraman, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2011), p. 398-399. Evliya Çelebi accuses the Wallachian Bey Mihne very harshly.

<sup>12</sup> *Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmed Zillî Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi III. Kitap Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 305 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu-Dizini*, ed. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), p. 176-177.

this reality, the Ottomans recognized the Russian threat and further strengthened Yergöğü before the 1828-1829 war.



**Photo 2:** Yergöğü Before the war in the Depiction of Mihai Anatolii Ciobanu<sup>13</sup>

The moats or walls, arranged in two rows and marked as number 1 in the photo, were constructed after 1790 and 1812. The redoubt indicated by number 2 on the plain was added after 1812. While the mosque within the redoubt was not showed in the Radu Oltean's depiction, we marked its location with a red circle. Number 3 refers to the fortress located on the island in the Danube River, which was constructed by the Ottomans after the conquest of Yergöğü and served as the main fortress. This fortress plan was created by Radu Oltean based on Russian military plans between 1800 and 1828. Yergöğü Fortress was not directly opposite of the Rusçuk Fortress and was out of artillery range. Over time, a strong pentagonal stone citadel was added to the main fortress. Later, a semi-circular fortress

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<sup>13</sup> During our field study of the Yergöğü Fortress between 24-27 July 2024, I discovered a work of Mihai Anatolii Ciobanu in a special section of the Yergöğü Museum. As the museum have only a single copy of the book, the administration did not permit its removal from the restricted section for examination. Mihai Anatolii Ciobanu, *Giurgiu În Cartografia Istorică A Marilor Imperii: Epoca Războaielor De La 1769 La 1854*, (București: Akakia, 2022). The redoubt on the opposite side of the old fortress corresponds to Colonel Chesney's description. The location of the mosque within the redoubt prior to the war was marked with a red circle. (Photo: Salim Aydın Archive, 24-27 July 2024).

was constructed on the plain, which also served as a port<sup>14</sup>. Calafat, located opposite Vidin, and Yergöğü, positioned across from Rusçuk, became crucial for the Russians in securing Wallachia<sup>15</sup>. For the Ottomans, Yergöğü held similar importance because it was seen as a key protector of Rusçuk against Russian advances. Yergöğü's strong defenses allowed Rusçuk to maintain a more robust defense against Russian attacks<sup>16</sup>.

The first Russian attack on Yergöğü happened in September 1771, but this was an unsuccessful attempt. A similar offensive with the same outcome took place during the Ottoman-Russian and Austrian War of 1787-1792. Although Austrian forces advanced till Yergöğü in 1790, they were eventually repelled by the Ottoman forces. The final battles in the city prior to the 1828-1829 war occurred during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1806-1812. In March 1807, the forces of Russian General Michelson and Alemdar Mustafa Pasha were confronted<sup>17</sup>. In April 1809, Russian forces under the command of General Miloradovich launched another offensive to capture Yergöğü, and the city was reinforced with the force led by Hüsrev Mehmed Pasha. Ömer Faruk Uzun cited a map from Mihaylovskiy Danilevskiy, which illustrates the Russian avenue of approach. The map also shows the redoubt constructed between 1812 and 1828. In this map, the old Yergöğü fortress is indicated as "Slobozia fortress."<sup>18</sup> However, modern geographical tools like Google Maps reveal that Slobozia is actually located approximately five kilometers away from Yergöğü. This discrepancy highlights the importance of accurate geographical knowledge. It is evident from the Google view that Slobozia is a different location from what is indicated on Mihaylovskiy-Danilevskiy's map<sup>19</sup>. In September 1810, despite the arrival of Mehmed Hüsrev Pasha and his reinforcements, Yergöğü was captured by the Russians. However, under the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, the city was returned to Ottoman control. Despite this, Russians maintained their

<sup>14</sup> Colonel Chesney, *The Russo-Turkish Campaigns of 1828 and 1829 With A View of The Present State of Affairs in The East*, (New York: Redfield, 1854), p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Baron Von Moltke, *The Russians in Bulgaria and Rumelia in 1828 and 1829*, p. 233.

<sup>16</sup> Fatih Yeşil, "Osmanlı-Rus Harplerini (1710-1829) Etkileyen Faktörler Üzerine", p. 104.

<sup>17</sup> Ömer Faruk Uzun, *1806-1812 Osmanlı-Rus Harbi'nde Rus Ordusunun Tuna Harekâtı*, Master Thesis, (Ankara: Hacettepe University, 2020), p. 75.

<sup>18</sup> Ömer Faruk Uzun, *1806-1812 Osmanlı-Rus Harbi'nde Rus Ordusunun Tuna Harekâtı*, p. 99-100. See appendix 1 and 2.

<sup>19</sup> For detailed information about the Danilevskiy's map and Google Maps image see appendix.



ambitions to seize Wallachia and Moldavia, and the capture of Yergöğü fortress become key objective. This goal was realized 26 years later during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-1829. On 12 May 1828, the Russians launched attacks on Ottoman territories, and on 29 May 1828 they officially declared war<sup>20</sup>. The Ottomans had been waiting for war and prepared accordingly. In this context, the construction works on Yergöğü fortress, which had been ongoing for a long time, was completed in the spring of 1826, just before the declaration of war<sup>21</sup>. The fortress was transformed into a heavily fortified square-shaped stronghold with reinforced gates, surrounding moats, and newly constructed bastions<sup>22</sup>. The Ottomans gave importance to the city due to its location on the main roads leading to Istanbul and its population of approximately 3,500 inhabitants at that time<sup>23</sup>.

Capturing Yergöğü Fortress was an important objective for the Russians to secure crossing over the Danube River during the 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War. Thus, at the beginning of the war, the commander of Rusçuk, Küçük Ahmet (Hamit) Pasha, crossed to the left bank of the Danube with 4000 soldiers and worked tirelessly to fortify the bridgehead at Yergöğü. British officer James Brown notes that, although Ahmet Pasha had no formal expertise in fortification, he understood its importance by thanks to his talent and intelligence<sup>24</sup>. The first major battle with Russian forces in Yergöğü occurred on 3 July 1828. The Turkish force, consisting of 2000 cavalry, 1000 infantry, and 7 field guns from the fortresses of Rusçuk and Yergöğü, along with 5000 cavalry, 4000 infantry, and 10 cannons from Vidin, launched an offensive against General Geismar's forces. After the battle, both sides claimed victory, but the Turkish forces returned to their fortresses with their own cannons and this indicated that the Russians were defeated by the formidable Turkish cavalry, whose courage and agility were historically renowned<sup>25</sup>. Following this battle,

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<sup>20</sup> Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi, *Vak'anüvis Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi I*, ed. Nuri Akbayan, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı-Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), p. 216.

<sup>21</sup> Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi, *Vak'anüvis Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi I*, p. 87.

<sup>22</sup> Mihai Maxim, "Yergöğü", *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 43, (İstanbul, 2013), p. 483-484.

<sup>23</sup> Colonel Chesney, *The Russo-Turkish Campaigns of 1828 and 1829 With A View of The Present State of Affairs in The East*, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Ali Rıza Seyfi, *Bir Milletin Bir İmparatorlukla Savaşı (1828-1829 Türk-Rus Harbi) İngiliz Zabiti James Brown'un Hatıratından*, (İstanbul: Kanaat Kitabevi, 1940), p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> Ali Rıza Seyfi, *Bir Milletin Bir İmparatorlukla Savaşı (1828-1829 Türk-Rus Harbi) İngiliz Zabiti James Brown'un Hatıratından*, p. 11.



Russian forces launched a surprise attack from the direction of Bucharest to Yergöğü on 14 July 1828. The Ottoman infantry and cavalry responded to the Russian offensive. A fierce clash between the Russians and the Turks lasted for over five hours<sup>26</sup>. The fighting concentrated around the moats in front of the bastions on the Rusçuk side. Both sides suffered casualties during the engagement. Yergöğü Fortress commander Ahmet Pasha reported to Istanbul that he lost men and a significant number of animals during the battle. He also emphasized the need for stronger artillery and ammunition, equivalent to what the Russians possessed, in order to effectively counter their firepower<sup>27</sup>. The Russians continued their assaults on Yergöğü to secure Wallachia. The strongest and most elite units of the Russian forces in Wallachia were deployed to these assaults. The most intense period of the attacks occurred on 29 June 1828. Although there were intermittent skirmishes, the fiercest clashes took place on 12 and 25 July, 9 August, 13 and 21 September<sup>28</sup>.

After the battle, Russian generals Polkonik? and Vodil approached the fortress with a message from General Loncuran Graf, the commander in Bucharest. The message expressed concerns about the health conditions of Russian prisoners of war, particularly regarding illness and lack of provision. The Russian commanders proposed prisoner exchange. In response, Yergöğü commander Ahmet Pasha reassured them that it had always been the duty of the Ottomans to care for prisoners, and all necessary measures were taken. He requested that this message be conveyed to the Russian commanders. Additionally, Ahmet Pasha informed the Russian generals that the exchange proposal was reported to Serasker pasha in Rusçuk, and they would proceed according to his response<sup>29</sup>. The Russian commanders also requested a face-to-face meeting in front of the fortress between the commander in Bucharest and fortress commander Ahmet Pasha. The guard, speaking on behalf of Ahmet Pasha, offered "Tell me what you want to say, and I will convey it to him." However, the Russian commanders insisted on a direct meeting.

<sup>26</sup> According to Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi, this period was six hours. See Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi, *Vak'anüvîs Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi* 2-3, p. 332.

<sup>27</sup> Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Hatt-ı Hümayun (HAT)*, 1022/42688, 01.01.1244 / 14.07.1828.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Türkiye Devleti'nin En Mühim ve Meşhur Esfarından 1244-45 (1828-29) Türkiye-Rusya Seferi ve Edirne Muahedesi*, (Ankara: Büyük Erkân Harbiye Reisliği Ankara Matbaası, 1928), p. 193-194.

<sup>29</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1069/43770\_E, 01.02.1244 / 13.08.1828.

In response, the guard explained that this request would need to be discussed with Grand Vizier Mehmet Reşit Pasha and Serasker Ağa Hüseyin Pasha in Şumnu (Shumen)<sup>30</sup>. British officer James Brown mentions his meeting with Ahmet Pasha. During this meeting, Ahmet Pasha remarked that the Russians tried to deceive him by claiming that “the golden key opened the gates of İbrail castle to us”<sup>31</sup>. Meanwhile, Celal Pasha, the governor of Maraş, was appointed as the commander of Rusçuk in place of Ahmet Pasha<sup>32</sup>.

### **The Issue of Soldier Numbers and Ammunition in Yergöğü and Rusçuk during the War**

Commander of Rusçuk Abdürrahim Pasha<sup>33</sup> reported the strength of Ottoman forces in the fortresses of Rusçuk and Yergöğü to Istanbul during the war. He initially stated that there were 755 cavalry and 801 infantry in Rusçuk, and 24 cavalry and 2544 infantry in Yergöğü Fortress. However, upon further assessment, he realized that the actual number of soldiers in Yergöğü was 813 cavalry and 3131 infantry<sup>34</sup>. Before the war broke out, Ahmet Pasha was the commander of Rusçuk. However, as war approached he was reassigned to Yergöğü Fortress while Abdürrahim Pasha took the command in Rusçuk. Both fortresses had considerable strategic importance to the Russian army. With 4000 soldiers, Yergöğü garrison posed a direct threat to Russian operations. Also, these fortresses gave the Ottomans advantage to launch attacks on Lower Wallachia. This situation led to a redistribution of Russian forces: while the majority of General Roth’s army advanced into Bulgaria, General Geismar’s troops remained in Wallachia to counter any potential Ottoman offensives<sup>35</sup>. Both

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<sup>30</sup> BOA., HAT, 1069/43770\_M, 01.02.1244 / 13.08.1828.

<sup>31</sup> Ali Rıza Seyfi, *Bir Milletin Bir İmparatorlukla Savaşı (1828-1829 Türk-Rus Harbi) İngiliz Zabiti James Brown’un Hatıratından*, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Türkiye Devleti’nin En Mühim ve Meşhur Esfarından 1244-45 (1828-29) Türkiye-Rusya Seferi ve Edirne Muahedesi*, p. 194.

<sup>33</sup> Although Ahmet Muhtar Pasha wrote that Maraş Governor Celal Pasha was appointed as the commander of Rusçuk after Rusçuk Commander Ahmet Pasha was assigned to Yergöğü Fortress, archival records mention Abdurrahim Pasha as the commander of Rusçuk. We assess that different names may be due to Ahmet Muhtar Pasha not specifying the exact timing during the war.

<sup>34</sup> BOA., HAT, 1069/43770\_Ç\_2, 01.02.1244 / 13.08.1828.

<sup>35</sup> Colonel Chesney, *The Russo-Turkish Campaigns of 1828 and 1829 With A View of The Present State of Affairs in The East*, p. 135-136., Ali Rıza Seyfi, *Bir Milletin Bir İmparatorlukla Savaşı (1828-1829 Türk-Rus Harbi) İngiliz Zabiti James Brown’un Hatıratından*, p. 64.

Ottoman archival sources and the book *The Russo-Turkish Campaigns of 1828 and 1829 With A View of The Present State of Affairs in The East*, published in the United States in 1854, provide a similar count for the number of soldiers in Yergöğü Fortress. This consistency suggests that the soldier numbers in the fortress were reported accurately.

After detailing the number of soldiers in Yergöğü Fortress, Abdürrahim Pasha provided an account of the Ottoman forces in Rusçuk fortress. He reported that there were 84 cavalry and 404 infantry in Rusçuk, noting that 77 of the infantry were either ill or exhausted. Additionally, 84 cavalry had already been transferred to Yergöğü. Abdürrahim Pasha further explained that the number of soldiers sent to defend Rusçuk had increased to 1015 cavalry. Of these, 174 were assigned to protect Birköz village near the Danube River, 180 to defend Rahva village and its surroundings, and 141 to secure Tabak village and its vicinity. Additionally, 520 cavalry had joined his forces from Vemsoviri? with 644 additional soldiers from villages along the Danube. This brought the total cavalry strength in Rusçuk Fortress to 1164. Abdürrahim Pasha also noted that a detailed registry of the soldiers in Yergöğü had been prepared and sent to Istanbul. He reported that 1659 cavalry from the 4000 dispatched cavalry arrived since his departure from Vemsoviri?. However, he reported to Istanbul that some of the cavalry were without horses or weapons, and many were destitute and unfit for service. As a result, he urgently requested reinforcements to replace the insufficient and ill soldiers. In addition, Abdürrahim Pasha referred to a letter he received from Yergöğü commander Ahmet Pasha. In the letter, Ahmet Pasha reported that the Russians had gathered at three different points near Yergöğü Fortress, with more than 14.000 soldiers. Ahmet Pasha also shared intelligence from a local resident, indicating that the Russians had successfully secured the necessary provisions to sustain their operations<sup>36</sup>. The numbers provided by British officer James Brown closely match those reported by Ahmet Pasha. After the fall of İbrail Fortress, General Roth advanced into Bulgaria, while General Geismar remained stationed in Wallachia with a considerable force consisting of 16 cavalry squadrons, two Cossack regiments, 12 infantry battalions, and artillery, totaling approximately 10.000 soldiers. The primary objective of these Russian forces was not only to limit Ottoman movements but also to maintain surveillance on key strategic locations such as Kalafat (Calafat) and Yergöğü. The plan was

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<sup>36</sup> BOA., HAT, 1069/43770\_Ç\_2, 01.02.1244 / 13.08.1828.

that once the Russian forces withdrew from Wallachia, the Ottoman troops would be able to emerge from their fortresses and launch offensive operations into Lower Wallachia<sup>37</sup>. Ahmet Pasha emphasized the urgent need for reinforcements to Yergöğü Fortress, particularly in response to the Russian attack preparations. As his forces consisted mainly of cavalry, he had previously requested that 1500 to 2000 infantry from Rusçuk to bolster the defense. In response to his appeal, 1000 infantry soldiers were eventually sent from the local population of Rusçuk to Yergöğü. However, this transfer left Rusçuk in a vulnerable position, prompting pasha to urgently request additional reinforcements for the city defense as well<sup>38</sup>. In his correspondence with Abdürrahim Pasha, Ahmet Pasha pointed out that, unlike the previous year, when no desertions had occurred among the Anatolian troops due to the strong guarantees provided by their sergerdes (leaders), the same confidence could not be given to the Rumelian forces. The sergerdes of the Rumelian soldiers expressed their inability to offer such assurances and raised their concerns about potential desertions within their forces. Ahmet Pasha also detailed the difficulties posed by the harsh winter conditions, particularly the challenge of crossing the Danube River. He noted that over the past two to three days, the river had partially frozen and made it impassable for cavalry units. Nevertheless, preparations along the riverbanks were conducted to facilitate troop movements, and Ahmet Pasha emphasized that, once the ice thawed, efforts would intensify with soldiers working day and night to establish viable crossing points for the forces<sup>39</sup>.

Abdürrahim Pasha informed Istanbul that the wheat reserves in the fortresses of Yergöğü and Rusçuk were critically low, enough to sustain the soldiers for only eight to ten days. Additionally, the fodder for the animals would be enough for just four days. He explained that this shortage was due to the grain harvested around Rusçuk during the previous summer was sent to the Shumen and Silistre regions, and the remaining supplies had already been consumed. The pasha explained that despite assurances from *Nüzül Emîni*<sup>40</sup> Hacı İbiş Ağa regarding the availability of sufficient

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<sup>37</sup> Ali Rıza Seyfi, *Bir Milletin Bir İmparatorlukla Savaşı (1828-1829 Türk-Rus Harbi) İngiliz Zabiti James Brown'un Hatıratından*, p. 64.

<sup>38</sup> BOA., HAT, 1069/43770\_Ç\_2, 01.02.1244 / 13.08.1828.

<sup>39</sup> BOA., HAT, 1069/43770\_Ç\_2, 01.02.1244 / 13.08.1828.

<sup>40</sup> The responsible official in the Ottoman campaigns who carries out tasks such as preparation of the accommodation places, provision of the army and the animals. (Source: Kubbaltı Lügatı)

funds to procure provisions, maintaining a steady supply chain during the war was becoming increasingly challenging. He expressed concern that the difficult wartime conditions were hindering the ability to secure and deliver the necessary supplies. The pasha warned that if provisions were not acquired and distributed promptly, the soldiers in both Rusçuk and Yergöğü would face severe hardship. He made an urgent appeal for immediate action to ensure that essential supplies were dispatched without delay to prevent a potential crisis<sup>41</sup>.

Archival sources reveal that the Ottoman army faced multiple challenges during this period, including not only shortages of soldiers and ammunition in the fortresses of Rusçuk and Yergöğü, but also the risk of desertion, widespread hunger and disease. In the aftermath of the Janissary corps' abolition and prior to compulsory military service, it was essential to consider the morale and psychological conditions of both soldiers and commanders in these fortresses within the larger framework of war psychology. The harsh winter of 1828-1829 severely affected both Ottoman and Russian forces. Despite their efforts, the Russian army failed to capture Yergöğü, Silistre<sup>42</sup> and Rusçuk. They lost approximately 40.000 soldiers to disease from the beginning of the war<sup>43</sup>. A large portion of these casualties resulted due to the insufficient Russian medical service. The plague initially broke out among the soldiers and quickly spread to the civilian population. Although infected Russian soldiers were treated outside the military camps, the disease ravaged Russian troops in Wallachia and Moldavia, eventually spread to more than 40 villages in Poland<sup>44</sup>. In addition to the human casualty, approximately 30.000 horses also perished. In Bucharest, the primary base for Russian forces, the epidemic claimed 19.000 lives, 12.000 civilians and 7.000 soldiers<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> BOA., HAT, 1069/43770\_Ç\_2, 01.02.1244 / 13.08.1828.

<sup>42</sup> Silistre eventually captured by the Russians on 1 July 1829, following a prolonged engagement. The conflict between Ottoman and Russian forces in the region had commenced much earlier, with the first significant battle took place on 17 May 1828. Ali Rıza Seyfi, *Bir Milletin Bir İmparatorlukla Savaşı (1828-1829 Türk-Rus Harbi) İngiliz Zabiti James Brown'un Hatıratından*, p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> Ali Rıza Seyfi, *Bir Milletin Bir İmparatorlukla Savaşı (1828-1829 Türk-Rus Harbi) İngiliz Zabiti James Brown'un Hatıratından*, p. 68.

<sup>44</sup> Baron Von Moltke, *The Russians in Bulgaria and Rumelia in 1828 and 1829*, p. 465; Tuğrul Özcan, *Sosyal ve Ekonomik Etkileri Açısından 1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı*, (İstanbul: Gece Kitaplığı, 2014), p. 80.

<sup>45</sup> Ali Rıza Seyfi, *Bir Milletin Bir İmparatorlukla Savaşı (1828-1829 Türk-Rus Harbi) İngiliz Zabiti James Brown'un Hatıratından*, p. 68.

Despite these serious circumstances, Yergöğü Fortress did not surrender, even by the time of treaty talks. This determined resistance shows the resilience of the Ottoman army, which persisted in its defense under exceedingly harsh conditions. We believe that the fighting spirit of the Turkish soldiers and commanders under such harsh circumstances must be acknowledged and evaluated accordingly. By 2 July 1829, the defense of Yergöğü Fortress continued successfully, despite ongoing shortages in manpower, ammunition and provision. However, the critical shortage of ammunition posed a serious threat to the fort's ability to sustain its defense. In light of this, fortress commander Ahmet Pasha urgently appealed for additional supplies of ammunition, emphasizing that it was crucial for Yergöğü to repeat the success achieved by Halep Governor İbrahim Pasha, who had recently get victory against the Russians at Kozluca, located between Varna and Pravadi. Ahmet Pasha underscored that, without sufficient ammunition, the continued success of the defense would be jeopardized.

The Pasha also requested military uniforms from Istanbul for the Tatar forces recently joined the defense of Yergöğü fortress<sup>46</sup>. Although the last victory at Kozluca, where the Ottoman forces had defeated the advancing Russians near the port of Varna, was a significant success, it was short-lived. Soon after, the Russian forces began to advance on Edirne via Pravadi. Following the devastating 1827 incident at Navarino, the Ottoman navy had lost its naval dominance in the Black Sea to the Russians and retreated as far as the Bosphorus. When the Russian fleet approached the entrance of the Bosphorus,<sup>47</sup> Sultan Mahmud II responded by moving the sacred battle standard of Prophet Muhammad (Sancak-ı Şerif) from the Rami Barracks to the Kalender Pavilion, located between Yeniköy and Tarabya. This symbolic act was intended to reassure the people of Istanbul and demonstrate solidarity with the soldiers stationed along the Bosphorus in the face of the looming Russian threat<sup>48</sup>. The Sultan's support had a significant and positive effect on the Ottoman navy. During one particular naval maneuver, as the Ottoman fleet sailed out of the Bosphorus into the Black Sea, an extraordinary event occurred. The captain of the Russian frigate *Saint Raphael*, mistakenly believing that the

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<sup>46</sup> BOA., HAT, 1017/42531, 29.12.1244 / 02.07.1829.

<sup>47</sup> Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi, *Vak'anüvis Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi I*, p. 219.

<sup>48</sup> For detailed information see Salim Aydın, "Kalender Kasrı: Yapımı, Tadilatı ve II. Mahmud Dönemi Askerî Üs Olma Süreci", *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, No 67 (2021), p. 281-298.



Turkish fleet was his own, joined them without signaling. By morning, the Russian captain and his crew realized that they were surrounded by the Ottoman fleet. When the captain raised the blue-crossed Russian flag, a cannonball from Kaptan Pasha's flagship forced the frigate to surrender without resistance. The ship was easily captured by the Ottomans, and in celebration of this unexpected victory, Kaptan Pasha named the captured frigate *Nimet-i Hüda* ("Gift of God"). The angel figure at the ship's bow was replaced with a floral carving. Later, Sultan Mahmud II personally visited the captured vessel and inspected the captain's quarters, where he noticed portraits of the Russian Emperor and Empress. The Sultan intrigued and asked the captured Russian captain if the portraits accurately resembled the emperor and empress. The captain confirmed they did<sup>49</sup>.

Although the capture of a Russian frigate by the Turkish Black Sea fleet was a matter of coincidence, the presence of Russian ships near the entrance of the Bosphorus and the ongoing war throughout the Danube River brought another pressing issue: the condition of the wounded. One of the fiercest battlegrounds during the war was Silistre fortress. In response to the growing number of casualties, Yergöğü commander Ahmet Pasha and Sert Mahmut Pasha convened near Hocabey to determine the situation of the wounded in Silistre. Rusçuk commander Hüseyin Pasha reported that around 900 soldiers had been injured in Silistre, but there were not enough transportation vehicles to transfer them. As a result, it was decided that boats from Rusçuk could be sent to Tutrakan to assist the evacuation of the wounded<sup>50</sup>. However, the main issue was how to bring the wounded from Silistre to Tutrakan. By August 15, the Russian fleet had not only secured dominance over the Black Sea but had also begun to advance toward strategic locations along the Danube River. Five Russian ships had anchored at Komaska Strait, two hours away from Yergöğü Fortress. The commander of Yergöğü Fortress reported that although the Russians were not yet in a position to directly attack Yergöğü and Rusçuk fortresses, the situation remained precarious. He again emphasized the need for reinforcements for a potential assault<sup>51</sup>.

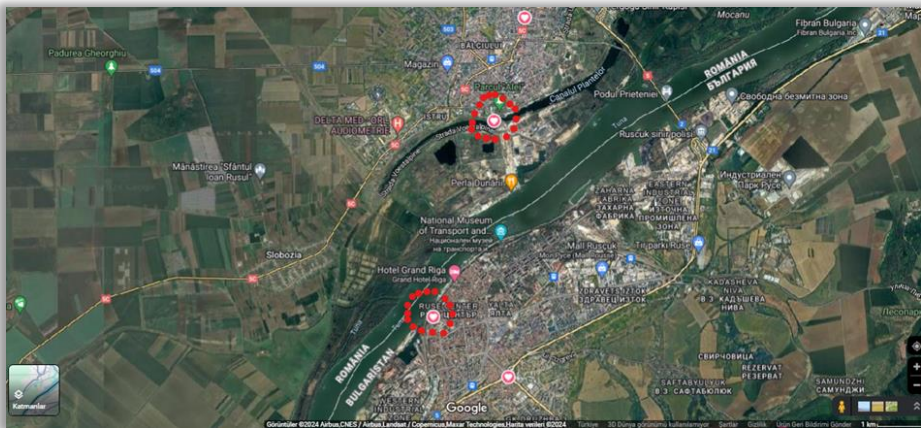
<sup>49</sup> Sir Adolphus Slade'in (Müşavir Paşa) Türkiye Seyahatnamesi ve Türk Donanması ile Yaptığı "Karadeniz" Seferi, Tans. by Ali Rıza Seyfioğlu, (İstanbul: Askeri Deniz Matbaası, 1945), p. 47.

<sup>50</sup> BOA., HAT, 1027/42776-A, 03.01.1245 / 05.07.1829.

<sup>51</sup> BOA., HAT, 1080/43984\_F, 14.02.1245 / 15.08.1829.



**Photo 3:** A Map Depicting the Positions of Yergöğü and Rusçuk Fortresses along the Danube River between 1812 and 1828<sup>52</sup>



**Google Maps 1:** The Positions of the New Fortress and the Rusçuk Fortress<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> The map created by Radu Oltean based on Russian military plans. The image was taken from a board during our field studies in Yergöğü. (Salim Aydın Archive, 24-27 July 2024).

<sup>53</sup> A new fortress was built on the left bank of the Danube, directly across from the old Yergöğü Fortress. However, both fortifications were demolished by the Russians following the conclusion of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-1829. On the map, the red circle on the left bank of the Danube marks the location of Yergöğü Fortress, while the red circle on the right bank indicates the position of Rusçuk Fortress. (Accessed: 5.06.2024).

The map created after the war, alongside the 2024 Google image shared above, demonstrates the accuracy of the earlier map in relation to the current landscape. In the Google image, the dried section of the Danube River between the two fortresses is clearly visible. The map illustrates Yergöğü fortress, which was attacked by Russian forces, and Rusçuk fortress, which also faced the threat of a Russian assault. The main command center for both fortresses was located in Shumen where the Serasker was stationed. Both fortresses would request support from Shumen when needed. As seen on the map, Rusçuk Fortress was positioned along the Danube River, while Yergöğü Fortress was on a small branch of the river. After Yergöğü fortress handed over to the Russians in 1829, much of it was demolished. Today, the branch of the Danube between the original fortress and the new fortress constructed after 1812 has dried up. The dried section has been repurposed, now serving as a platform for social activities.



**Photo 4-5:** The Dried Bank of River in Yergöğü<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> The image on the left shows the dried branch of the Danube River that once separated the old fortress, and the redoubt constructed after 1812. On the right, the ruins of the fortress are visible, along with the Çelebi Sultan Mehmed Mosque, which was later converted into a church. (Salim Aydın Archive, 24-27 July 2024).

As shown in the photo on the right, the walls of the fortress built after 1812 have been entirely demolished and new buildings were constructed. Today, the area is housing various public institutions in Yergöğü. In an effort to commemorate the historical site of the fortress, the local municipality or public institutions have installed two symbolic fortress towers, each approximately two meters, along the road near the museum.<sup>55</sup>

### **The Yergöğü Fortress during the Peace Treaty**

With full control over the Black Sea, Russian forces advanced from Varna to Edirne. Following the fall of Edirne on 20 August 1829, the Ottoman Empire announced its intention to implement the terms of the Akkerman Convention and accept the London Protocol. In response, Russia proposed a peace treaty. Consequently, Turkish and Russian delegations convened in Edirne to negotiate the terms. The Russian delegation presented several conditions, including granting privileges to Serbs, paying war indemnities to Russia, and surrendering Yergöğü fortress in exchange for the withdrawal of Russian forces from Edirne. Yergöğü fortress held significant strategic value for the Russians, as it was a crucial Ottoman stronghold in Romania on the northern (left) bank of the Danube. The Russians had been unable to capture the fortress. Initially, fortress commander Ahmet Pasha resisted the surrender, arguing that the treaty did not aim to preserve the empire and the Turkish homeland, but rather to protect Istanbul alone<sup>56</sup>. Despite Ahmet Pasha's objections, peace negotiations continued. Following discussions with the Russian delegation in Edirne, Russian forces withdrew from the areas around Burgas and Medene along the Black Sea coast, but they did not evacuate Edirne. In response to this partial withdrawal, Vecihi Pasha, a member of the Ottoman delegation in Edirne informed the Grand Vizier about the situation<sup>57</sup>. In response to the harsh terms proposed by the Russians, Serasker's representative Halil Rifat Pasha and Necip Efendi, the former treasurer of the Balkans, were sent to St. Petersburg to negotiate for more favorable conditions. Despite these efforts, the Russians remained resolute in their demand for the surrender of Yergöğü Fortress<sup>58</sup>. Following the

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<sup>55</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>56</sup> Sir Adolphus Slade'in (Müşavir Paşa) Türkiye Seyahatnamesi ve Türk Donanması ile Yaptığı "Karadeniz" Seferi, p. 145.

<sup>57</sup> BOA., HAT, 1025/42747, 27.03.1245 / 26.09.1829.

<sup>58</sup> BOA., HAT, 1022/42677, 05.04.1245 / 04.10.1829.

negotiations in St. Petersburg and additional discussions between the Ottoman and Russian delegations in Edirne, the Treaty of Edirne was signed on 26 September 1829. According to the fifth article, Yergöğü was ceded to Wallachia<sup>59</sup>. On 4 October 1829, it was proposed that cannons, ammunition, provisions and other usable materials would be transported to Rusçuk. It was also planned to relocate the Muslim population to Rusçuk before the city was handed over to the Russians<sup>60</sup>.

Yergöğü fortress commander Ahmet Pasha informed the Ottoman delegation negotiating with the Russians that the fortress, including its two bastions and gates, had been officially handed over to Russian forces. While he indicated that the full evacuation of the fortress was expected to be completed within a month, he expressed his concerns that due to the size of the fortress, it might be challenging to transfer all ammunition, provisions and personal belongings within that time frame. After surrendering the gates, the fortress command requested from the Ottoman delegation that Russian troops delay their entry for at least a month to allow sufficient time for the transfer process. This was crucial to avoid Russian questioning of those entering and exiting the fortress, especially since the local population had already suffered greatly from the war. Despite the treaty, Russian General Enşaf and his force in the Rahova and İvraca regions continued to attack the districts of Lofça, Pleven, and Selvi. Cossack soldiers harassed the local population. They seized carts, animals, and provisions, while offering false promises of compensation. In response to this oppression, many locals abandoned their belongings and fled to the mountains to protect themselves during the harsh winter. Russians committed cruelty against the people in the towns of Gabrova and Darenve, and they suffered devastation<sup>61</sup>. The Russian soldiers also launched an attack on the Turkish forces stationed at Somuncu Derbendi and seized three cannons. In response, the commander of Yergöğü requested that the damage of the Turkish forces would be formally reported to the Russian delegation involved in the ongoing peace negotiations<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> For detailed information about the Treaty of Edirne see Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi, *Vak'anüvîs Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi* 2-3, p. 498-509.

<sup>60</sup> BOA., HAT, 1022/42677, 05.04.1245 / 04.10.1829

<sup>61</sup> BOA., HAT, 1027/42782-B, 28.04.1245 / 27.10.1829; Ufuk Gülsoy, "1828-1829 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı'nda Rumeli'de Rus İşgaline Uğrayan Yerlerin Durumu", *Sultan II. Mahmud ve Reformları Semineri Bildiriler (28-30 Haziran 1989)*, (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1990), p. 21.

<sup>62</sup> BOA., HAT, 1027/42782-B, 28.04.1245 / 27.10.1829.



Although Russian forces evacuated Çorlu, Lüleburgaz (Bergos), and Silivri after occupying these areas following the fall of Edirne, they did not withdraw from Edirne. They maintained their position, insisting that they would remain in Edirne until Yergöğü was fully surrendered. Vecihi Pasha, the commander of Çirmen, informed Aliş Pasha that Russian troops had retreated from Çirmen. The Russian force first moved from İvraca direction towards Sofia. However, due to reports of an outbreak of infectious disease near Ahyolu (Pomorie), it was reported that the Russian forces would change their direction toward İslimiye (Sliven)<sup>63</sup>. As these reports were issued daily, the movements of Russian forces could change from one day to the next. By 22 October 1829, Russian troops under the command of General Kislof were advancing toward Gabrova and Sofia. Additionally, it was reported that Russian forces led by Commander Kismar were near İvraca. Both Kislof and Kismar intended to maintain their positions in İvraca and Gabrova until Yergöğü was fully surrendered to the Russians<sup>64</sup>.

As part of the Russian forces withdrew from Edirne, they reached Gabrova, with approximately 10.000 soldiers. Mustafa Pasha, stationed in Plovdiv, reported to Istanbul that while the Ottoman army was in Shumen, its grain supply base was Tırnova. He warned that the advancing Russian forces could create a grain shortage in the area, which could jeopardize the positions of the Ottoman army. Pasha emphasized that if such a shortage occurred, the Ottoman troops might abandon Shumen, causing a significant security risk for the region. The presence of Russian troops in the Tırnova region was seen as a deliberate attempt to cut off supplies and starve the Ottoman soldiers. It was also believed that the Russians might remain in the area until Yergöğü fortress was fully evacuated. To prevent the Ottoman forces from facing starvation, Mustafa Pasha urged immediate action, and his concerns were relayed to the Serdar-ı Ekrem<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1043/43144A\_2, 29.04.1245 / 28.10.1829.

<sup>64</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1027/42782\_J\_2, 31.12.1829.

<sup>65</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1027/42782\_İ\_1, 05.05.1245 / 02.11.1829.



### Developments after the Treaty of Edirne

The Treaty of Edirne was signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire on 26 September 1829. By November 2, Yergöğü commander Ahmet Pasha informed Istanbul that the gates of the fortress along with its two bastions were officially handed over to Russian forces. According to the treaty, Ottoman officers and soldiers were required to fully evacuate the fortress within fifteen days. The Serasker office requested detailed inventories of the cannons, ammunition, and other assets in the fortress. The only remaining item in the fortress was maize<sup>66</sup>. Following the treaty, the Muslim population began to abandon the fortress and its surrounding areas, marking the end of Ottoman control over the region<sup>67</sup>. The treaty stipulated that a contingent of Russian soldiers would remain in Edirne until Yergöğü fortress was fully surrendered. Also, Silistre would remain under Russian control until the war indemnity was paid. After the gates and two bastions of Yergöğü fortress were handed over to Russian forces, the problem of where to assign the remaining Ottoman troops arose. Commander Ahmet Pasha proposed that these troops be transferred to the fortresses of Rusçuk and Vidin. He noted that two of the bastions at Rusçuk Fortress were under the command of an agha, while additional bastions, constructed by Hüseyin Pasha required reinforcement. Ahmet Pasha recommended that the soldiers, artillerymen, armorers, grenadiers and officers from Yergöğü fortress be reassigned to these new fortresses and bastions in Rusçuk. Ahmet Pasha emphasized that since these soldiers were originally from the regions of Hotin (Khotyn) and Bender and had bravely defended Yergöğü fortress, it would be highly beneficial for both the sake of state and the religion to keep them together in Rusçuk, rather than dispersing them. He further stressed that these experienced soldiers and officers would be greatly useful to the forces stationed at Rusçuk fortress and its bastions, and that their salaries should continue to be paid<sup>68</sup>. Ahmet Pasha's proposal to relocate these well-trained personnel to Rusçuk not only aligns with the Ottoman tradition of keeping skilled soldiers but also underscores the strategic benefit of maintaining a cohesive unit of troops familiar with the local terrain and defense needs.

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<sup>66</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1074/43935\_D\_2, 01.06.1245. / 28.11.1829.

<sup>67</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1075/43938\_D\_1, 02.11.1829.

<sup>68</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1022/42674\_2, 08.05.1245 / 05.11.1829.

Following the treaty, it was decided that the cannons from Yergöğü would be relocated to the fortresses of Rusçuk and Shumen. In April 1834, French Baron Charles Boislecomte prepared a report on the Ottoman defenses in the region surrounding the Danube and the Balkan Mountains. He noted that, with the transfer of Yergöğü's entire artillery unit to Rusçuk, it became the most significant fortress along the Danube. However, during his visit to Shumen, Boislecomte observed a shortage of cannons<sup>69</sup>. Therefore, the Ottomans recognized this deficiency, which became apparent after the 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War, and decided to prepare 60 new cannons to bolster the defenses of Shumen.

Serasker Pasha and Hüseyin Pasha, the acting commander of the Imperial Army, discussed the issue of transporting the cannons. It was agreed that constructing fortifications for the transported cannons would not be appropriate due to the presence of Russian forces around Rusçuk. Mehmet Efendi, the chief engineer of the Imperial Army, was appointed to oversee the transportation of the cannons and ammunition, with 25.000 kuruş budget for this task. After the transportation was completed, 11.000 kuruş remained. Mehmet Efendi reported that he exceeded his allowance by over 1000 kuruş, and it was agreed that these additional costs would be covered from the remaining money. In addition to the cannons transported from Yergöğü fortress, the previously requested 60 additional cannons for Shumen were approved, and the Minister of the Arsenal later issued orders to fulfill this requirement. The total cost of these cannons was estimated to be 65.000 kuruş. 2000 kuruş of this decided to be provided from the treasury of the Imperial Army. Upon Mehmet Efendi's request, 30.000 kuruş for merchants and laborers and together with an extra 5000 kuruş was also allocated from the army's treasury. The cost of timber and labor would be covered by the administration in Shumen<sup>70</sup>.

Meanwhile, following the Serdar-ı Ekrem's order regarding the evacuation of Yergöğü, Lağımçıbaşı (head of the miners) Hafız Ağa arrived in Rusçuk and sent a letter about the evacuation process to Russian General Karasofski, who was near Shumen. In his response, General Karasofski claimed that he had ordered the Russian soldiers stationed in

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<sup>69</sup> "Fransız Baronu Boislecomte'un Tuna ve Balkan Sıradağları Civarında Osmanlı Savunması Hakkındaki Raporu", Trans. by Ayşe Kayapınar, *Ege ve Balkan Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2015), p. 182-189.

<sup>70</sup> BOA., HAT, 1084/44144\_1, 12.05.1245 / 09.11.1829.

the İvraca and Gabrova regions to cross to the Romanian side<sup>71</sup>. However, despite the general's assertion that the troops had been ordered to move to the left bank of the Danube, the Ottoman Empire considered this to be a distraction tactic. In subsequent correspondence, the same general stated that Russian soldiers would remain near Gabrova until Yergöğü fortress was fully surrendered. The Ottoman Empire had even assigned officials to enable the smooth passage of Russian troops from Gabrova to the Danube<sup>72</sup>.

As a result of the complete evacuation of Yergöğü fortress, the Russian Field Marshal in Edirne would withdraw from the city. Following a letter from the Russian general at Yergöğü, Russian troops evacuated Dimetoka (Didymoteicho) on October 31. By November 3, the other section of the Russian army also evacuated Baba-yı Atık<sup>73</sup> (Babaeski) and Kırklareli. It was reported that Russian forces were expected to abandon Edirne by November 8, but they would leave some sick soldiers in the Edirne barracks. The presence of Russian troops in Ottoman territories increased the demand for provision. If the Turks evacuated Yergöğü quickly and handed it over to the Russian troops, the Russians would withdraw from Ottoman territories, thereby reducing the need for provisions<sup>74</sup>.

Before signing the Treaty of Edirne, the British delegate expressed concerns about the conditions of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire and called for improvements to their situation. Additionally, he raised the issue of a frigate that the Ottoman Empire had purchased from Russia, which was now being considered for return due to the ongoing war. In response, the Turkish delegation emphasized that this matter should be addressed by Halil Pasha, who was sent to St. Petersburg. The British delegate's support for the Ottoman delegation regarding the frigate while simultaneously advocating for the rights of non-Muslims seemed to show his neutrality in the negotiations. The Russian delegation, meanwhile, accused the sultan of distributing leaflets in the war zone. These leaflets were allegedly intended to create the impression that although the sultan accepted the Russian proposals, the Islamic world opposed the treaty and united against

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<sup>71</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1079/43967\_2, 12.05.1245 / 09.11.1829.

<sup>72</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1075/43938\_I\_2, 16.05.1245 / 13.11.1829.

<sup>73</sup> Tahir Sezen, *Osmanlı Yer Adları*, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yayını, 2017), p. 76.

<sup>74</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1075/43938\_C\_2, 19.05.1245 / 16.11.1829.

the Russians. This accusation was seen as an attempt by the Russians to justify their presence in Ottoman territory. Thus, the Turkish delegation sought clarification from Istanbul. The leaflet was stating that Mustafa Pasha's soldiers from İşkodra were cooperating with Ottoman troops in Shumen. Russian General İnşaf even presented a copy of the leaflet to the Turkish delegation. In response, the Turkish delegation expressed that they have no idea about the claims and requested further clarification from Istanbul<sup>75</sup>. Russia's false claims about the leaflets raised during the peace negotiations were seen as an attempt to pressure the Turkish delegation to force them to accept Russian demands and to justify the presence of Russian troops in the war zone. According to the Turkish delegation, they perceived these accusations as part of a broader Russian strategy by aiming to get concessions for Serbs and Greeks<sup>76</sup>.

The Russians also claimed that Mustafa Pasha had gone to the districts of Vidin, Rahova (Oryahovo), and Karayova to encourage the local population to rebel against Russian forces. They claimed that approximately 42.000 soldiers had already been assembled in the region, with additional recruits from Albania, the total force reached to 80.000. The Turkish delegation dismissed these claims as implausible and they interpreted the Russian claims as a part of Russian strategy to pressure the Ottomans in swift concessions to the Serbs, secure indemnity payments and accelerate the evacuation of Yergöğü fortress<sup>77</sup>.

During the peace negotiations with the Russians and discussions regarding the surrender of Yergöğü fortress, Russian troops did not withdraw from Edirne but also advanced into the Tırnova district. Albanian soldiers stationed by Mustafa Pasha at Somuncu Derbendi were unable to resist the Russian forces and lost three cannons. The defeat of Mustafa Pasha's forces was reported to Istanbul by the commander of Niğbolu. Russian troops stationed in the Sofia plain could surrender Mustafa Pasha's forces. Therefore, the urgency of completing the handover of Yergöğü was emphasized. Additionally, reports indicated that Russian

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<sup>75</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1017/42539\_1, There is no specific date regarding to this event. The Ottoman Archives (BOA) provides two possible dates. The first is 29.12.1244 / 02.07.1829, when the war still ongoing. After the fall of Edirne on 20 August 1829, the Ottomans demanded treaty. So, the second date correspond after this period: 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830. It is likely that these two dates were provided based on the possibility that the war and peace negotiations were between these periods.

<sup>76</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1017/42539\_1, 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

<sup>77</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1017/42539\_1, 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

forces caused significant damage in the Tırnova region. Süleyman Pasha in Plovdiv reported that 10.000 Russian soldiers had passed through Somuncu Derbendi and reached Kamarlı district of İzladı and Taşkesen district of Sofia. In addition, it was also reported that Russian forces crossed Shipka Pass, captured provisions from Kızanlık and advanced to Kalofer village 12 hours from Plovdiv. The Russian advance toward Edirne was viewed as a strategic move to pressure the Ottoman delegation. As Russian forces near Plovdiv, Istanbul requested 3000 reinforcements from Yaşar Pasha, the governor of Shkoder, and 2000 reinforcements from Süleyman Pasha around Sofia. However, with the advance of the Russian troops toward Sofia, the route for reinforcements from Bosnia and Albania was closed. If the Russians reached Plovdiv, a potential conflict with Mustafa Pasha's force of around 20.000 soldiers could lead to a new war. Another pressing concern was the disruption of provision supply for the Ottoman army due to the Russian existence in Tırnova. Despite this problem, the Ottoman forces managed to gather enough supplies that were enough for 15 days by utilizing all available resources<sup>78</sup>.

Upon receiving news that approximately 6000 Russian soldiers were expected to arrive in Gabrova, with their provisions to be supplied on the way, it became clear that the arrival of these troops to Tırnova could disrupt the supply line of the Ottoman army in Shumen. Shumen was already surrounded by the Russian forces and thus the army there had only about 20 days provision. Without additional supplies, hunger would become a critical issue and under such conditions it would be difficult to maintain control of the troops. The urgency of the situation was reported to Istanbul by Serdar-ı Ekrem. He called for immediate action including the swift evacuation of Yergöğü to hasten the withdrawal of Russian forces from the region. Meanwhile, 2000 akçe purses were sent from the treasury for the needs of the army in Shumen. It was also mandated that this amount be recorded in the ammunition registers, while an additional 98.000 kuruş should be sent to the treasury<sup>79</sup>.

Another problem in the army was the soldiers who were employed on a monthly wage. It was emphasized that these soldiers should not be dispersed. Although these soldiers appeared useless, they were important in order to show that the number of soldiers in the army was high but there

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<sup>78</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1027/42782-A., 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

<sup>79</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1082/44077\_1, 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

was not enough budget for these men<sup>80</sup>. Nurullah Pasha, the commander of Zıstovi, reported that 98.000 kuruş was provided to his soldiers from Zıstovi's poll tax and provisions and this money would be covered by the funds of the Imperial Army. It was also noted that Halil Hamdi Pasha, the former governor of Süzebolu (Sozopol), arrived in Shumen and he should go to Edirne. Additionally, it was reported that the value of the provisions given to Russians in Pleven, and some districts was too high. Meanwhile, the Russians offered low prices for the provisions in Edirne, but the locals refused to accept the price. When they evacuated Edirne, they did not pay the money, and it was suggested that this money should be compensated by the Russians<sup>81</sup>. But this never became a reality.

Meanwhile, Mustafa Pasha, the governor of Shkoder arrived in Plovdiv and contacted the Russian officials in Edirne. At the same time, Mehmet Pasha, the governor of Kayseri, arrived in Hasköy via Eski Zagra (Stara Zagora) and Yeni Zağra (Nova Zagora). During this displacement, it is learned that Russians had demanded 100,000 gold coins in exchange for evacuating Edirne. The Grand Vizier had departed from Shumen and Mustafa Pasha requested that the Serasker address key issues, including the surrender of Yergöğü, the privileges to the Serbs and the matter of indemnity<sup>82</sup>. A letter from the delegates clarified that Russia's demands for indemnity did not include the fortresses of İbrail and Yergöğü but the fortresses of Anapa, Vefaş, Ahıska, and Ahılkelek. In Istanbul, in other words Sultan Mahmud II, indicated that the Russians reached the Dardanelles and the Black Sea straits but there was no religious and patriotic unity among the population. He also complained that the number of people willing to sacrifice their lives for the country. He expressed his deep frustration by indicating that despite the imminent threat with the advancing Russian forces, "the so-called mens of Istanbul" showed little zeal to resist. The Sultan concluded that the only option was to negotiate a treaty under such circumstances<sup>83</sup>.

Meanwhile, Mustafa Pasha's advance from Shkoder to Plovdiv had alarmed Russian forces and earned praise from Istanbul. The head of the Russian delegation expressed his desire to travel from Edirne to Istanbul, and the Prussian ambassador recommended that a guide should be

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<sup>80</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1027/42782-A., 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

<sup>81</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1082/44077\_1, 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

<sup>82</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1034/42912\_1.

<sup>83</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1043/43144\_1.



appointed for the journey. In response, Colonel Reşit Bey was selected as the guide to accompany the Russian delegate Orlof<sup>84</sup>.

After negotiating the Russian claims that Mustafa Pasha was gathering troops, the Ottoman delegation advised that once Russian forces evacuated Edirne, control of the city should not be handed to Mustafa Pasha, but to Aliş Pasha, the governor of Çirmen, or Hasan Pasha, the governor of İzmir, in order to avoid provoking the Russians<sup>85</sup>. Consequently, Aliş Pasha was appointed to take control of Edirne from the Russian troops<sup>86</sup>. Following the Treaty of Edirne on 26 September 1829, Russian delegate Orlof announced that Yergöğü fortress would be handed over to Russian forces on 6 November 1829. The Russian commander Field Marshal confirmed that Yergöğü would be taken in the first days of November. However, before this deadline, Russian General Lashferof stated that he would take the fortress and its two bastions by 30 October. In response, Ottoman officials, adhering to the treaty, affirmed that Yergöğü would be evacuated within a month. On November 8, the Field Marshal departed from Edirne toward Ahyolu Bergos to take control of Yergöğü. It was emphasized that the first arriving Russian troops would be stationed in the fortress and its surroundings during the winter. Additionally, the Ottoman Empire agreed to care for the sick Russian soldiers left behind in Edirne. This gesture was appreciated by the Russian emperor<sup>87</sup>. In his memoirs, Slade noted that when the Russian commander-in-chief evacuated Edirne, he left behind 8000 sick soldiers. Only about 1500 of these soldiers recovered and returned to Russia, while the rest died in Edirne<sup>88</sup>.

In accordance with the Treaty of Edirne, Ottoman forces handed over Yergöğü fortress in November 1829. Following the handover, an area would be established along the Danube River, controlled by a small force commanded by Russian officers. Also, Romanian flags are permitted on the river<sup>89</sup>. As outlined in the treaty, Russia's primary objective was to secure control of the left bank of the Danube. The most definitive border

<sup>84</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1043/43144\_1.

<sup>85</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1017/42539\_2, 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830

<sup>86</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1017/42529\_1, 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830

<sup>87</sup> BOA., *HAT*, 1013/ 42471\_D, 09.05.1245 / 06.11.1829.

<sup>88</sup> *Sir Adolphus Slade'in (Müşavir Paşa) Türkiye Seyahatnamesi ve Türk Donanması ile Yaptığı "Karadeniz" Seferi*, p. 145.

<sup>89</sup> Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi 5 (1774-1912)*, Trans. by Nilüfer Epçeli, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2005), p. 294.

in this was the river. French Baron Boisilecomte compared the Danube to the Rhine in his observations. He noted that while the Rhine is backed by mountain ranges like the Vosges, the right bank of the Danube on the Bulgarian side is similarly lined with mountain ranges. He further observed that the Danube averages 700 meters in width and reaches a depth of approximately six meters. The higher and steeper right bank offered a strategic advantage over the shallow and marshy left bank. Baron Boisilecomte also noted that Russia sought to demolish these fortifications along the left bank of the Danube such as the Turna, Yergöğü and İbrail. The strongest fortification among these was located on a small island between Yergöğü and Rusçuk, capable of bombing and supporting both cities. After the 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War, the Russians partially demolished the walls of this island fortress,<sup>90</sup> which was considered as a part of Yergöğü by the Russians. But they also left the bastions along the river. The destruction of Yergöğü fortress's walls left Rusçuk more vulnerable to potential Russian attacks<sup>91</sup>.

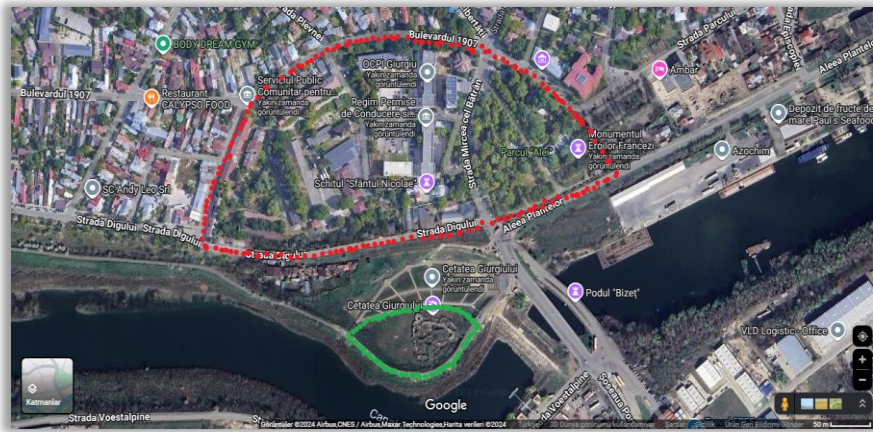
In a map provided in a book on the 1853-1856 war, another Ottoman-Russian conflict following the 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War, it is noted that there was no fortress in Yergöğü. The map also indicated the presence of Russian soldiers in the city<sup>92</sup>. The branch of the Danube between the old fortress on the island and the plain dried. Today, the remnants of the fortress are now located on the outskirts of the city due to the expansion of the city. In the Google image provided below, the approximate borders of the fortress built after 1812 are indicated. This area, now encircled by roads, forms a shape like a semicircle. The size of the fortress, marked by red dots, covered an area of approximately 1200 meters. The side near the dried branch of the Danube measured around 500 meters, while the oval section extended about 700 meters. The size of the old fortress was marked by a green circle. It was about 400 meters. The new fortress on the plain was approximately three times bigger than the old one. The area between the new and the old fortresses is now a dry riverbed. Part of this area is used for storage and an event venue.

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<sup>90</sup> “Fransız Baronu Boisilecomte’un Tuna ve Balkan Sıradağları Civarında Osmanlı Savunması Hakkındaki Raporu”, p. 191.

<sup>91</sup> Baron Von Moltke, *The Russians in Bulgaria and Rumelia in 1828 and 1829*, p. 453-454.

<sup>92</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, p. 102. Map 1 The Danubian theater of war 1853-1854.



## Google Maps 2: The Old and New Fortresses in Yergöğü

The Çelebi Sultan Mehmed Mosque, previously marked with a red circle, was located within the new fortress. Following the war, the mosque was expanded and converted into a church. This building on Mircea cel Bătrân Street was dedicated to Saint Nicholas and became an Orthodox church in 1830. During its conversion process, an apsis and a wooden bell tower were added<sup>93</sup>. The front entrance of the church was constructed in 1905 and reached today's form with renovations over the years.



**Photo 6-7: The Exterior of the Converted Mosque on the Right and the Entrance on the Left<sup>94</sup>**

<sup>93</sup> Mehmet Emin Yılmaz, *Kiliseye Çevrilen Türk Eserleri*, Vol. 2, (Ankara: YTP Yayınları, 2023), p. 674-685. Mehmet Emin Yılmaz, “Yergöğü Kalesi’ndeki Türk Eserleri ve Çelebi Mehmed Câmî”, *Bursa Günlüğü*, No. 13 (2021), p. 80-83. See also appendix 5.

<sup>94</sup> Salim Aydın Archive, 24-27 July 2024.

In the left photo above, it is clear that an additional structure was later built in front of the mosque's original entrance. The mosque's original inscription, which once stood above the main entrance, has been replaced with new text, as seen on the right. These texts were located on both sides of the door and provide details about the mosque's conversion into church.



**Photo 8-9:** The Russian Text Panels on the Left and Right of the Main Entrance<sup>95</sup>

The panels at the entrance bear the following words: On the right; “This church was built in 1830 from the Muslim Mosque of Yergöğü fortress, which was conquered during the glorious reign of Nicholas I, emperor and autocrat of all Russia in 1829.” The other; “This church was constructed in memory of the successes of Russian troops during the reconquest of the city of Yergöğü in 1828-1829 for the Principality of Wallachia under the administration of General Aide-de-Camp Kisselev, plenipotentiary of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, and under the Yergöğü construction committee.” Although the Russian army besieged Yergöğü fortress throughout the war, they could not capture it by force. Instead, they obtained the city through the Treaty of Edirne in 1829 in return for the evacuation of Edirne. Thus, the fortress was not taken by military action, but rather treaty terms.

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<sup>95</sup> Salim Aydın Archive, 24-27 July 2024.

## Conclusions

The Romanian city of Yergöğü, located on the Danube River is a kind of port city today. According to Evliya Çelebi, it was first captured by the Ottomans during the reign of Yıldırım Bayezid (1389-1402). Although it was lost after the Battle of Ankara in 1402, the Ottoman dominance in the city was reestablished in 1420 after the ascension of Çelebi Sultan Mehmed (1413-1421). The strict Ottoman control in city was established during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). During this period, a fortress was constructed on the island to protect the city. Being positioned diagonally across from the Rusçuk Fortress on the right bank of the Danube, Yergöğü fortress remained out of the artillery range. Over time, a pentagonal inner fortress was constructed. With the Russian advance on the Balkans during the 1768-1774 Ottoman-Russian War, Yergöğü fortress was besieged in 1771 by the Russians, but this attempt was unsuccessful. A similar attempt took place, during the 1787-1792 Ottoman-Russian and Austrian War. Although they had some success, in 1790 they were eventually repelled by Ottoman troops. A notable confrontation also occurred during the 1806-1812 Ottoman-Russian War. In March 1807, the Russian forces under General Michelson and the Ottoman forces under Alemdar Mustafa Pasha had a significant battle for control of the region.

In response to the growing Russian threat, the Ottoman Empire began fortifying Yergöğü fortress and its surroundings in the 1790s. By 1812, a new fortress construction opposite the old one was started and completed just before the outbreak of the 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War. With the outbreak of the war, the Russians first captured the İbrail fortress along the Danube, then occupied Bucharest and advanced to the gates of Yergöğü. However, they saw fierce resistance at Yergöğü, mainly because of the efforts of Yergöğü commander Ahmet Pasha. Although he was the previous commander of Rusçuk fortress and played a critical role in reinforcing defense of the city before the clashes. At the onset of the war, Ahmet Pasha was appointed as the commander of Yergöğü fortress. During the first days of the war, there were not enough soldiers and ammunition in Yergöğü but the Ottoman forces achieved victory in the first battle. To strengthen the defense Ahmet Pasha also requested modern cannons from Grand Vizier Mehmet Reşid Pasha and Serasker Ağa Hüseyin Pasha in Shumen. In order to better defend the Yergöğü fortress, he requested cannons in accordance with the technology available in the



Russian army. Although logistical support was provided from the Rusçuk Castle during certain periods, there were also delays in some periods, especially due to the freezing of the Danube River, which caused difficulties in the transportation of the required supplies.

Upon the strong Ottoman resistance at Yergöğü Fortress, Russian forces shifted their strategy but left a significant portion of their troops around the fortress. This was due to the potential threat posed by the Ottoman soldiers in Yergöğü, who could potentially surround the Russian forces from behind during their siege in Silistre fortress. During the Yergöğü defense, the Russians launched a landing operation to Varna on the Black Sea coast. In 1829, Silistre fortress was eventually captured by the Russian army. Although the Ottomans achieved a brief victory against the Russians near Pravadi, it was short-lived, and on 20 August 1829, the Russians occupied Edirne. Meanwhile, the Russian fleet was at the entrance of the Bosphorus and Sultan Mahmud II drew attention to the unwillingness of the people of Istanbul to engage in the conflict. Eventually, the Ottoman Empire had to deal with the Russians. Swift Russian advance to Edirne was a result of the Russian war plan to pressure the Ottomans for a quick deal. In September 1829, the Treaty of Edirne was signed. One of the treaty key terms stating that the Russians would evacuate Edirne only after Yergöğü fortress was left to them. As one of the most formidable strongholds on the left bank of the Danube, Yergöğü should have been surrendered within a month according to the treaty. However, the fortress commander Ahmet Pasha, raised his concerns by noting that evacuation with the Muslim population in such a short time would be challenging because they also had to transport cannons and ammunition.

The treaty stipulated that a part of the Russian soldiers would remain in Edirne until the fortress was fully abandoned. Also, Silistre would remain under Russian control until paying the compensation. With the surrender of the gates and two bastions of Yergöğü fortress, the question arose regarding where to transfer the Ottoman troops. According to Ahmet Pasha, the soldiers, artillerymen, armorers, grenadiers and officers from Yergöğü should be transferred to Rusçuk and Vidin. Ahmet Pasha emphasized that these troops, originally from the Hotin and Bender regions, showed exceptional bravery during the defense of the Yergöğü. He also indicated that these soldiers would be useful by keeping them



together in Rusçuk fortress where their expertise could be most effectively utilized. They could reinforce and help the existing force in Rusçuk.

During the evacuation of Yergöğü, a part of the Russian forces remained in Edirne, while the others advanced toward Rahova, Ivraga, and Yanbolu. Although the Russians promised to pay their debt to the local population for grain and other goods, they did not compensate for their commitment. There was also a lot of correspondence about the quick evacuation of Yergöğü in order to ensure the rapid withdrawal of Russian forces from Edirne and other Ottoman territories. In November 1829, Yergöğü Fortress was officially handed over to the Russians and the fortress was demolished. The Çelebi Sultan Mehmed Mosque within the fortress was converted to a church by the Russians. Today, only remnants of the inner fortress walls, standing at heights of one to two meters, survived. The branch of the Danube between the old fortress on the island and the plain dried up. This dry riverbed, which once separated the two fortresses, is now used as an event space for social activities. It is clear that the Russians wanted to demolish Yergöğü fortress to eliminate a major stronghold on the left bank of the Danube that would be a problem for them in case of a probable war. This would make it even easier for Russian forces to invade the left bank of the Danube.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Danilevskiy's Map<sup>96</sup>



### Appendix 2: Google Maps<sup>97</sup>



<sup>96</sup> Danilevskiy's map cited by Ömer Faruk Uzun shows Yergögü as number 1, Slobozia as number 2, and the fortified area as number 3. Ömer Faruk Uzun, *1806-1812 Osmanlı-Rus Harbi'nde Rus Ordusunun Tuna Harekâtı*.

<sup>97</sup> Although Danilevskiy's map designates Yergögü as number 1, Slobozia as number 2, and the fortified area as number 3, a comparison with Google Maps clearly shows that the aerial distance between Slobozia and Yergögü Fortress is approximately five kilometers. (Accessed: 28.06.2024).

### Appendix 3: The Symbolic Gate of Yergöğü Fortress<sup>98</sup>



### Appendix 4: Remnants of the Inner Fortress Walls in Yergöğü<sup>99</sup>

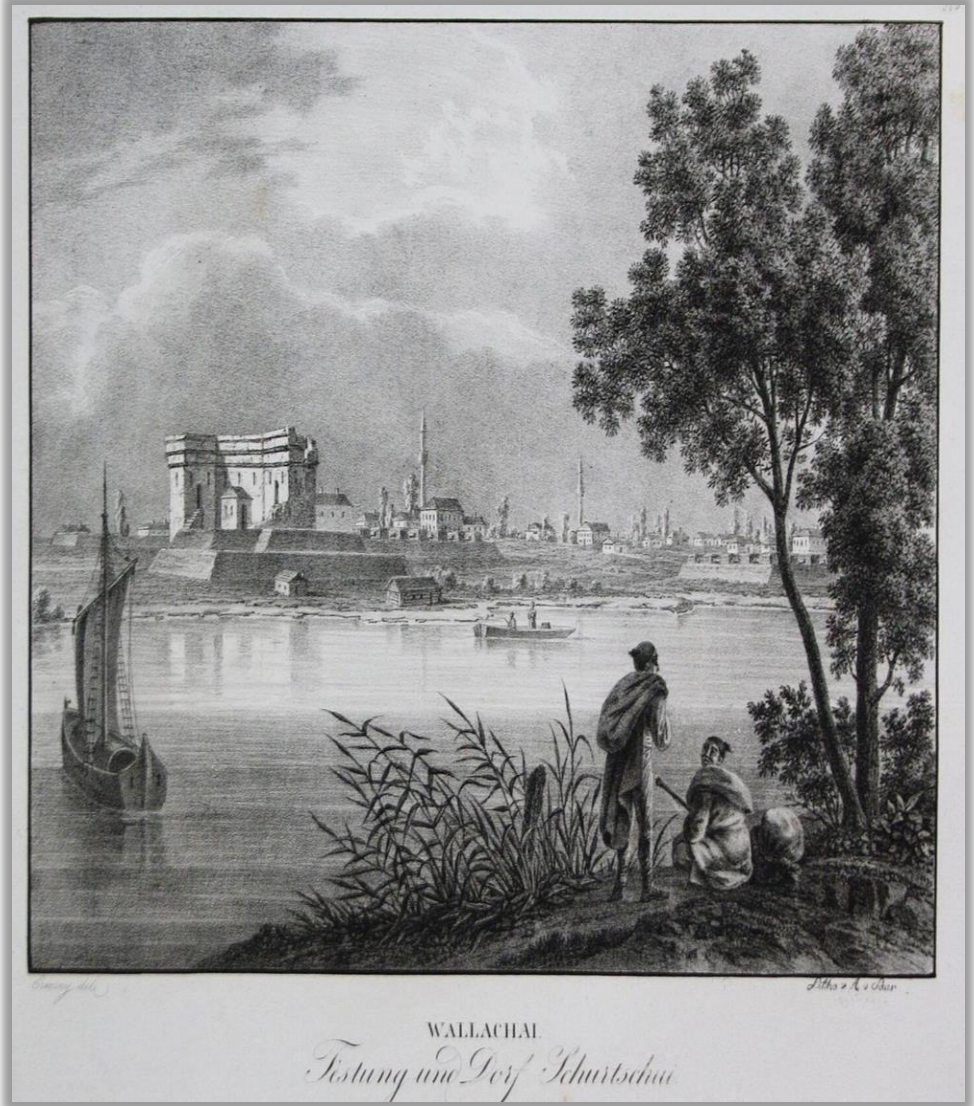


<sup>98</sup> Salim Aydın Archive, 24-27 July 2024.

<sup>99</sup> The fortress shown in Photo 1 was one of the most challenging strongholds for the Russians during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-1829. Despite successfully defending against the Russian assaults, it was ceded to Russia following the Treaty of Edirne, which concluded the war. Today, only remnants of the inner fortress walls, standing at heights of one to two meters, survived. (Photo: Salim Aydın Archive, 24-27 July 2024).



**Appendix 5:** A Drawing of Yergögü from the Island on the Danube<sup>100</sup>



<sup>100</sup> The Çelebi Sultan Mehmed Mosque is depicted at the center of the image. Mehmet Emin Yılmaz, *Kiliseye Çevrilen Türk Eserleri*, p. 675.

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*HAT*, 1027/42782\_E., 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

*HAT*, 1082/44077\_1, 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

*HAT*, 1034/42912\_1.

*HAT*, 1043/43144\_1.

*HAT*, 1017/42539\_2, 29.12.1245 / 21.06.1830.

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# THE ROLE OF *POTKALI KOZAKLARI* (UKRAINIAN COSSAKS) IN THE OTTOMAN-RUSSIAN WARS

*Olena BACHYNSKA*\*

## Abstract

There was a military center of the Ukrainian Cossacks in Budjak and Dobrudja in the 19th century. It was called the Danube Sich (Host) and was situated on the territory of the Ottoman Empire. These Ukrainian Cossacks with the official Ottoman title “Potkalı Kozakları” took an active part in the war of 1806-1812. They took part in the defense of the Ibrail, Ruschuk and Silistra fortresses. The next war that Russia planned to start in 1826 was postponed due to the question of the Cossack’s protection of Dobrudja. Their military art blocked the Russian flotilla. This became one of the reasons for the start of the war only two years later - in 1828. The study is based on the documents from the archives of Turkey and Ukraine.

**Keywords:** Ukrainian Cossaks, “Potkalı Kozakları”, 1806-1812 Ottoman-Russian War, 1828-1829 Ottoman-Russian War, Danube.

## Introduction

Ukrainian Cossacks is a phenomenon of Ukrainian history, which appeared in the XVI century. It gave the traditions of state formation, and the concept of freedom, courage and glory. In 1775 Russian troops destroyed the center of the Cossacks – Zaporozhian Host (ukr. - Sich) on the Dnieper River. This led to the transition of a large part of the Zaporozhian Cossacks to the Ochakov district, the Dniester and the lowlands Danube (Budjak and Dobrydja) – the territories that belonged to the Ottoman Empire at that time. According to the Russian documents, these Cossacks were called “Turkish Cossacks” or “Trans-Danubian Cossacks”. In the Ottoman documents, the Cossacks were given the name “Potkalı / Butkalı Kazakları”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (Presidency of Türkiye Ottoman Archives) (BOA), C.AS, 409/16908-4; BOA., HAT, 50/ 2355A-4.

## **1. Cossacks Migrations and the Katyrlez Host (Sich) at the Danube**

The emigration of the Cossacks caused great concern for the Russian government - according to the border administration, the Sultan was inclined to treat the Cossacks as his subjects. The Russian government handed over to their Ambassador O. Stakhiev instructions to relocate the Cossacks across the Danube or back to Russia. According to the decision of the Ottoman administration, the Cossacks had to settle in Rumelia - away from the Black Sea coast. This led to the migrations of the Cossacks from the Ottoman state to the Moldova Principality, Russian and Austrian Empires.

Migrations from the Ottoman lands caused major changes in the attitude of the Sultan government to the Cossacks. Lastly, in preparation for a new war with Russia, it was extremely not allowed. Due to this, the Cossacks were again allowed to create their own military-administrative organization - Sich, which had some autonomy. Already, since the middle of 1780-s years it was situated in the village Katyrlez at the Danube (now Saint George village) near Tulcea (now in Romania).

During the Ottoman-Russian War of 1787–1791, the Cossacks participated in hostilities on the side of the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan mobilized the Cossacks, a firman about this was pronounced in Edirne “by the former Zaporozhian Cossacks, who are now mainly fishing in the Danube.” From the end of December 1787, the main forces of the Trans-Danube region came to the field camp in Tuzla. A fleet (one Turkish ship, 14 Zaporozhian boats) arrived here from Akkerman and from the Danube. They were subordinate to the Crimean Khan Selim-Girey. By the end of 1787, large contingents were concentrated near the Kinburn Fortress, near Ochakov and on the island of Berezan (1200 Cossacks in the infantry, 300 in the cavalry, a small number of people served in the fleet). In the Dniester firth and at the estuary of the Danube there was a flotilla of Turkish Cossacks, they were also pledged to the fortresses of Akkerman, Bender, Ismail, and Kiliya. As part of the irregular corpus of the Khan Bechti-Giray, the Danubian units were stationed near the fortresses of Babadag, Isakcha, Machin<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Bachynskiy Anatoliy, *Sich Zadunayska. 1775-1828 rr.* Odesa, 1994, V. 16; Svitlana Kayuk, *Zadunays'ka Sich (1775-1828 rr.): Dysert.... na zdobuttya stupenya kandydata istorych. nauk*, (Dnipro, 1998), p. 108-109.

After the Russian-Turkish war, most of the Danube Cossacks, who were dissatisfied with their position in the Russian, Moldovan and Austrian lands, began to settle around the Danubian Sich in Katyrléz. Sich (Host) had all the traditional elements. In Sich lived a leadership – a Cossacks chiefman [ukr. – *koshovyi otaman*], a small chiefmen [ukr. – *kurinni otaman*] and only unmarried Cossacks. Married Cossacks lived in villages around Sich. They all were subordinate to the Ottoman leaders in Silistra, Tulcha or Ibrail. Sich always had the *kleinodes* - symbols of power: *bajrak* (flag), a *bunchuk*, a *pernach* and a seal. The seal had no images, only the text “قزاقلرينك پوتقالى سركرده سى قوشوى ۱۲۱۷” - “Potkalı kazaklarının serkerdesi koşoviy. 1217” - “The Potkaly Cossacks chief 1802/1803”<sup>3</sup>. In the territory of Sich traditionally was the square with a church and *kurins* (Cossack house). The Cossack military units were formed by *kurins*, but, when necessary, they joined groups in the Ottoman units. Some documents suggest that the territory from which the Cossacks taxes were sourced was Wallachia (Eflak voyvodası<sup>4</sup>).

The active development of Sich led to a conflict with the Russian communities of Don Nekrasov Cossacks (Russian Old Believers). In the disputes between the two Cossack groups of paramount importance was the profitable land and fishing in the Danube estuary, and then their different religious traditions. The Sultan's government and local authorities did not interfere in the conflict between the Cossacks, deciding that “ode to the giur-oda giur (both infidels) ... when you have the power - fight yourself”<sup>5</sup>. It influenced the relations between the Cossacks and the Don Nekrasov Cossacks crisis situation in the Ottoman Empire of the 1780s - the beginning of the 19th centuries, which was related to the reform activity of Sultan Selim III and the great vizier Alemdar Mustafa Pasha (Bayraktar) in the administration, economy and army. Opponents of the reforms were in Silistra - Yilikoglu Suleiman-aga, in Vidin - Osman Pazvand-oglu, in Izmail - Ibrahim Peglevan, named Baba Pasha. The Danubian Cossacks fought on the Turkish government sight with these feudal lords. “Pazvand-oglu believed that only the Danube Cossacks were the worst of his troops. According to reports of 1804, the Danube Cossacks, who participated in the struggle of Turkish government troops against the rebels of Pazvand Oglu, received permission from the sultan's

<sup>3</sup> The State Archives of Odessa region. F.I. Op. 214. Spr. 11 (1816). Ark.150.

<sup>4</sup> BOA., C.AS, 505/21087-4.

<sup>5</sup> Fedor Kondratovych, “Zadunayskaya Sech’ [по местным воспомыныям y rasskazam]”, *Nevycherpni dzhherela pam’yati: Zb. nauk. statey, materialiv i republikatsiy*, T. II, (Odessa, 1998), p. 42.

court to settle “among the Tatar hordes” in the Akkerman and Kiliya districts and along the banks of the lower Danube, “below Old Kiliya on the island in the dwellings of the Nekrasovites, from where the Brail pasha expelled the Nekrasovites and settled the Cossacks.”<sup>6</sup> The choice of places for the settlement of the Danube Cossacks was indeed made with the assistance of the Nazir Braila Ahmet Pasha. Ottoman-Turkish documents state that, among other things, the Braila nazir’s opinion was clarified that the Cossacks would comprise 3-4 thousand outstanding soldiers, and if necessary, would defend their own settlements and Braila <sup>7</sup>. According to Mykola Dibrova, a resident of Zadunay, “when Pehlevan did not give them (the Cossacks-O.B.) peace, all the Cossacks moved from Seimen to Vilkovo and Katyrlez to the land assigned to them by the Brailian nazir<sup>8</sup>. At this time, the Cossacks received 8,000 kurush per year for 40 kurens for everyone, several hundred kilograms of wheat, and they could engage in fishing at the mouth of the Danube, and later the payment was increased<sup>9</sup>. As of April 1805, there were about 9,000 Cossacks serving in the Ottoman army<sup>10</sup>. At the turn of 1805/1806, as part of Peglevan’s troops, attacked Katyrlez, burned down the Cossacks’ buildings. The Zaporozhian Cossacks, led by koshovyi otaman Gnat Koval, moved to Ibraila under the protection of commandant (nazir) Ahmet Pasha<sup>11</sup>. There they met a new Ottoman-Russian war 1806-1812.

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<sup>6</sup> The State Archives of Odessa region. F.1. Op. 214. Spr. 15 (1817). Ark.9,12 zv.

<sup>7</sup> M. Aydın, “Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı Devleti’nde Kazaklar (1779-1838) (Die Kosaken im osmanischen Reich im Lichte der Archivdokumente (1779-1839)”, *Deutsch-Türkische Begegnungen Alman/Türk Tesadüfleri. Festschrift Kemal Beydilli/Kemal Beydilli’ye Armağan*, ed. Hedda Reindl-Kiel, Seyfi Kenan (Berlin: EB Verlag, 2013), p. 499.

<sup>8</sup> Olena Bachynska, *Kozatstvo v “pislyakozats’ku dobu” ukrayins’koyi istoriyi (kinets XVIII – XIX st.)*, (Odesa: “Astroprynt”, 2009), p. 103-105.

<sup>9</sup> . Aydın, “Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı Devleti’nde Kazaklar (1779-1838) (Die Kosaken im osmanischen Reich im Lichte der Archivdokumente (1779-1839)”, p. 499.

<sup>10</sup> A. Başer, “Osmanlı Devleti’ne Sığınan Potkalı Kazaklarının İskânlarına ve Faaliyetlerine Dair Gözlemler (1775-1826)”, *Uluslararası Türkiye-Ukrayna İlişkileri Sempozyumu: Kazak Dönemi (1500-1800)*, (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2015), p. 551.

<sup>11</sup> Olena Bachynska, *Kozatstvo v “pislyakozats’ku dobu” ukrayins’koyi istoriyi (kinets XVIII – XIX st.)*, (Odesa: “Astroprynt”, 2009), p. 103-105.



## **2. Ottoman-Russian War 1806-1812 and the Verkhniy Dunavets Host (Sich)**

Already in November 1806, about two thousand Cossacks from Izmail were transferred to Ibrail. By order of the Ibrail Nazir, other parts of the Danubian units, including Kiliya, Vilkovo, Galatsh, Balchik, Machin, were brought to the fortress. Deposits of the Danubian Cossacks were in Rushchuk, Galatsh, Izmail, Kiliya, the islands of the Danube estuary, the Cossacks served in the Ottoman River fleet.

They were distinguished by their high combat capability and, most importantly, their knowledge of convenient transitions across the Danube. According to estimates by O. Langeron, who commanded the Russian Danube Corps, there were up to three thousand Danubian Cossacks in the fortress of Ibrail, which could “do more damage than the Turks and Tatars”, he also stressed that only the Cossacks knew the convenient places to sail across the Danube<sup>12</sup>.

In the war, the Cossacks were especially distinguished in defense of the fortress of Ibrail, Rushchuk, Silistra. After the war, the Danubian Cossacks attacked to the Nekrasov Cossacks settlements and occupied their main center - the village Verkhniy Dunavets in St. George's Danubian estuary, where the Sich was found (now is Dunavățu de Sus in Romania). The new organization kept the features of Zaporozhian Sich in social and military life. The new organization kept the features of Zaporozhian Sich in social and military life. According to various reports, the population subject to the jurisdiction of the Danube Sich was from 15 to 20 thousand people. The commander-in-chief included a basket chieftain (koshovyi otaman), a clerk or scribe, an osavul, a dragoman, a koshovyi otaman was supervised by a Sylistrian or Tulchyn pasha, the latter even received the title of Cossack-bashi. According to Turkish regulations, the chieftain had the title of two bunchuk (horse tails) pasha<sup>13</sup>. The Danubian Cossacks were obliged to participate in the campaigns of the Turkish troops, including expeditions against the Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbs who fought for their independence. During 1817-1818, the Cossacks, together with the koshovyi otaman Semen Moroz, worked on the construction of gateways and earthworks in Istanbul. At the same time, the Russian Empire was preparing for a new war with the Porte, and since 1821, the General Staff

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<sup>12</sup> “Zapysky hrafa A. F. Lanzherona: Voyna Rossyy s Turtsyey. 1806 – 1812 rr.”, *Russkaya staryna*. 1907, Kn. 2, p. 613.

<sup>13</sup> Anatoliy Bachynskyy, *Sich Zadunayska. 1775-1828 rr.* (Odesa, 1994), p. 57.

had been working on projects and routes for the movement of the Russian army to the Danube and the Balkans. As early as 1821, patrols of Greek patriots led by O. Ipsilanti had battles with Turkish troops in the Danube and Danube principalities where the Cossacks of the Danube region were located, for example, in the Turkish army of the Ozim Pasha seraser. During the 1824 - 1826, over a thousand Cossacks were stationed in the Morea region (Peloponnese Peninsula), and 40 Cossack boats participated in the battles near Missolunga (Mesolongion)<sup>14</sup>.

### **3. Ottoman-Russia War of 1828-1829 and Potkalı Kozakları**

In 1826, these plans were rapidly activated due to the increased attention of the European community to the Greek issue. One of the problems that awaited the Russian military commanders was the small number of the flotilla that they could send to the Danube theater of war, its inability to maneuver in the Danube estuaries, the lack of necessary knowledge about the floodplains, straits and rivers, that is, the area where it was planned to fight. At the same time, such knowledge, as well as light kaik and oaks, were possessed by the Danubian Zaporozhians, and, according to researchers, if they were skillfully used as part of the Ottoman army, it would be possible to completely block the actions of the Russian army. This is confirmed by the correspondence of the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian troops, I. Dibich, with the Governor-General in Odesa M. Vorontsov in 1826. Thus, I. Dibich noted that the Danubian Cossacks “can cause significant damage to the rear of the army in the event of its movement to Varna and Shumla “, then he asked to provide information about the Danubian Cossacks and proposals for measures “in case of a war with the Turks, which could be carried out in order to exterminate or resettle them within the borders of the Russian Empire or delay them in their homes”.

In connection with the reform of the army in the early nineteenth century the first to recruit to the regular units on a voluntary basis were the Cossack population of Dobrudja - Zaporozhians. Already from the fall and winter of 1826, the Cossack units were part of the regular cavalry regiment, which maintained order in the province of Silistra. The regiment consisted of three divisions (units) - Turkish, Tatar and Zaporozhian Cossacks. The

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<sup>14</sup> Fedor Kondratovych, “Zadunayskaya Sech’ [po mestnym vospomynaniyam y rasskazam]”, *Nevycherpni dzherela pam’yati: Zb. nauk. statey, materialiv i republikatsiy*, T. II, p. 54-55.

formation of the regiment was entrusted to the Silistrian commandant Ahmet Pasha, who was to act according to the provisions specifically designed for the compound. Of the 1323 officers and rank and file cavalry 329 were Zaporozhian Cossacks. The Zaporozhian Cossack part was obliged to be headed by a Muslim, the first to receive the title of leader (Kazak Başı) of this part Ali Koch Aga. In addition, he included 3 captains (Yüzbaşı), 6 lieutenants (Yüzbaşı Mülâzimi), 3 ensigns (sancakdar), 6 sergeants (Çavuş), 30 corporals (leader of hundreds of soldiers, Onbaşı) and 270 cavalymen, a priest, 3 suppliers<sup>15</sup>.

Therefore, both states - Russia and the Ottoman Empire, on the eve of the new war, tried to subjugate the Cossacks by various means (peaceful and non-peaceful). The Ottoman government increased the pay of Cossacks and increased their supervision. The Russian government intensified measures to eliminate the Transdanubian Cossacks. Through the mayor of Izmail, General S. Tuchkov, secret negotiations began with the koshovyi chief Vasyl Nezamaivskiy and then with the new koshovyi chief Osyp Gladky about the possibility of the transfer of the Transdanubias. One part of the Cossacks accepted the offer to switch to the Russian side. Most were sure that during the war, Russia would seize the lands of Sich, so it was necessary to move to another place.

At the beginning of the new Ottoman-Russia war of 1828-1829, the Sultan government announced the mobilization of the Cossacks, they were to be stationed in Rumelia. Part of the Danubian Cossacks (about two thousand) were mobilized into the Ottoman army and went to Silistra. For the most part, they were Cossacks who adhered to pro-Turkish orientation. After that, koshovyi chief Osyp Gladky returned to Sich and in May 1828 transferred other Cossacks across the Danube River to the Russian army. Part of the population of Sich was murdered, and part of the rescued population settled in various towns and villages of Dobrudja, and later, even, served on the pledges of Turkish fortresses. The Cossack Sich himself was strictly forbidden by the Sultan government to restore. The Cossacks in Silistra were disarmed by the Turkish authorities and sent to prison in Constantinople<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Avigdor Levy, "The Contribution of Zaporozhian Cossacks to Ottoman Military Reform: Documents and Notes", *Harvard Ukrainian studies*, No. 3 (September 1982), pp. 381-382.

<sup>16</sup> Ludmyla Malenko, Yosyp Hladkyy: lyudyna i diyach", *Pivdenna Ukrayina XVIII – XIX st., Zapysky naukovo-doslidnoyi laboratoriyi istoriyi Pivdennoyi Ukrayiny ZDU*, 1999, No. 4(5), p. 240-251.

## Conclusions

Thus, in the territory of the Ottoman Empire after 1775 the Zaporozhian Cossacks (*Potkalı Kazakları* / Ukranian Cossacks) established their own military-political organization - the Danubian Sich. The Ottoman government applauded the Danube Cossacks on its territory. In the Ottoman Empire, the Cossacks not only carried out combat missions in the Ottoman army during the Russian-Turkish wars of the late eighteenth - first third of the nineteenth centuries, but fought against opposition feudal lords, participated in the struggle of Serbian and Greek troops, security and patrols fortresses. In general, the service of the Danubian Cossacks has become one of the highlights of not only Ukrainian but also European military history.

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# WAR AND DIPLOMAT: RUSSIA'S BUCHAREST CONSULS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE OTTOMAN-RUSSIAN WARS (1806-1877)

*Okan GÜVEN\**

## **Abstract**

The city of Bucharest, which gained importance in the 15th century in terms of Ottoman history, was made the center of Wallachia after the provinces were given order in the classical sense. The city, which did not limit its importance to the century in question or only to that region, became the heart of this geography in time, dominating the entire Romanian lands. Therefore, the city, which was not only in the eyes of the residents of these lands or the Ottomans, but also of the European powers, became a focal point for the Russians. The Russian Empire, which made Romanian lands a base in its campaigns against the Ottomans, also established here one of the examples of diplomatic representations that opened in their states one by one. Thus, by implementing and complying with the official and unofficial rules of the European-focused world diplomacy that has been developing since the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the Russians have tried to use their Bucharest consulates in the most effective way. Indeed, the aim of this study is to examine, in its most basic and brief form, how the Russians used diplomacy and their diplomats within the scope of the periods indicating the war process between them, which was at the top of the list of diseases they made in order to make that century more permanent for an Empire that lived its longest century.

**Keywords:** Bucharest, Diplomacy, Consul, Ottoman-Russo Wars.

## **Ottoman Romania / Ottoman Bucharest**

The Roman lands and Romanians, who first appeared in the historical showcase with the Dacian kingdom and the Dak people, first came under Roman and then Eastern Roman (Byzantine) rule after the end of their kingdoms. Their adoption of Latin culture, their ancestry from here and the phonetic features of their language also took their place in their

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history with this occasion. For a while, during the Eastern Roman times, the Pecheneg-Cuman and Mongol-Tatar elements that came from the north also influenced these lands. Until the arrival of the Ottomans in the region, Romanians, especially those in the present-day Moldova and Wallachia, constantly protected their country against Poland in the north and the Hungarian Kingdom in the west. After the Latin element, German, Russian (Slavic) and Hungarian influences, which were important for them, thus, also entered their structure<sup>1</sup>.

After the 1390s, the struggle against the Ottoman forces that had now crossed the Danube continued for almost a century. In the 1470s, Moldavia, known as *Memleketeyn*, and Wallachia accepted Ottoman rule. In the 1540s, with the changing balance of power, the Ottomans took control of today's Romania with the capture of Transylvania. For these three lands that formed classical Romania to gain independence, it would be necessary to wait until 1699 for the last to join them and 1878 for the other two<sup>2</sup>.

While the classical image of Romania was in such a state, Bucharest was also in a development compatible with it. The city, which tried to make its name known for the first time seriously for the Wallachian lords from the 13th century, gained great importance when the Ottomans conquered it and made it a centre. This city, where the Wallachian Voivodes also lived, was the capital city of the region with its usual silhouette until the end of the 18th century<sup>3</sup>. However, with the date indicated, that image would change a little. Because now, as a requirement of the modern age, international law, the politics of countries, the politics of bilateral relations and more specifically the inhabitants of that place, the cities would greet their new residents: consuls.

### **Ottoman Diplomacy and the Russian Consulates**

Although its name was not directly diplomatic at that time and did not have all the diplomatic definitions of today, it is seen that the first known diplomats in history came from Greek geography<sup>4</sup>. However, it

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<sup>1</sup> Mihai Maxim, "Romanya", *DİA*, Vol. 35, (İstanbul, 2008), p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Maxim, "Romanya", pp. 168-172; The same study can be consulted for details of the conquests, most of which took place during the reign of Mehmed II, and for issues such as the Ottomans viewing the city as a food warehouse and the privileges granted.

<sup>3</sup> Nicoara Beldiceanu, "Bükreş", *DİA*, Vol. 6, (İstanbul, 1992), pp. 484-485.

<sup>4</sup> Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Majestelerinin Konsolosları*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 14; Also see for disambiguation; Güner Doğan, *Venediklü ile Dahi Sulh Oluna*

took some time for these ambassadors, who were simply the means of communication that one state wanted to establish, imposed on another state or established, and who went and came in their simplest forms, to modernize. Although there were primitive consuls from Florence, Genoa and Venice who came to the Eastern Roman Empire<sup>5</sup> and could be defined as the second generation, the real development was made possible with the Peace of Westphalia, one of the milestones of the early modern period. After this incident, in which the foundations of the unwritten rules of diplomacy were laid, such as ambassadors entering a round tent at the same time to prevent the display of superiority, diplomacy slowly began to bureaucratize. And finally, by the 19th century, it had caught up with its age and taken on the appearance of an almost unshakable rock.

Even though our aim here is not to explain Ottoman diplomacy in detail or compare it with Russian diplomacy, it is necessary to say the following as an interlude: The Ottomans never missed diplomatic developments, neither at the beginning nor at the end, and they adopted this system in every period and knew how to use it in the best way<sup>6</sup>. It is possible to use the same expressions for Russia. Indeed, they developed their diplomacy by always considering reforms in the internal part of their foreign affairs, starting with the posolsky prikaz established by Ivan the Terrible and extending to the *Ministerstvo 'Innostrannikh Del'* (MID) meanly Foreign Affairs Ministry<sup>7</sup>. The issue that needs to be discussed and detailed here is how Russian diplomacy entered the Ottoman lands.

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– 17. ve 18. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Venedik İlişkileri, (İstanbul: İletişimYayımları, 2017), pp. 21-31.

<sup>5</sup> Uriel Heyd, *Yakındoğu Ticaret Tarihi*, Trans. by Enver Ziya Karal, (Ankara, 1975); as cited in Hasan Yüksel, “Osmanlı Safevi Mücadelesi’nde Sivas”, *Cumhuriyet’in 80. Yılında Sivas Sempozyumu (15-17 Mayıs 2003)*, (Sivas: Sivas Hizmet Vakfı Yayınları, 2003), p. 147.

<sup>6</sup> Ercüment Kuran, “1793-1811 Döneminde İlk Osmanlı Mukim Elçilerinin Diplomatik Faaliyetleri”, *Çağdaş Türk Diplomasisi: 200 Yıllık Süreç – Ankara, 15-17 Ekim 1997*, ed. İsmail Soysal, (Ankara: TTK, 1999); Ömer Gezer, *Osmanlı Diplomasisinde Denge Politikaları (1774-1829)*, MA Thesis, (Ankara: Hacettepe University, 2006); Aydın Çakmak, *Türk Dışişleri Teşkilatının Gelişimi: Hariciye Nezareti*, (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Taşansu Türker – Pavel Chlykov *et al*, “Osmanlı ve Rusya’da Modern Öncesi Diplomasi ve Harici İşler Dairesi”, *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 76, No. 3, (2021), p. 623; Alesandr İgoreviç Kuznechov, *Podgotovka i Vospitanie Diplomata v Rossiskoi Imperii*, Phd. Thesis, (Moscow: MGIMO University, 2015); V. A. Ulyanichkago, *Russkiya Konsulstva – Za Granichuyu v’ XVIII v’k’*, chast I, (Moskova, 1899).

After the abolishment of the Posolsky Prikaz – which had the appearance of today's departments – by Peter the Great that because of it was not modern, the Russian foreign ministry, which entered with reforms, gained its real victory after 1774. Based on the authority granted by the 1774 treaty, the Russians opened several (in other words, a considerable number) consulates throughout the Ottoman Empire in the last quarter of that century<sup>8</sup>. For example, as early as 1783, Baron von Tonus was appointed head of the Russian Consulate in Alexandria<sup>9</sup>. Another example that speaks from as early as 1814 was the Russian Consulate in Aleppo<sup>10</sup>. One of the developments that took place in that city immediately after the treaty was from the lands: Jassy. Another point that should be noted here is that the Russians were eager to open their diplomatic representations in Ottoman lands in places where the French and British consulates were located<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, the Russians wanted to establish these agencies in the geographies they had ambitions for. For this reason, similar to the Ottoman authorities who did not want to cause the parties to fight and accepted the opening of the Russian Consulate in Silistra, the first consulates opened by the Russians who wanted to have regional influence, especially the Boyars and Voivodes, in 1782 were in Jassy and Bucharest<sup>12</sup>.

### **Who are the Consuls? or the Russian in Bucharest**

As mentioned above, the Russian Consulate in Bucharest was opened in 1782<sup>13</sup>. Although not exactly on the same date, what needs to be stated here is which countries had diplomatic representations in this Ottoman city along with the Russians in the 19th century. These were England, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Norway, Belgium, Portugal and

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<sup>8</sup> Osman Köse, “Balkanlarda Rus Konsolosluklarının Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri”, *Turkish Studies*, No 2, (2006), pp. 141-155.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Du Quenoy, “The Russian Empire and Egypt 1900-1915 A Case of Public Diplomacy”, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (June 2008), pp. 215

<sup>10</sup> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (Presidency of Türkiye Ottoman Archives) (BOA), *C. HR*, 84/4199.

<sup>11</sup> The main source of this detailed information given by Osman Köse was Akdes Nimet Kurat. Kurat stated that he wanted to benefit from the capitulation rights enjoyed by the French and the British in places where the Russians had interests, especially in Bucharest, and that he obtained this. See. Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya – XVIII. Yüzyılın Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına Kadar Türk-Rus İlişkileri (1798-1919)*, (Ankara: TTK, 2011), p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Osman Köse, *1774 Küçük Kaynarca Andlaşması*, (Ankara: TTK, 2006), p. 165-166.

<sup>13</sup> It can be learned from documents in the Ottoman archives that the relevant events had started in late 1781, before this date, which indicates the appointment of a consul to the institution and its opening.

the Netherlands<sup>14</sup>. The fact that the Russians opened consulates in both Jassy and Bucharest at the earliest dates is related to these being the centres of Wallachia and Moldavia. Therefore, the possibility that the diplomatic units that were likely to be opened later could only be vice-consulates, consulates and honorary consulates indicates that these units, which were more centrally located, were consulates-general. Indeed, these metropolitan cities were superior to the other units in their vicinity not only in terms of demographics and development, but also diplomatically. Moreover, the Russian Consulate in Bucharest was already shown as a consulate-general in Ottoman archive documents.

During the research process conducted within the scope of the study, many issues such as what kind of a place the consulate building was, whether it had a photograph, what features this building had, whether it had a telegraph room inside, whether it had a garden, whether the consul had a car or a sea vehicle such as a ferry-registry or boat since it was by the river, could not be reached. However, the fact that such situations were known to exist in other Russian consulates within the Ottoman Empire shows that the Russian Consulate in Bucharest may also have had these specialities. Another issue where the same uncertainty exists naturally concerns the consuls themselves. The difficulty Ottoman document producers had in writing the name of a foreign person who was not one of them was one of the reasons that increased this uncertainty. Indeed, although the Ottoman clerk who wrote the name of an Englishman or a Russian exactly as he heard it, contributed to the researcher and his research, it also caused a serious surprise. Therefore, the only way to learn who the consuls were and how to write their names correctly would be through the archives of the state to which that person belonged or through literature produced by their authors. However, for such a study, which is smaller in volume and has a time limit compared to a thesis or book, the Russian archives could not be scanned, and the exact dates of the consuls' duties and the exact names could not be determined<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> It should not be understood from this that all these states were in this city at the same time for instance in 1840. For example, Germany was Prussia in 1840. Or, while the consulates of states numbered 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8 were in Bucharest, the consulates of the others may not have been there at that time. The list in question was determined from the Ottoman archives and shows which states opened consulates in Ottoman Bucharest throughout history.

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, such a situation presents difficulties even for a thesis or book study. Sometimes, Ottoman clerks hesitated to write down the names of these officials because they had difficulty in hearing their names and only wrote their titles and titles on paper. For this

It should not be forgotten that a diplomat should not have any language problems in the place he is sent to (Russians, like their other counterparts, also have educational institutions on this subject), should be a polyglot, have good knowledge of maps and geography, etc. information that is relevant to the subject but cannot be discussed here due to the scope of the study. In fact, it is obvious that the Russians in Bucharest may not only have worked for the interests of their country on the eve of the Russian Empire's war with the Ottomans, but also may have been active in different situations such as socio-cultural issues<sup>16</sup>. What importance did these consuls, who were Russia's intermediaries with all the work they did, attach to the Romanian lands being under Russian influence, especially in terms of the Ottoman-Russian wars? Because when the war broke out, the Ottomans did not want the consul on their own soil. For this reason, the periods of activity of these diplomats actually indicate the times before and after the war.

### **The Diplomat on the Edge of the War**

As can be learned from the Ottoman archives, the first consul appointed to Bucharest was Sergei Laskarov. His appointment took place in 1781 and his first step into those lands took place the following year, in 1782. This date is also compatible with the process of establishing the first diplomatic units opened by the Russians in the Ottoman Empire in accordance with the provisions of the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty. The

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reason, the names of these people are not actually mentioned even in the documents. Or the fact that the Ottomans still produced a document about the former consul despite the appointment of a consul to a new position by the Russians caused confusion in the dates and made it difficult to determine the exact dates of the consuls' duties. Naturally, for a work explaining the difficulties in creating a complete list of names and dates, see. Okan Güven, *Rusya'nın Osmanlı Bağdat Konsolosluğu (1880-1914)*, PhD Thesis, (Sivas: Sivas Cumhuriyet University, 2024); Additionally, since Moldavia and Wallachia were privileged provinces, the administrators in these geographies did not keep yearbooks (salnâme) containing the analysis of the region. This prevented access to the names and terms of office of the consuls, whose complete information was included in those books.

<sup>16</sup> For example, handling the work of an official who will go to the Russian ambassador in Istanbul. See. BOA., *HAT.*, 987/41816a.; The voivod and the consul seal up the house of a Russian soldier after he escapes for his crimes see. BOA., *HAT.*, 1141/45405; We also learn that the affairs of this region, which were privileged provinces, were carried out through the application of the Russian Consul in Bucharest, Minciaky, who was uneasy about the arrival of the new Russian ambassador to Istanbul. See. Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, Vol. 5, Trans. by Nilüfer Epçeli, (İstanbul, Yeditepe, 2005), p. 271-274; For example, the Russian Consul in Bucharest requested that cheap and plain oil from Vidin not be brought into that country. See. BOA., *HAT.*, 1292/50209.



appointment permit of the Russian Consul in Bucharest, which came after him, approved by the Sultan, dates back to 1794, and the name of this time consul was Aleksei Sesorlov<sup>17</sup>. It is not known whether Consul Sergei continued his duty or whether there was another name between the two names during the almost 10 years that passed. As mentioned above, it is actually an important issue that the names of Laskarov and Sesorlov are coincidental. In fact, the rate of knowing the names of not only Russian but also other states' diplomats within the Empire is around sixty percent. For example, according to Ottoman archive documents, Mohi, who was among the Russian Consuls in Bucharest but whose name does not match a Slavic form, is one of them. In fact, it should be added here that Russian consuls who were able to serve for 3-5 years in the Ottoman Empire, which also encompassed the Middle East, were considered heroes in their country<sup>18</sup>. One of the things that should be noted here is that these diplomats sent by Russia are mostly from military backgrounds<sup>19</sup>.

For a Russian diplomat who lived on Ottoman soil and was on the verge of war, this study, limited to the 19th century, has four main periods of distinction. These naturally symbolize the four wars that the Ottomans and Russians faced in that century: 1806-1812, 1828-1829, 1853-1856, 1877-1878. Therefore, the research covers the developments before and after the war of 1877-1878, starting from just before 1806 (which in its context indicates a period not long after the opening of the consulate in Bucharest - 25 years). Of course, it is necessary to touch on the following situation here. Consulates can be closed down at certain times and for very different reasons. The Russian Consulate in Bucharest is an institution that has naturally experienced such a situation. In fact, this situation occurred in its early years. It would not be far from being useful to reinforce the reason for this with a quote like this;

“After 1786, the warlike Grand Vizier Koca Yusuf Pasha was responsible for the decision-making process for the next three years. When Catherine toured her new province of Crimea, all avenues for resolving disagreements with Russia through diplomacy were blocked, and when Catherine later demanded

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<sup>17</sup> He is the famous Griko mentioned in the text.

<sup>18</sup> Viktoriya Maksimovna Khevrolina, *Rossiiskii Diplomat Graf Nikolay Pavlovič Ignatiev*, (Moskova: Kvadriga, 2004), c. 134.

<sup>19</sup> The same issue was also addressed by the famous Romanian historian Jorga when he made important statements about the Russians in Bucharest. See. Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 208.

Ottoman withdrawal from Georgia, she was met with insistence on the acceptance of Eastern Georgia as an Ottoman vassal and the right to search Russian ships in the Black Sea, the closure of some sensitive Russian consulates (Iași, Bucharest and Alexandria), and most importantly, the return of Crimea. It was especially impossible for Catherine to accept this last request. In August 1787, the Ottomans declared war.”<sup>20</sup>.

As in other periods, the events in the 1800-1815 period, which symbolizes the first phase of the relations between the consul and the Ottoman authorities, are not frequent. The most important point to be noted here is that the events in question will never be frequent. Because consuls walk in the snow and do not show their footprints. However, when an incident breaks out, its repercussions are great, and the parties go into detail about it. Here, the first example of these relations, which include or do not include details and show intensity or do not show detail, of the consuls getting involved in wars comes from 1802. Missions carried out by the Russian consuls here also included the military activity and military potential in the region. For example, the Russian Consul in Bucharest in 1802 went to Brasov, which the Germans called Kronstadt. Of course, he made his trip with Russian merchants in order not to attract attention. Of course, since the Ottoman authorities knew what he was doing, they knew that he would stay in Transylvania, where Brasov was located, until the security was ensured. The consul, who drew the portrait of this place, eventually returned. However, this time the destination was Moldavia<sup>21</sup>. Of course, in addition to consuls going from one place to another, it is also seen that they directly escaped under extraordinary circumstances. For example, it is known that the consuls in Bucharest escaped when Pazvantoglou came to the region in 1802. However, it is not known whether the Russian consul who made the agreement<sup>22</sup> with him was still in Bucharest at that time<sup>23</sup>.

The events date back to a little earlier, in 1788, when the Austrian consul in Bucharest stated that the Russians had many employees in their

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<sup>20</sup> Caroline Finkel, *Rüyadan İmparatorluğa Osmanlı – Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Öyküsü 1300-1923*, Trans. by Zülal Kılıç, (İstanbul: Timaş, 2012), p. 340.

<sup>21</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 131/5419.

<sup>22</sup> Although the Sultan promoted and rewarded him, he had contacted the French and Russian consuls in Bucharest. See. Finkel, *Rüyadan İmparatorluğa Osmanlı*, p. 358.

<sup>23</sup> Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, Vol. 7, Trans. by Nilüfer Epçeli, (İstanbul: Yeditepe, 2011), p. 171.

consulates and that they wanted to have such rights<sup>24</sup>. The events that started here were revealed by the Russians in 1812. Although the source was probably the consul who had served in Bucharest in 1806, the Russians knew how to operate their intelligence elements well in these lands. Because the Austrian and French consulates in Bucharest were making propaganda against Russia. The Tsar had requested that those people be removed from the city. What they failed to see was that they had actually obtained this information through a similar system and method. Although there was tension between the Austrians and Russians in Bucharest during wartime, the most important point to remember is that when wartime came, the Russian consul, who was either sent home by the Ottomans or fled there, always left his aforementioned colleague in his place to manage the affairs of the Russians in Bucharest<sup>25</sup>.

As an example, from the post-war period, the Russian Consuls in Bucharest continued their activities to protect Russian interests. An activity of Consul Griko, who spoke in 1812 within the scope of intelligence and propaganda, an important element of war and the military, is decisive here. Griko gave false information about the French, who the Russians immediately started fighting against, at a time when the Ottoman-Russian war was ending. He said that the Russians were victorious against them and achieved important winnings. Still, the eyes of Ottoman intelligence were open. Ottoman authorities also knew that the French had entered Moscow, the Russian capital, and that the Russians were trying to rescue children in the city<sup>26</sup>. This was actually an activity aimed at preventing a possible Ottoman threat, perhaps based on Griko's own thoughts or on instructions he received directly from the foreign ministry, in the form of, look, we are winning, if you declare war on us, you will not encounter a defeated but a victorious Russia. Griko's actions were not limited to this. Even though he was on behalf of his government, he displayed a daring attitude. He wrote and sent a letter regarding the return of Russian prisoners held by the Ottomans without waiting for quarantine (Of course, his courage was of no use, and the Ottoman side stated in harsh language that the Russian prisoners should wait in quarantine<sup>27</sup>). He also added that he did this on an order he received from his own government. In fact, far from being true, his attitude was harsh like that of other Russian

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<sup>24</sup> In archival documents it belongs to 1789. See. BOA., *AE.SABH.I.*, 19/1659.

<sup>25</sup> For an example see. BOA., *HAT.*, 1154/45800.

<sup>26</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 1093/44358a; BOA., *HAT.*, 1093/44358b; BOA., *HAT.*, 1004/42118.

<sup>27</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 1096/44411b.

consuls<sup>28</sup>. As can be guessed from the date range, in July 1812, another request came to the Ottomans from the Russian Consul in Bucharest, Griko. This was about one of his own translators going to Istanbul. In fact, the incident shows that the consuls mobilized not only themselves but also their employees and used them as spies. For example, excuses such as he would handle his civil affairs in Istanbul, he would do shopping in Istanbul were perceived as real intentions by the Ottoman decision-makers due to their guise and were accepted<sup>29</sup>. In 1812, it was reported by Jorga, the master of Romanian historians, that Griko was replaced and another consul named Pini<sup>30</sup> was appointed to Bucharest. However, it would be inappropriate to immediately close the topic of Griko, who replaced him. Because it is necessary to mention the incident of his kidnapping as a consul. His kidnapping - detention - arrest, whatever the name, was carried out by Alemdar Mustafa Pasha. This was a retaliatory operation against the attitudes of the Russians<sup>31</sup>. In fact, as the Ottoman archives shed light on the issue, the Russians made an unfounded and empty threat that they would arrest the entire Islamic world if their consuls, who were taken to Rusçuk, were not returned<sup>32</sup>. Another special situation that should be mentioned here is that although the Russian Consulate in Bucharest was not a small honorary consulate, its first administrators were said to be Greeks. Jorga stated that Griko or Kriko-Kiriko are among those who are definitely of a different ethnicity. In fact, it has been pointed out that other Russian officials had such a situation.

As Jorga stated, the consul who succeeded the above-mentioned Pini, whose appointment had been finalized as of 1821, was Minciaky. However, he only arrived in Bucharest in 1823. Because he visited the Boyars on the Moldavian side, who were still restless due to the Ottoman-Russian disputes<sup>33</sup>. This alone shows that the diplomat, who was on the verge of war, was still working for the interests of his country and a possible war situation. Although Their war activities could sometimes be

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<sup>28</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 1096/44411a; about the prisoners and the Russian consul in Bucharest see. BOA., *C.HR.*, 64/3188; BOA., *HAT.*, 288/172874.

<sup>29</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 989/41822a.

<sup>30</sup> This person's name is also mentioned in this way in Ottoman archive documents. See. BOA., *HAT.*, 1169/46240.

<sup>31</sup> Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 291.

<sup>32</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 288/172874; Jorga was touched upon this situation too. He stated that there was no guarantee that Wallachia would be in Ottoman hands, and there was no guarantee that they would keep the Russian consul. See. Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 151.

<sup>33</sup> Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 251.

prevented by Ottoman intelligence through official or unofficial means. For example, in 1820, the Russian Consul in Bucharest, who wrote a letter to an officer who wanted to come to Bucharest and carry out mapping activities, was rejected by the Ottoman authorities<sup>34</sup>.

The mobilization movements that will be included in the following lines also include people other than the consul<sup>35</sup>. In fact, the people who caused such actions, made propaganda within this framework, and even directly provoked the Ottoman authorities were these Russian consuls. Todor Vladimirescu, who had earned a rank from the Russians in 1821 and was about to rebel on the Hungarian border<sup>36</sup>, interestingly complained to his own embassy by the Russian Consul in Bucharest. And in fact, all Russian consulates in Romania had become recruiting centres for this rebellion<sup>37</sup>. The reason for the complaint was that he was preparing to rebel. The reason for this situation being written to the superior in Istanbul was probably the knowledge that the Ottomans could obtain the document in question. In other words, the Russians actually operated the intelligence action in a counter-intelligence manner because they knew that the Ottoman intelligence would look at their documents. Moreover, by reporting the mobility of someone working on their behalf. Of course, the explanation for this is that they wanted to somehow ensure the continuation of the ongoing peace with the Ottomans. From another perspective, while the Russians were indirectly conveying this useful information to the Ottomans, they were actually implicitly conveying the meaning, “If we fight, see how our intelligence works and is successful in your country.”

The best example of Russian consuls naturally displaying a separate example of war for their country and during wartime is that Minciaky did not leave Bucharest during the 1828-1829 war. Although the Ottomans expelled or arrested the diplomats of that country when they

<sup>34</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 1282/49704.

<sup>35</sup> For example, at a time when Metternich and Nesselrode were supposed to meet, but Metternich could not come because he was ill, the Russian Consul in Bucharest was in that city to follow the meeting and was not in Bucharest, where he was assigned. See. BOA., *HAT.*, 1039/43025.

<sup>36</sup> In Şanizade Ataulлах Efendi's history, the event in question is mentioned and the Russian Consul in Bucharest is introduced as the Wallachian Consul. There is no other information than that a paper regarding the Vladimirescu events was sent to him by his embassy. See. Şânî-Zâde Mehmed 'Atâ'ullah Efendi, *Şânî-zâde Târîhi [Osmanlı Tarihi (1223-1237/1808-1821)]*, Vol. II, ed. Ziya Yılmaz, (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yay., 2008), p. 1047-1048.

<sup>37</sup> Orlando Figes, *Kırım – Son Haçlı Seferi*, Trans. by Nurettin Elhüseyni, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi, 2012), p. 60.

entered the war, Minciaky did not fall into this situation. Moreover, shortly after the war began in May 1828, Minciaky personally welcomed General von Geismar, who had captured Bucharest and arrived here<sup>38</sup>.

So much so that the Russians were dealing not only with Bucharest and Romania, but also with other parts of the region through the Russian Consul in Bucharest. For example, the Pasha, who was the guard of Vidin, had caught a man on the border with a document that he had to deliver. When the man was asked to whom he had taken this document, the answer given was not far from guesswork: the Russian Consul in Bucharest. And this person was a Serb, and he had information on Serbian affairs. That document was immediately fired and destroyed<sup>39</sup>. It should not be forgotten here that in certain cases, in order to shape the general Russian policy and organize war situations accordingly, the Russian consul in Bucharest sent letters to the embassy and the embassy sent letters to that institution, and even directly from the Russian Foreign Ministry to that diplomatic mission, as in the case of Count Nesselrode, and informed each other about the events taking place in the region and what attitude they should adopt<sup>40</sup>.

Of course, the activities of the Russian Consuls in Bucharest did not occur directly and in a very recent period, just before or after the war, but also in peacetime. For example, in 1837, the Russian Consul was directly tasked with delivering gifts such as a boxed sword sent by Russia to the notables in Silistra. Of course, this situation is one of the clearest types of evidence that the Russians were doing some kind of material propaganda and wanted these people by their side in case of war. As can be seen, a consul was working even for a possible war situation for his country. What needs to be stated here is that the Ottoman side prepared gifts in return for this event, which was a product of courtesy, despite knowing the Russian intentions.

In the following period, from the 1830s to the 1860s, one of the Russian Consuls in Bucharest whose name is known is Alexander Duhamel. He is known as a person who left his consulate and fled to Transylvania as a reaction to the government established during a similar European revolution that broke out in Romania in 1848. In fact, this person, who had the identity of a military general, would later come and suppress the rebellions together with the Turks. In this respect, his

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<sup>38</sup> Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 284.

<sup>39</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 1038/43000.

<sup>40</sup> BOA., *HAT.*, 1150/45685a; BOA., *HAT.*, 1150/45685b; BOA., *HAT.*, 1145/45496.



consulate continued. However, this diplomat, who also made harsh statements about the pro-independence Bulgarians, would be dismissed from his duty in 1851<sup>41</sup>. Despite some of the major socio-cultural events that took place (expensive gifts given by both the Emperor and the Sultan to the consular officers and the consul general himself, etc.) and other troubles and developments, it can be argued that this period was calmer. What should not be forgotten is the calm before the storm. Because one of the most serious wars of this century was the Crimean War, which took place during this period.

One of the most important pieces of evidence that directly shows the espionage activities of the Russian Consuls in Bucharest is their mobilization. This situation may directly concern them, but there are also examples belonging to different people. For example, a Russian consul gave the news that a Russian general would visit and tour the Ottoman lands. In 1853, intelligence was received that one of the former Bucharest Consuls was in the Zemun location of Hungary and was on his way to Bucharest. This is one of the most important pieces of evidence that directly shows the activities of the said consuls. Even the arrival of the son of the Russian consulate clerk in Bucharest to this city is considered as an action taken within the scope of the said activities<sup>42</sup>. In addition, this period also allows some important general conclusions to be drawn. Nesselrode sent a significant share of the taxes increased during this period to the Russian Consul in Bucharest<sup>43</sup>. In fact, in a similar way, the Russian Consul in Bucharest was generally responsible for the financial affairs here. In this year, that is, in 1856, the name of the consul here was Kalchinsky<sup>44</sup>. The explanation that the Russian Consul in Bucharest was the most important person, not only for military and war affairs but also for everything else, came from a colleague of his. This was the British Consul in Bucharest, Robert Colquhoun. Consul Robert said that the Russian in Bucharest was the best informed and most detailed person in the place<sup>45</sup>. In addition, despite the fact that there was an Ottoman-Russian war during this period, there was another situation that caused the Russian Consulate in Bucharest not to be very prominent. While one of the battlefields in the previous and current centuries was Romania, during the

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<sup>41</sup> Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, p. 345-349; Figes, *Kırım*, p. 117-118.

<sup>42</sup> BOA., *HR.MKT.*, 73/30.

<sup>43</sup> The National Archives (TNA), *Public Records Office (PRO) – Foreign Office (FO)*, 424/14, No. 620, p. 596.

<sup>44</sup> TNA – FO, 424/15, No. 169 / Inclosure 2., p. 158-161.

<sup>45</sup> TNA – FO, 424/16, No. 96, p. 90.

Crimean War the Russians were naturally unable to enter Romanian territory and the battlefield took place further north. For this reason, that consulate must not have been needed much at the time.

The Russian Consuls in Bucharest have certainly also participated in the transformation that diplomats have gone through over time. They are now the consuls who act almost like foreign ministers of the ambassadors who are almost like an Emperor. Therefore, even if there is no change in their authority in a systematic and official manner, their behavior has shown a serious change in both the Middle East and the Balkan geography. One of the biggest reasons for this is of course the Russian Empire's perspective on the Ottoman Empire. The Russians, who exhibited a pan-Slavist and pan-Orthodox structure in the Balkans, especially supported groups under Ottoman rule, but this chauvinist structure also showed itself in the Russian Consulate in Bucharest. Indeed, at the intersection of both notions, a huge amount of one hundred thousand francs from Russia and a Russian Consul in Bucharest, who was to be distributed to the volunteer soldiers established by his Bucharest Committee in Tulca, are encountered. The time points to both the process leading to Romania's independence and an era in which the Russians now wanted to watch the Ottoman sun set: 1873<sup>46</sup>.

### Conclusions

As a result, there is almost no document that directly explains and proves that the Russian in Bucharest was actually a spy or that he was gathering information and making preparations in favour of Russia just before or after the war. However, as can be seen from both Ottoman and Russian sources, there are also documents that suggest that they were involved in these activities and even clearly reveal them. The Ottomans generally conveyed the mobilization and propaganda activities of these people to the relevant authorities in some way, showing today's researchers that they did not take their eyes off the Russians that day. The Russians, on the other hand, generally hinted that such situations were taking place through orders sent from Moscow to Istanbul or directly to Bucharest.

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<sup>46</sup> BOA., *HR.SYS.*, 2922/107.

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987/41816a; 989/41822a; 1004/42118; 1038/43000; 1039/43025;  
1093/44358a; 1093/44358b; 1096/44411a; 1096/44411b;  
1141/45405; 1145/45496; 1150/45685a; 1150/45685b;  
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# MILITARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ROMANIAN TERRITORY DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR

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## Abstract

Romanian territory served as a battleground for all the Russian-Ottoman conflicts in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Russian offensives against the Ottomans targeted Romanian territory and the Balkan front with much more military might than the one assigned to the Caucasus because its main strategic stakes (the river exits to the Black Sea, the Danube and finally, Constantinople) were in the European theater. Thus, the fastest and only route the Russians could use on land crossed the Romanian territory. Also, the geography of South-Eastern Europe provided much more suitable conditions than the one in the Caucasus, as well as direct contact with Orthodox nations and especially those of the southern Slavs<sup>1</sup>. Once the Russian army gathered experience in occupying and governing Romanian territory<sup>2</sup>, all their military plans against the Ottomans purposed it as an advanced base of operations; this is also a reason why the Russian wars with the Ottomans of 1806-1812 and 1828-1829 and finally the Crimean War started with the occupation of the Romanian territory. Furthermore, the Russians managed to get a better grip of Romanian territory by annexing parts of it (Bessarabia in 1812) or forcing the Ottomans to destroy their fortresses at the Danube (through the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829).

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<sup>1</sup> Leonid Boicu, *Austria și Principatele Române în vremea Războiului Crimeii (1853-1856)*, (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1972), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> The Russian army demonstrated that it could reach Moldavia during the war of 1735-1739. Then, during the war of 1768-1774, the Russians began their initial campaign over the Dniester, into Moldavia (whose northwestern part was subsequently ceded to Austria); they reached Moldavia once again during the war of 1787-1792. The wars of 1806-1812 and 1828-1829, as well as the Crimean war, began with Russian occupations of the Principalities, the first leading to the Russian annexation of the eastern half of Moldavia, renamed "Bessarabia". Bessarabia will later be used as the main supply base for the Russian Army on the Balkan front. Anatol Leșcu, *Basarabia și asigurarea logistică a trupelor ruse în anii 1812-1874*, (București: Editura Militară, 2018).

In this article we will explore the importance of Romanian territory from the viewpoint of the Crimean War, the last of the Russian-Ottoman wars that started with the occupation of the Romanian principalities. It eventually evolved into a Great European War that had fundamental consequences in shaping the political architecture of Romanian territory up until the First World War.

**Keywords:** Black Sea, Carpathian Mountains, Crimean War, Danube, Military Geography.

## 1. Theoretical Notions of Military Geography

Military geography links geography and military sciences, employing knowledge, methods, techniques and concepts of geography for military purposes<sup>3</sup>. Since the first conflicts in the history of humankind, military leaders have taken geographical factors into consideration, but, as a formal field of study, military geography was developed in the 19th century by European authors<sup>4</sup>. This kind of research has, first and foremost, a practical purpose, being based on the understanding of the importance of using physical or human geographic conditions to build military strategy and tactics, for defensive<sup>5</sup> or offensive purposes. Its instruments can also be employed in the service of historical research, and it will be my attempt to do so in order to offer some military perspectives on the importance of the Romanian territory as a battleground between the Russians and the Ottomans.

## 2. General Traits of the Romanian Territory

In the scope of this paper, when I say “Romanian territory” I will refer exclusively to the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, organized with autonomous administrations under Ottoman sovereignty

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<sup>3</sup> For general theoretical notions of military geography and its European history of the field, see Eugene J. Palka, “Military Geography” (Chapter 31), *Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, ed. Gary L. Gaile, Cort J. Willmott, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 503-504.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Géographie Physique, Historique et Militaire* (1836), by Theophile Lavallée (1804-1867), professor of geography and military statistics at the Imperial School of Saint-Cyr; *Militärische Landerbeschreibung von Europa* (“Military Geography of Europe”) (1837), “a work containing detailed physiographic descriptions of military regions of Europe” by Captain Albrecht von Roon (1803-1879) of the Military Academy at Berlin. Cf. Eugene J. Palka, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

<sup>5</sup> Iurii Ciubara, „Influența spațiului geografic în desfășurarea operațiilor militare pe teritoriul național”, *Revista Militară. Studii de Securitate și Apărare*, No. 2 (16)/2016, p. 135-143.



and Russian protection. I will except Transylvania which was, since the Third Russian-Ottoman war (1683-1699), part of the Austrian Empire up until the end of the First World War. Also, Dobrujda (Dobrogea) was at that time an Ottoman territory and it remained at such until the conclusion of the Russian-Romanian-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 when it became Romanian territory. Furthermore, Moldavia lost some of its territory as a consequence of Russian-Ottoman wars, namely Bukovina to Austria in 1775 and Bessarabia to Russia in 1812.

As previously said, the Romanian territory was on the fastest road that the Russian armies could take to reach the Ottoman capital on land. From Bessarabia, the Mouths of the Danube prevent a direct crossing into Dobrudja and force the invader to march through the Focșani Gate<sup>6</sup>.

Pointing out some general traits of the Moldo-Wallachian territory<sup>7</sup>, we observe that, in rough numbers, more than 40% of its terrain is covered by fields, another 40% by hills and less than 20% by the bordering sides of the Carpathian Mountains. In Moldavia, the surface with hills is larger than the one with fields, while in Wallachia this ratio is reversed<sup>8</sup>. Both the Wallachian Plain and the Moldavian Plain are part of belt of the Eurasian steppe that has chernozem, which is the best arable soil (being very fertile and producing high crop yields)<sup>9</sup>. The area has (like most of Central and Eastern Europe) humid continental climate with warm summers and cold winters.

Romanian territory is crossed by the Lower Danube, that offers Wallachia a southern natural border which is not very easy to cross because the broadness of its stream. The Danube poses an advantage for a defending side situated on one of its banks against an offensive force coming from the opposing bank<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Anatol Leșcu, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Alexandru Averescu (1859-1938), a Cavalry officer who later became Chief of the General Staff during the Balkan Wars and army commander during the First World War, gave a detailed description of the Romanian territory from a military point of view in a course of military geography that he published in 1895. Alexandru Averescu, *Lecțiuni de geografie militară predate la Școala de Oficiari, anul I*, (București: Tipografia Curții Regale „F. Göbl Fii”, 1895).

<sup>8</sup> Calculations following Alexandru Averescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 55, 61.

<sup>9</sup> Anca-Luiza Stănilă, Mihai Parichi, *Solurile României*, (București: Editura Fundației România de Măine, 2002), pp. 35, 39.

<sup>10</sup> N.A. Constantinescu, „Întinderea raielelor cu deosebită privire la raiaua Giurgiului”, *Anuar de geografie și antropogeografie*, no. 1 (1910-1911), p. 24.

In terms of human geography, our main interests are the population, resources and infrastructure. Both Principalities have altogether, at the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, no more than 4 million people (Wallachia's population being almost double to that of Moldavia)<sup>11</sup>. Almost 90% are peasants and agriculture formed the base of local economy. The Romanian grain markets were controlled by the Ottomans, which competed with Russia over wheat export in Europe<sup>12</sup>; moreover, the Romanian Principalities were a market for British products and also an exporter of grains<sup>13</sup>. The road system was quite poor and there were no railways, but the Danube “provided an excellent artery for transporting the grain direct to the Black Sea, without costly trans-shipments”<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. The Romanian Territory as a Russian-Ottoman Battleground

When the Ottomans started taking control of the Romanian territory, they understood that it is very important to control the Lower Danube as part of a larger plan to transform the Black Sea into an “Ottoman lake”. The only way to properly control the Danube is by occupying both sides of the shore, so, at its fords, where the stream is shallow, the Ottomans built a series of fortresses on the left bank, that are paired with the ones of the right bank and assured a better control of the border with

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<sup>11</sup> The *Almanach de Gotha* of 1853's statistical data indicates the Wallachian population as 2.324.484 people and the Moldavian population as 1.254.447 people, up to a total of 3.578.931 people. *Almanach de Gotha: Annuaire Diplomatique Et Statistique Pour l'Année 1853*, (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1853), pp. 669-670.

<sup>12</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> “The principalities alone imported more goods from Britain than Russia did”. Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 63. In regard to exports, the Romanian Principalities “were supplying more grain than any other Turkish province with the exception of Egypt (about 2% of Britain's total imports)” – which as still only half of the Russian export. The fast rate of expansion of Danubian commerce presented a threat of Brăila and Galați becoming “serious competitors to the Russian Black Sea ports”. Eventually, the Russians, hoping to transform Odessa into “the principal seaport and export point both for Danubian and Black Sea trade” (albeit with the additional cost of trans-shipment affecting the merchants' profits), attempted to obstruct the Sulina Channel by allowing it to silt up and keeping ship-wrecks undisturbed on the river-bed. This eventually led to a state of tension between the British and the Russian on the eve of the Crimean War. Radu R. Florescu, “The Rumanian Principalities and the Origins of the Crimean War”, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 43, no. 100, 1964, pp. 63-64. Cf. E.V. Tarlé, *Războiul Crimeii*, Vol. I, (București: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură Științifică, 1952), pp. 37-42.

<sup>14</sup> Radu R. Florescu, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

Wallachia<sup>15</sup>. I will name such pairs, from the West to the East (the first on the left bank, the second on the right bank): Bechet-Rahova, Turnu-Nicopole, Zimnicea-Șiștov, Giurgiu-Rusciuc, Oltenița-Turtucaia, Călărași-Siliștra, Brăila-Măcin<sup>16</sup>.

Russia emerged as a great imperial power after the reforms of Peter the Great (1682-1725) and with the conclusion of the Great Northern War (1700-1721) that cemented its access to the Baltic Sea. Naturally, Russia became a rival to the Ottomans. The Russians progressively took control of the northern area of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, first by capturing its primary river exits (the Don and the Dnepr), then by annexing the Crimean Peninsula<sup>17</sup>. At this point on, Russia pursued a plan to extend its domination over the Black Sea. To this end, the final target of the Russian campaigns against the Ottomans was Constantinople (Istanbul). The single and fastest way to cross the Balkans from the North on foot is through the territory of the Romanian principalities. Thus, for Russia, dominating the Romanian principalities actually meant controlling the roads leading to Constantinople – so they first claimed to offer “protection” (1774) and later a “protectorate” (1829) to their fellow Orthodox, albeit Latin neighbours. To make this control easier, during the Napoleonic Wars they ripped the easternmost territory of Moldavia, Bessarabia, in 1812<sup>18</sup>. Another important moment took place at the end of the Ottoman-War of 1828-1829, with the treaty of Adrianople (Edirne), which forced the Ottomans to abandon their fortress on the left bank of the Danube<sup>19</sup>, leaving them more vulnerable against the Russians.

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<sup>15</sup> N.A. Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24: „Due to its deep, difficult to cross bed, the Danube served as a natural border for Wallachia, difficult to defend against the Turks. (...) those that wanted to dominate this border had to control it from both sides” (my own translation).

<sup>16</sup> N.A. Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> J.C. Hurewitz, “Russia and the Turkish Straits: A Revaluation of the Origins of the Problem”, *World Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (July 1962), p. 607; Anatol Leșcu, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> During the Napoleonic Wars, the Russians, at war with the Ottomans in 1806-1812, occupied the Romanian principalities with the intention of installing there permanently. Their single prize was Bessarabia, the easternmost territory of Moldavia, which the Ottomans ceded by signing the treaty of Bucharest in May 1812. Armand Goșu, *Între Napoleon și Alexandru I. Contextul internațional al anexării Basarabiei*, (Iași: Polirom, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> According to Separate act (1) relative to the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia annexed to the Treaty of Adrianople, paragraph “Turkish Towns on Left Bank of the Danube to be Restored to Wallachia”, “The Turkish towns situated upon the left bank of the Danube shall, as well as their territories (Rayahs), be restored to Wallachia, in order to

For pursuing military operations and then administrating the occupied territory it was very important for the Russians to study the local geography and terrain, and they started doing so, making topographic maps of the most important cities, Iași (Jassy)<sup>20</sup> and Bucharest (București)<sup>21</sup>, as well as for strategic points such as Brăila<sup>22</sup> or Giurgiu<sup>23</sup>. The Ottomans also used a series of maps of Romanian territory made using French, Austrian and German cartographers<sup>24</sup>.

#### 4. The Romanian Territory during the Crimean War (1853-1856)

The name of “Crimean War”, as many scholars observed, is somewhat improper, because its military operations took place in more than a single theater. Still, calling it just a “Russian-Ottoman war” would be too narrow, since most of the European great powers were involved<sup>25</sup>, in what can be seen as a “typical outcome of the hegemonic rivalry in a multipolar environment”<sup>26</sup>.

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be henceforward united to that Principality, and the fortifications heretofore standing upon that bank can never be rebuilt. (...)”. Edward Hertslet, *The Map of Europe by Treaty*, Vol. II (London, Butterworths, 1875), p. 825.

<sup>20</sup> The oldest Russian map of Iași is from 1739, and the most recent before the Crimean War, from 1828-1829. Laurențiu Rădvan, Mihai Anatolii Ciobanu, *Planurile orașului Iași în arhive străine (1739-1833) / The City Plans of Iași in Foreign Archives (1739-1833)*, (București: Editura Dar publishing; Heidelberg: Herlo Verlag UG, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> The oldest Russian map of Bucharest is from 1770, and the most recent before the Crimean War, from 1849-1850. Laurențiu Rădvan, Mihai Anatolii Ciobanu, *Planurile orașului București în arhive rusești (1770-1850) / The city plans of Bucharest in Russian archives (1770-1850)*, (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2023).

<sup>22</sup> A Russian map of Brăila was made during the Russian occupation of 1770-1775. Laurențiu Rădvan, Mihai Anatolii Ciobanu, „Noi planuri ale orașului și cetății Brăilei”, *Miscellanea Historica et Archaeologica in honorem Professoris Ionel Căndea septuagenarii*. ed. Costin Croitoru (București: Editura Academiei; Brăila: Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei “Carol I”, 2019), pp. 363-383.

<sup>23</sup> Mihai Anatolii Ciobanu, *Giurgiu în cartografa istorică a marilor imperii: Epoca războaielor de la 1769 la 1854* (București: Akkia, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> Ottoman cartography was initially more symbolic. The *Cedid Atlas* was the first modern atlas printed and published in Constantinople, in 1803, adapting maps from a Western atlas (published by William Faden’s *General Atlas*).

<sup>25</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 3; Hew Strachan, “Preface”, Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War: 1853-1856*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), p. ix.

<sup>26</sup> Șerban Filip Cioculescu, “The Romanian Principalities and the War of Crimea: interests and perceptions according to the international relations theory”, *Türkiye-Romania Joint Military History Symposium: Proceedings, 8-9 May 2023, İstanbul*, ed. Bünyamin

The Crimean War was preceded by the Russian occupation of the Romanian principalities in July 1853. Military preparations were previously made in Bessarabia since March 1853<sup>27</sup>. Using the question of the Holy Places as a pretext to enforce upon the Ottomans to recognize the Tsar's role as protector of the Orthodox<sup>28</sup>, Russia, to put further pressures on the Sultan<sup>29</sup>, ordered its armies to occupy the Romanian principalities, crossing the river Prut on July 2 (June 20)<sup>30</sup>. (N.B. I will use New Style dates to ease references to events usually dated by the Western calendar, giving the Old Style dates in parenthesis). On July 5 (June 23), the Russians marched into Iași and, on July 25 (July 13), they occupied Bucharest, as well as strategic points across the Danube (ex. Giurgiu) from which they could easily engage the Ottomans<sup>31</sup>.

Russian command forcefully made us of Romanian local troops, infrastructure and resources (cereals). They “ordered the Romanian units to guard food, fodder and munition deposits, ensure communications, continue to exert police services and guard the Danube pickets”<sup>32</sup>. Despite bringing provisions requisitioned from the local population in Bessarabia (especially flour that was deposited in storages across Moldavia and Wallachia and brought back by the Russian troops upon their retreat in

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Kocaoglu, Ahmet Taşdemir, (İstanbul: Turkish National Defense University Press, 2023), p. 141.

<sup>27</sup> Anatol Leșcu, *op. cit.*, p. 193. On his way to Constantinople, in February 1853, Prince Menshikov inspected the 5th army corps in Bessarabia, at Kishinev (Chișinău). Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 72; E.V. Tarlé, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 131.

<sup>28</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 65. The Tsar's special emissary to the Pore, Prince Alexander Sergeyevich Menshikov (1787-1869), lacking fundamental diplomatic skills, was instructed to demand the Ottomans to agree adding an article to the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, giving a formal guarantee of the rights and privileges of the Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire under the protectorate of Russia, in return for a military alliance; the negotiations were unsuccessful and, after Menshikov's ultimatum received no favourable response, he departed Istanbul on 21 May. *Ibidem*, pp. 75, 79.

<sup>29</sup> The threat of a Russian occupation of the Romanian Principalities was explicitly mentioned in the Tsar's instructions to Baron Peter von Meyendorff (1796-1863), the Russian ambassador in Vienna, dated 29 May 1853. Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>30</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>31</sup> Adrian Silvan Ionescu, *Cruce și semilună. Războiul ruso-turc din 1853-1854 în chipuri și imagini*, (București: Editura Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Maria Georgescu, „Relațiile politico-militare ale țărilor române cu alte state europene”, *Istoria militară a poporului roman*, Vol. IV: „Epoca revoluțiilor de eliberare națională și socială: de la Revoluția populară din 1784 la cucerirea independenței depline: 1877-1878”, (Editura Militară: București, 1987), p. 384.

1854<sup>33</sup>), the Russians still made use of the resources available on Romanian territory<sup>34</sup>.

The Ottomans did not immediately consider the Russian occupation a *casus belli* but rather attempted to pursue a peaceful solution, as the Western powers suggested, through Austrian-mediated negotiations<sup>35</sup>. On the other hand, the Russians took a series of actions that suggested their occupation was more than a temporary measure; for example, they tried to force the Romanian princes, Barbu Știrbey of Wallachia (1799-1869) and Grigore Alexandru Ghica of Moldavia (1804-1857) – both reigning since after the 1848 revolution –, to halt payment of the tribute owed to the Porte, prompting them to take refuge in Austria to avoid further implication<sup>36</sup>. Eventually, after all negotiations failed, the Ottomans addressed Russia an ultimatum to evacuate the principalities on October 9 (September 27) and, after it failed to comply, issued a declaration of war on October 16 (October 4)<sup>37</sup>. As the first act of retaliation, Ottoman artillery opened fire on Russian ships on the Danube on October 21 (October 7)<sup>38</sup>. The skirmish took place in Isaccea (İsakçı), where Ottoman shore batteries fired on two Russian steamships on the Danube going to Galați (Galatz)<sup>39</sup>. During the first months of the war, the Ottomans proved quite restrained in engaging in hostilities against the Russians on the territory of the Romanian principalities; the Russians displayed a similar attitude of restraint, but some observers explain it through the military incompetence of the commanders<sup>40</sup>. In truth, both parties still pursued a diplomatic solution<sup>41</sup>, the Ottomans entrusting on the

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<sup>33</sup> Anatol Leșcu, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>34</sup> Tudor Eugen Sclifos, „Diplomația franco-britanică și ocupația militară rusească a Principatelor Române (1853)”, *Politică și relații internaționale în istoria românilor. Studii în onoarea profesorului Gheorghe Cliveti*, coord. Gabriel Leanca, (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași, 2023), p. 197; Natalia Timohina, „Relațiile dintre autohtoni și armata rusă în Principatele Române în anii Războiului Crimeii”, *Tyragetia*, Vol. XVII, nr. 2/2008, pp. 265-270.

<sup>35</sup> Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, p. 86. Tarlé implies that the British diplomacy actually aimed to provoke the war, citing the actions of the British Ambassador in Constantinople, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe (1786-1880). E.V. Tarlé, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 130, 149-152.

<sup>36</sup> Tudor Eugen Sclifos, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

<sup>37</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> E.V. Tarlé, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 227.

<sup>41</sup> “It is indeed one of the peculiarities of the Crimean War that diplomatic efforts never ceased during more than two years of war. War and diplomacy went in parallel”. Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 85. Cf. Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, p. 10.



support from the French and the British, while Russia hoped (to no avail) that it could convince the Austrians to join their side<sup>42</sup>. The Rumelian army, commanded by Croatian-born Marshal (Müşir) Ömer Pasha<sup>43</sup>, had its troops stationed along the Danube, mainly in Vidin, Calafat (Kalafat), Șistov (Ziștovi), Rusçuk (Rusçuk), Turtucaia (Tutrakan) and Silistria<sup>44</sup>. The Russian occupation army, commanded by General Prince Mikhail Dmitrievich Gorchakov<sup>45</sup>, was garrisoned in the main cities and reserved a small portion as a vanguard against the Ottomans. The Russians forced the Romanian troops to take part in military actions, fighting alongside the Russians against the Ottomans<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, Ömer Pasha made a failed attempt to conscript anti-Russian Romanian fighters as volunteers in the Ottoman Empire, in a Romanian legion that would have been led by General Gheorghe Magheru (1802-1880), Wallachian émigré and 1848 revolutionary<sup>47</sup>.

The Russians didn't concentrate troops in the Vidin area, wishing to "avoid arousing the suspicions of Austria by being too close to the Serbians"<sup>48</sup>. The Ottomans made use of that to their advantage and conquered Calafat with relative ease on October 28 (October 16)<sup>49</sup>; the Russians failed to launch a counter-attack, due to the express orders given by General Peter Dannenberg<sup>50</sup>. On November 2 (October 21), the

<sup>42</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>43</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 102. Ömer Pasha (1806-1871) was born as Mihajlo Latas, an Austrian subject in Croatia. In 1823 he fled to the Ottoman Empire, rising through its military ranks. He was commander of the Ottoman forces in Moldavia and Wallachia in 1848. By the times of the Crimean War, he had great ambitions to become governor of the Romanian Principalities, enforcing them with the claim of being a descendant of a Roman soldier. Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>44</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 107. Prince Mikhail Dmitrievich Gorchakov (1739-1861) was a General of the Artillery distinguished during the Napoleonic Wars, as well as during the Russian-Ottoman War of 1828-1829, when he was present at the siege of Silistra; he commanded the Russian artillery in the 1849 campaign against the Hungarian revolutionaries.

<sup>46</sup> Wallachian units also fought alongside the Russians against the Ottomans. Nicolae Ciachir, „Aspecte privind relațiile ruso-române în timpul campaniei dunărene din războiul Crimeii (1853-1854)”, *Revista Arhivelor*, nr. 2/1961, pp. 85-86; Horia Vladimir Șerbănescu, „Participarea unor unități românești la operațiuni militare în timpul Războiului Crimeii (1853-1855)”, *Războiul Crimeii: 150 de ani de la încheiere*, coord., Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, (Brăila: Editura Istros, Muzeul Brăilei, 2006), pp. 163-172.

<sup>47</sup> Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133; Maria Georgescu, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 388.

<sup>48</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 107.

<sup>50</sup> E.V. Tarlé, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 226. Peter Dannenberg (1792-1872) was a General of the Infantry; he took part in the occupation of the Romanian principalities in 1848 as chief of

Ottoman forces in Turtucaia crossed the Danube on Oltenița (Oltenitsa), which hosted the quarantine house of Wallachia. On November 4 (October 23), the Russians launched an attack but failed to occupy the fortified Ottoman positions and retreated. The Ottoman thus had “their first serious victory on the Danube”, but did not pursue the enemy<sup>51</sup>. In the meantime, the Russian victory at the Battle of Sinop of November 30 (November 18) eventually prompted France and Britain to join the war<sup>52</sup>.

Military operations continued during winter, without any operational pause, which was quite unusual<sup>53</sup>. A contributing factor could have been the mild autumn; the chill came only towards the end of the year 1853 and in the following months<sup>54</sup>. On the Danubian front, near the end of the European year, on December 31 (December 19), the Ottomans forces in Calafat attacked the Russian forces to the north, near Cetate (Çatana) and Maglavit. The attack was repulsed, but, on January 6 (December 25) 1854, the Ottoman launched a new attack, which proved successful<sup>55</sup>.

In the last months of winter, the Danubian front was relatively quiet. On February 14-15 (February 2-3), the Russians advanced to retake Calafat but retreated unexpectedly; on February 20 (February 8), the Ottomans in Silistra launched an attack on the northern shore which was repelled by Russian forces in Călărași; February 22 (February 10), the Russian artillery in Turnu bombarded the Nicopole (Nikopol) fortress.

On March 23 (March 11), the Russian troops in Galați launched an offensive in Dobruđja, conquering without any fight Tulcea, Isaccea and Măcin. The advancement stopped<sup>56</sup>, focusing all resources on the Russian

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staff of the 5th Infantry Corps. On the eve of the Crimean War, he commanded the 4th Infantry Corps (comprising the main part of the Danubian expeditionary force). *Ibidem*, Vol. I, p. 214.

<sup>51</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108. Cf. E.V. Tarlé, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 226-229; Adrian Silvan Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> “The Russians had destroyed a Turkish flotilla lying at anchor almost under the eyes of the great naval powers”, “The war had now definitely gone beyond a collision between Russia and the Porte”, “The Battle of Sinop disturbed the European balance of power. (...)”. Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, pp. 141, 129, 140.

<sup>53</sup> Anatol Leșcu, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>54</sup> E.V. Tarlé, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 200.

<sup>55</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-178. Cf. E.V. Tarlé, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 230-234; Adrian Silvan Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> The Russians were also awaiting Austrian support and “approval” for their military actions south of the Danube. Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

Siege of Ottoman Silistra, what took place in May-June 1854 under the command of Field Marshal Paskevich (superseding Gorchakov until near the end of the battle)<sup>57</sup>. I won't discuss this action in detail, because Silistra is south of the Danube, on now Bulgarian territory. The Russians eventually retreated out of political reasons, due to the Austrian demand to evacuate the Principalities, which was received on June 15 (June 3), a day after the Austrians signed with the Ottomans a convention in this scope<sup>58</sup>. At the same time, in June 1854, the Allied expeditionary force landed at Varna, anchoring off Balçık (Balçık)<sup>59</sup>. After lifting of the siege of Silistra, the Russians evacuated Dobruja, Wallachia and Moldavia. Some clashes with the Ottomans still took place, such as the one in Giurgiu (Giurgevo) on July 5-7 (June 23-25), with heavy losses on both sides<sup>60</sup>. The Russians evacuated Bucharest on August 1 (July 20), and on September 15 (September 3) the occupying army had retreated beyond the Prut<sup>61</sup>.

Upon their retreat, the Russians captured and took with them the Wallachian and Moldavian horses, artillery batteries and fluvial gunboats, placing them in Bessarabia and Ukraine to avoid capture by the Allies; still, they failed, despite heavy pressures, to enlist any troops to continue the fight on Russian soil. When faced with this demand, on August 30 (August 18), Captain Gheorghe Filipescu, commander of the artillery battery in Iași, protested, prompting his arrest and subsequent capture into Russian territory<sup>62</sup>. While the Russian army retreated, the Austrians stepped to occupy the principalities together with the Ottomans, according

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<sup>57</sup> Tarlé suggests that Field Marshal Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich (1782-1856) – one of the most trusted counselors of Tsar Nikolai I – having lost initiative due to his old age, was secretly skeptical towards the outcome of the war and thus acted in a hesitant and contradictory manner when he took command of the Army of the Danube in April 1854; moreover, General Gorchakov emulated Paskevich's attitude in this regard from the beginning of the campaign and until its very end. Paskevich will surrender the command once more to General Gorchakov on 9 June 1854, after a supposed contusion forced him to resign. E.V. Tarlé, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 203, 371. Cf. Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-106, 184, 186.

<sup>58</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 186; Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>59</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>60</sup> Adrian Silvan Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>61</sup> Winfried Baumgart, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>62</sup> Horia Vladimir Șerbănescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-169; Maria Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 385; Anatol Leșcu, *op. cit.*, p. 198; Dorina N. Rusu, „Țările române și forțele lor militare în ajunul și în timpul războiului Crimeii”, *File din istoria militară a poporului român*, Vol. 7, coord. Ilie Ceaușescu, (București: Editura Militară, 1980), pp. 50-51; Adrian Stroea et al., *Enciclopedia Artileriei Române*, (București: Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, 2013), p. 36.

to the provisions of the Boiadji-Kioi (Boyadji Köy) Convention of June 14<sup>63</sup>. Based on the convention, the first to move in Bucharest were the Ottomans, on August 20 (August 8), followed by the Austrians on September 6 (August 25), that “were careful not to meet the retreating Russians”<sup>64</sup>. The Austrians reached Iași on October 2 (September 20). In November, Ömer Pasha assembled its troops at Focșani and Brăila to cross the Prut River and invade Bessarabia, in order to prevent Russian reinforcements from this area marching to the Crimea, but such an action, postponed for early spring of 1855, never took place<sup>65</sup>. Eventually, in December, the bulk of the Ottoman troops in Ömer Pasha’s army were sent to reinforce the Allied troops in Crimea<sup>66</sup>, ferried by British transports, leaving a small force led by Ismail Pasha as garrison in Bucharest<sup>67</sup>. The Austrian occupation ended in 1857, its costs being enforced upon the Wallachian and Moldavian authorities<sup>68</sup>.

## Conclusions

The Crimean War represented a turning point in the Russian-Ottoman Wars due to the involvement of the Western European powers against Russia. It was the only war in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Ottomans defeated Russia<sup>69</sup>. The European great powers, assembled during the Peace Congress in Paris, took measures to limit further Russian expansion in south-eastern Europe by returning to Moldavia the southern Bessarabia lands around the cities of Cahul, Bolgrad and Ismail, blocking its direct access to the Danube. In the following years, the temporary weakening of Russian influence in the Black Sea region allowed the strengthening of

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<sup>63</sup> The association of the Austrians to the Ottoman military occupation of Romanian territory had been promoted by the British. Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>64</sup> Hans-Christian Maner, “The Habsburg Monarchy and the Danube Principalities – The Age of Occupation 1854-1857. From the Correspondence of Austrian Diplomats and High-Ranking Military Officers”, *Politică și relații internaționale în istoria românilor. Studii în onoarea profesorului Gheorghe Cliveti*, coord. Gabriel Leanca, (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași, 2023), pp. 218-220; Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 187; Baumgart, *op. cit.*, p. 113. Adrian Silvan Ionescu, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>65</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 189, 278. Winfried Baumgart, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>66</sup> Winfried Baumgart, *op. cit.*, p. 114. Ömer Pasha commanded forces in the Caucasian campaign, most notably taking part at the Siege of Kars (June - November 1855), a “diversionary operation against the Russian army”; he did not participate at the conquest of Sevastopol. Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 250. „He was criticised for having caused the Ottomans’ non-participation in the final victory in Sevastopol”. *Ibidem*, p. 283.

<sup>67</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 238. Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>68</sup> Leonid Boicu, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

<sup>69</sup> Candan Badem, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Romanian self-government. The aftermath of the Crimean War created the conditions that made possible the unification of the Romanian Principalities three years later, in 1859. The new state, a conscious political actor that now mastered its territory, developed modern armed forces that replaced the former “national militias”. At this point, the Russians could no longer occupy Romanian territory without having to engage in any battles with the local military. As such, upon embarking into a new war against the Ottomans, in April 1877, the Russians negotiated and signed beforehand a convention with Romania and paid all expenses (as compared to 1853-1854); in the following months, with the exception of a few incursions and artillery assaults, all fighting took place south of the Danube.

In perspective, the Crimean War set the spark for the emergence of independent national states in the Balkans and, twenty-two years after its conclusion, the next Russian-Ottoman war of 1877-1878 brought the official recognition of Romanian, Serbian and Montenegro independence. This created a much more complicated political setting that contributed to keep Russia from engaging in another direct conflict with the Ottomans until the First World War. Moreover, Emperor Alexander III of Russia promoted a new national military doctrine based on the understanding that “the solution of the Eastern Question to Russia’s gain could not be solved by waging war in the Balkans”, but through diplomatic means<sup>70</sup>.

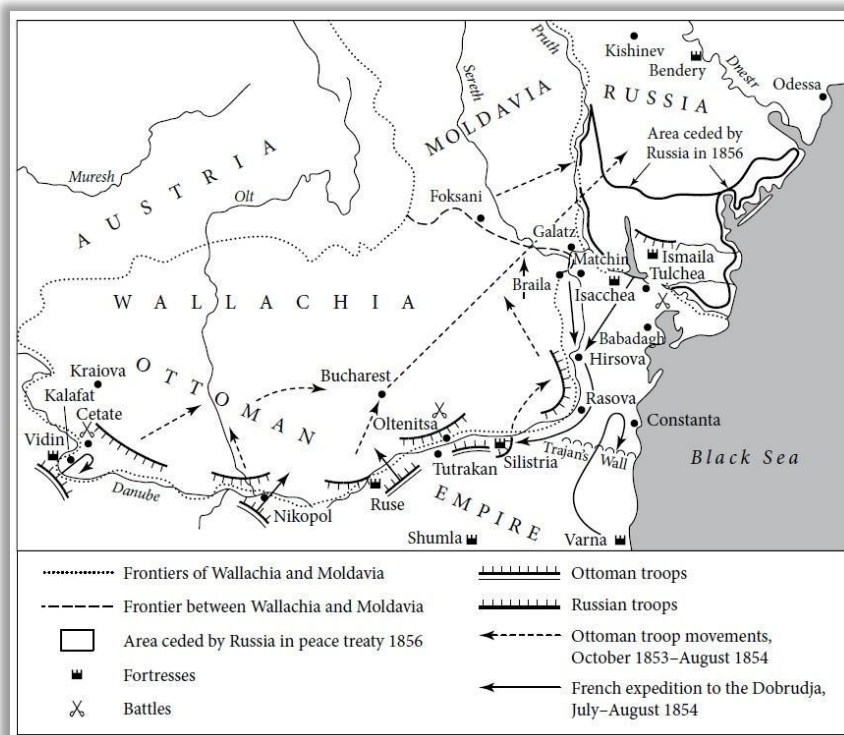
The importance of the Romanian territory increased once it gained access to the Black Sea: first, at the end of the Crimean War, when Moldavia was returned the South of Bessarabia, as decided at the Congress of Paris; then, twenty-two years later, when Northern Dobrudja became a Romanian territory, albeit at the cost of losing the South of Bessarabia to the Russians<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Anatol Leșcu, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 11.

<sup>71</sup> The Russians partitioned Dobrudja, awarding only the southern part to the Bulgarians and the northern part to the Romanians, as an “exchange” for the South of Bessarabia; the principle of “exchange” was rejected by the Romanians. Constantin Iordachi, “Diplomacy and the Making of a Geopolitical Question: The Romanian-Bulgarian Conflict over Dobrudja, 1878–1947”, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 308-309.

**Appendix 1:** Map illustrating the military operations on the Danubian theatre of the Crimean War, 1853-1854<sup>72</sup>



<sup>72</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, p. 102, “Map 1. The Danubian theatre of war 1853-1854”. A similar version was published by Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War: 1853-1856*, p. 105, “Map 2. The Danube front, 1853-4”.



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# RUSSIAN EFFORTS TO INCREASE ITS INFLUENCE THROUGH PROPAGANDA AND PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT IN WALLACHIA AND MOLDAVIA DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR

*Esra KIZIL\**

## **Abstract**

During the Crimean War (1853-1856), Russian efforts to expand its control over Wallachia and Moldavia, which were under Ottoman rule, was important due to their strategic location and historical connections. Russia aimed to expand its influence in the Balkans and wanted to create a buffer zone against potential dangers by utilizing the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, perceiving them as an inseparable part of this strategic goal. Russia saw itself as the protector of the Orthodox Christians in the region and therefore, made efforts to develop a sense of closeness and support among the local population here. Thus, in order to increase its influence in Wallachia and Moldavia during the Crimean War, Russia made some attempts to establish a close bond between Russian administrators and soldiers and the local population, as well as to contribute to the development of a positive attitude towards the Russian rule. The main purpose of this study is to present the strategic attempts of Russia to increase its influence in Wallachia and Moldavia against the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War through basic parameters such as diplomacy, religion, culture and military in the light of archival sources, digital archive of periodicals and research works. In addition, one of the prominent purposes of the study is to explain the dimensions of its efforts to create a perception in its favor, to create opposition among its rivals, and to consolidate its influence in the region by making use of the power of mass communication and propaganda in shaping public opinion. It will be tried to present how and for what purpose a pro-Russian perception is wanted to be created through media activities.

**Keywords:** Crimean War, Russia, Ottoman Empire, Wallachia and Moldavia, Propaganda and Perception Management.

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## Introduction

The Crimean War was a conflict that started between Russia and the Ottoman Empire between 1853 and 1856, and later expanded with France, Britain and the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia siding with the Ottomans. The war was based on Russia's diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman Empire to protect Orthodox Christians in Jerusalem and other holy places. The dispute between Catholics and Orthodox over the rights to the Holy Land and the Ottoman refusal to recognise Russia as the official protector of the Orthodox were the main causes of the conflict. Russia, which saw its mission to protect the Christians in the Ottoman Empire as a religious war, wanted to create the perception of a "holy war". Russia's expansionist and aggressive attitude led France and Britain to support the Ottoman Empire. Thus, they aimed to maintain the balance of power between the states by siding with the Ottoman Empire.

The Crimean War, one of the turning points in recent Ottoman and European history, set the stage for many firsts in terms of its alliances, the wide area it spread, its consequences affecting the whole world, the armoured ships, mines, military equipment and war-tactical techniques used, transportation, war surgery, nursing, war reporting and photography<sup>1</sup>. Russia wanted to create the perception of a holy war with the Crimean War, which British historian Orlando Figes described as a dress rehearsal of the First World War<sup>2</sup>. The Holy Places issue turned into a war on 8 February 1853 when Prince Alexander Sergeyevich Menchikof (1787-1869), the envoy sent by the Russian Tsar Nicholas I (1796-1855) to Istanbul for the resolution of the so-called Holy Places issue, rejected the requests of the Orthodox subjects to be protected by Russia and as a result, Russia invaded Wallachia and Moldavia. The Crimean War, which was an important event in Ottoman-Russian relations, reshaped the political cracks and alliances in Europe, causing Austria and Prussia to react to Russia's invasion of Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as Britain and France<sup>3</sup>.

Wallachia and Moldavia were part of Russia's strategy to expand its borders westwards. Situated in the border region between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, Wallachia and Moldavia had a direct impact on the

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<sup>1</sup> Yüksel Çelik, Fatih Yeşil, *Osmanlı Modernleşmesinde Tereddüt ve Teceddüt Yılları 1768-1908*, (İstanbul: Vakıfbank Yayınları, 2023), p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade*, (London: Penguin Books, 2010), p. 444.

<sup>3</sup> Fahir Armaoğlu, *19. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi 1789-1919*, (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2014), pp. 232-238.



border security and relations between the two states. Due to their strategic location, access to the Black Sea and being an important trade centre, these regions have been important for various powers throughout history. They served as a buffer area against Ottoman expansion and allowed Russia to advance its geopolitical ambitions in Eastern Europe. In addition, Wallachia and Moldavia, with their dense Orthodox Christian populations, were regions where Russia sought to increase its influence by utilising religious and cultural commonalities. This partnership was also used in Russia's propaganda activities during the Crimean War against the Ottoman Empire.

The fact that Wallachia and Moldavia were important centres of trade and strategy by providing access to the Black Sea, acting as a buffer against the Ottoman Empire, and their religious-cultural ties played an important role in Russia's geopolitical objectives in Eastern Europe and increasing its influence in the Black Sea. In line with these objectives, Russia effectively used propaganda and perception management tools in Wallachia and Moldavia to support the war effort and gain popular support.

### **1. What was the Purpose of Russia's Propaganda and Perception Management in Wallachia and Moldavia?**

Propaganda is defined as a set of information and messages used systematically and deliberately to influence and direct the thoughts and behaviour of individuals and societies towards a specific goal. Perception management is the process of controlling how people perceive and interpret reality as part of propaganda techniques. This process involves the selective presentation of certain information and messages in order to ensure that the public adopts a certain perspective and reacts in a certain way. Accordingly, propaganda and perception management become important tools for the manipulation and control of large masses. It can make a significant contribution to the course of war by playing a critical role in shaping the beliefs and behaviours of individuals and communities, especially during wartime.

Propaganda draws on a mythology of liberation, linked to the instinct for power and struggle, and in large social movements it has a powerful dynamic and unifying effect on the masses that guarantees victory<sup>4</sup>. During the Crimean War of 1853-1856, Russia, too, used

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<sup>4</sup> Jean-Marie Domenach, *La propagande politique*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), p. 20.

propaganda and perception management in Wallachia and Moldavia to gain local support, legitimise its aggression and win popular sympathy for its war effort. In fact, Russia's propaganda activities emphasised Russia's mission to protect the Orthodox Christian population in Wallachia and Moldavia. Russia argued that it was fighting to protect their people and to free them from Ottoman oppression. Thus, Russia's mission to protect Orthodox Christians was at the centre of the propaganda campaign<sup>5</sup>.

Propaganda and perception management represent not only a military dimension of war, but also a struggle over the mental and emotional dimensions of society and the enemy. During Russia's Crimean War between 1853 and 1856, propaganda and perception management took various forms. In Wallachia and Moldavia Principalities, the aim of propaganda and perception management was to legitimise its aggression by building an administrative and local support base in the region. Propaganda activities were very important in gathering the sympathy and support of the population and local administrators for the war effort. At the same time, another goal was to gain the support of European powers and public opinion.

## **2. How and in What Way did Russia Carry Out Activities?**

Russia's propaganda activities and perception management in Wallachia and Moldavia Principalities during the Crimean War manifested itself as a process of manipulating information and influencing the perception of the public or the enemy in order to achieve its own goals in conflict environments.

When these activities of the Russians in these principalities are evaluated on the basis of two objectives, one is the propaganda carried out on the basis of religion on the Orthodox rulers and the people of Wallachia and Moldavia, and the other is the propaganda carried out in order to change the views of the European States against the Ottoman Empire and to isolate the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the Russians tried to achieve their goals through these three groups: local administrators and the people of Wallachia and Moldavia and also European Powers.

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<sup>5</sup> According to the founding ideology The Tsardom of Russia which gained new power with Russian nationalism in the 19th century, it was to save the Orthodox from the Ottoman Empire and reestablish Constantinople as the center of Eastern Christianity. For detailed information see. Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade*, pp. 38-39.

## 2.1. The Impact on Local Administrators

Russia saw the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia as an effective tool for the realisation of its goals. By exerting pressure on local princes and governing bodies, Russia tried to ensure that pro-Russian figures gained power and increased its own influence. With these strategies, Russia aimed to detach these principalities from the Ottoman Empire and bring them under its influence. The fact that Russia was in frequent contact with both the beys and the boyars, who had influence in the administrative sphere, shows that Russia tried to win them over with various promises.

In order to legitimise its occupation of the region and to avoid a backlash, Russia contacted the local rulers with assurances that they would not harm their status, as stated in the letter of Prince Ghica of Moldavia (1803?-1857) to the Ottoman Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşit Pasha (1800-1858) on 18 June 1853. Russian Empire asked for their consent to provide for the needs of the Russian troops and requested that the commissars of Moldavia liaise with the Russian commanders. Prince Ghica did not find it appropriate to accept these demands and foreseeing that the Russians would soon invade the region, he asked the Ottomans to take precautions<sup>6</sup>. The Russian General Prince Gorchakov (1793-1861) also demanded that the Romanian princes should no longer pay taxes to the Ottomans and completely cut off their relations with them<sup>7</sup>. This situation shows that the Russians ignored the Ottoman sovereignty over Wallachia and Moldavia Principalities and attempted to legitimise their own sovereignty.

On 12 July 1853, Ottoman administrators reported to Bab-ı Âli (Sublime Porte) on the situation in the region. In the report, it was stated that the Russians demanded a deed from the authorities of Wallachia and Moldavia stating that they were not opposed to their entry<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, the seriousness of the situation was emphasised by drawing attention to the possibility that the Wallachian and Moldavia boyars might submit to Russia.

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<sup>6</sup> Harison and Son, *Correspondence Respecting the Rights and Privileges of the Latin and Greek Churches in Turkey*, (London: Printed by Harrison and Son, 1854), pp. 387-388.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı Tarihi V*, Trans. by Nilüfer Epçeli, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2009), p. 1921.

<sup>8</sup> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (Presidency of Türkiye Ottoman Archives) (BOA), *A.MKT. UM.*, 139/14-1, H-05.10.1269 (12.07.1853). It is understood that the Russians took such an initiative in order not to draw international reaction from this measure and not to violate the law of the period.

In the proclamations distributed by the Russians in the Principalities, it was emphasised that Russia had come not as an invader but as a “saviour”<sup>9</sup>. According to Sir William Howard Russell, an Irish war reporter who witnessed the Crimean War, the Russian Tsar’s attempts to win Wallachia and Moldavia to his side had influenced some sections of the population and caused the Russians to gain favour in these regions<sup>10</sup>. The fact that the Russians were welcomed with interest at the Court of Moldavia before the invasion and especially Prince Gorchakov was shown interest by the bishops in Bucharest shows that the Russians’ efforts to increase their influence on local rulers and their religion-based propaganda efforts were successful.

Following the Russian occupation of the principalities, Prince Barbu Stirbei of Wallachia (1799-1869) and Prince Ghica of Moldavia left their countries in October 1853 with the permission of the Ottoman Empire. In the same month, the Russian administration announced that Prince Stirbei and Ghica were dismissed by order of Prince Gorchakov<sup>11</sup>. This situation shows that both states were struggling for dominance over the principalities. In order to increase its influence in the Principalities and to ensure that they act independently from the Ottoman Empire, Russia established intensive communication with the local rulers and tried to attract them to its side with various promises. These measures of the Russians on the local rulers actually reflect their efforts to impose the perception that they were the sole power and to increase their influence.

## 2.2. The Impact on Local Population

While trying to win over the local administrators in Wallachia and Moldavia to its side, Russia also tried to win the hearts and minds of the people by using Orthodox identity and religious beliefs on the front line and used religious propaganda as an effective tool to gain psychological superiority over the Ottoman administration in these regions. Since the majority of the people of principalities were Orthodox Christians, Russia used this common religious bond to present itself as a saviour. The Russian authorities carried out an intensive propaganda activity in order to gain the trust of the people through Orthodoxy and to create a resistance against the Ottoman rule.

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<sup>9</sup> BOA., *HR. MKT.*, 61/12, H-01.10.1269 (08.07.1853).

<sup>10</sup> Sir William Howard Russell, *The Crimean War*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009). p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Togay Seçkin Birbudak, “1853-1856 Kırım Harbi’nde Osmanlı-Avusturya İlişkileri”, *Belleten*, Vol. 82, No. 293, (2018), p. 243.

On 20 June 1853, Russian General Gorchakov, who was appointed by the Russian Emperor, presented a proclamation to the people of Wallachia and Moldavia, which included the purpose of the invasion, and here he was especially highlighted as the protector of the rights of the Orthodox<sup>12</sup>. The Russians claimed to be in these principalities as the protectors of the Orthodox people, seeking to take advantage of the religious connection<sup>13</sup>. Thus, efforts were made to make the people perceive Russia as a saviour rather than an occupier. In addition, Russia, in the proclamation it issued to the people of Wallachia and Moldavia, promised that they would preserve the existing administrative order, that they had come to ensure peace, that Russian soldiers would not burden the people, that no taxes would be levied and that agriculture and trade could be carried out safely, and asked the people to obey the existing order and administrators.<sup>14</sup> This situation can also be interpreted as an attempt to legitimise Russia's future actions in the principalities.

Intelligence reports from the region to Bab-ı Âli reported that advertisements stating that Russia would expand its occupation in Wallachia and Moldavia and would not withdraw were pasted on the streets<sup>15</sup>. While the Ottoman Empire took measures in response to these reports, Russia prevented the announcement of the concessions promised by the Ottoman Empire to the principalities. On 20 June 1853, the Russians published a proclamation containing concessions to the principalities and wanted to create the perception that the people would have these rights only through the Russians<sup>16</sup>. Accordingly, by asking them to believe that they had certain rights in the region only through the Russians, they ignored the Ottoman presence and wanted to create a perception in their favour. In other words, by preventing the Ottoman commitment through

<sup>12</sup> Kezban Acar, *Ortaçağ'dan Sovyet Devrimi'ne Rusya*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), p. 236.

<sup>13</sup> BOA., *A.MKT.UM.*, 139/14-1. In addition, in the report sent to Bab-ı Âli by District Governor Abdülhalim Galib Bey (?- 1876), it was stated that on 3 July, the Russian General crossed the Prut River to the town of Iasi with 180,000 troops and that a proclamation was printed and announced to be distributed to the people here and that the main purpose of this siege was to save them. For further information, see; BOA., *HR. MKT.*, 61/12.

<sup>14</sup> BOA., *HR.TO.*, 418/136, M-20.06.1853.

<sup>15</sup> Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi / Archive of the Directorate of Military History and Strategic Studies of the Turkish General Staff, (ATASE), *Osmanlı-Rus Harbi (Kırım Harbi) / Ottoman-Russian War (Crimean War)*, 9/7/1, M-09.01.1854.

<sup>16</sup> BOA., *HR.TO.*, 418-136; BOA., *A.MKT.UM.*, 139/14-1.

the manifesto he published, he aimed to increase the Principalities' loyalty to him and to be subject only to him.

After Russia occupied the principalities, it tried to legitimise the situation by stating in the documents it distributed to the Kocabaşı<sup>17</sup> that it had not received a positive response despite notifying the Ottoman Empire of its decision to protect the rights of the Orthodox Church, and as a result, troops were sent to the region<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, he expected the support of the people in this holy cause. Although not a great majority, the promises he had made had begun to have an effect. The fact that some militia forces in Wallachia and Moldavia were under the command of Russian General Sala proved this<sup>19</sup>. In his letter to the Russian Tsar, Russian Commander Paskevich (1782-1856) called on the Christian militias to rise up against the Turks, stating that their influence among the Christian community in the Ottoman Empire was an important weapon that could not be blocked even by Western powers, and thus he wanted to force the Turks to make concessions without the need for war<sup>20</sup>. Paskevich justified this proposal on religious grounds: Orthodox unity.

According to the report sent to Bab-ı Âli by Bucharest in December 1853, the population was in economic distress and did not pay taxes, and the people were turning to rebellion and refusing to obey the beys. In the same report, it was also reported that the Russians were in contact with the Prince of Wallachia and rewarded him<sup>21</sup>. It was requested to take measures against Russia's attempts to increase its influence over the people. Because Russia could turn this state of turmoil in its favour. Press and media sources of the period were among the most important instruments influencing public opinion. They drew attention to the issue between Russia and the Principalities with their comments. It is possible that Russia, through such media organs, used propaganda to increase its influence in the region and

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<sup>17</sup> In Ottoman society, Kocabaşı refers to the prominent and well-known persons of the Christian subjects living in certain regions. For further information, see; DİA, "Kocabaşı", *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 26, (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayın Matbaacılık, 2002), pp. 140-141.

<sup>18</sup> BOA., A.AMD., 51/1, H-06.07.1270 (04.04.1854).

<sup>19</sup> *The New York herald*. (New York, NY), "Military Operations on Danube", Dec. 31, 1853.

<sup>20</sup> Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade*, p. 179. In his manifestos to the Balkan Slavs, Russian Tsar Nicholas emphasised that Russia was waging a religious war to save them from the Turks, while Russian army commanders donated bells to churches in Christian towns and converted mosques into churches in order to win the support of the people. For further information, see; Harison and Son, *Correspondence Respecting the Rights and Privileges of the Latin and Greek Churches in Turkey*, pp. 415-418.

<sup>21</sup> ATASE, *Osmanlı-Rus Harbi (Kırım Harbi)*, 5/15/11, M-20.12.1853.



gain public support against the Ottoman administration. As a proof of this situation, the newspaper “*Agnam*”, which was being published in Wallachia and Moldavia at that time, invited the people to the war by creating the perception that the Ottoman Empire, which had made false promises for centuries, would not grant them any rights and privileges, and that the wars being fought for this reason were for the salvation of Christians<sup>22</sup>. Russia also banned the import of European newspapers that favoured the Ottoman side to the principalities<sup>23</sup>. With this measure, Russia aimed to control the flow of information in the occupied territories and strengthen its own propaganda. The ban may have also restricted the connection of the people in the occupied territories with the outside world, thus enabling Russia to carry out its occupation policies more effectively. We can say that newspapers, magazines and media tools may have played an important role in shaping public opinion and supporting Russia’s political goals at that time. Today, press activities are also important in terms of public perception management.

The Russians also used Russian intellectuals and journalists in their propaganda activities in the region. This was an element of consolidating Russian hegemonic power in the region. According to Rostislav Andreevich Fadeev (1824-1883), one of the Russian Panslavist journalists and military historians of the period, he claimed that if the Romanians did not ally with Russia, the region could become a province of Austria, and the Romanians could be relegated to the status of an inferior race<sup>24</sup>. He argued that Russia was the only power to support this independence. *Lupok* or *Lupki*<sup>25</sup> paintings were used as a propaganda tool to create a favourable public perception of Russia’s wars in the 19th century. Orthodoxy, faith in the tsarist system, and patriotism were all portrayed in

<sup>22</sup> Cezmi Karasu, *Kırım Savaşı Sırasında Osmanlı Diplomasisi (1853-1856)*, Doktoral Thesis, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1998), pp. 93-94.

<sup>23</sup> A newspaper published by Austria in Bucharest and containing favourable opinions about the Ottoman Empire was banned by Russia. European newspapers favourable to the Ottoman Empire were also banned from entering the country. The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, exercised its right to protest against these situations and fulfilled its duty to protect its independence. BOA., *A.MKT.UM.*, 139/14.

<sup>24</sup> Lucien J. Frary, Mara Kozelsky, *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), p. 56.

<sup>25</sup> For detailed information about *Lubki*, see; Stephen Michael Norris, *Russian Images of War: The Lubok And Wartime Culture, 1812-1917*, Phd Thesis, (Virginia: Corcoran Department of History University of Virginia, 2002) and Kezban Acar, “Kırım Savaşı (1853-56) Döneminde Propaganda: Rus Popüler Kültüründe Savaş ve Düşman İmgesi”, *Bilig Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, No. 88, (2019), pp. 113-136.

the lupok. Encouraged and funded by the government, the lupoks depicted the courage and heroism of Russian troops. Enmity towards the Turks and the British was portrayed and presented as a triumph of the holy faith of the Russians over the Turks.

In order to consolidate Russia's control in the region during the occupation, Russia prohibited the people from speaking Turkish, English, French and Austrian languages, while allowing them to speak Italian, Russian and Greek languages<sup>26</sup>. It is understood that this language policy of Russia aimed to increase its cultural and political influence on the people in the occupied regions. Such restrictions were intended to weaken the people's ties with foreign powers and strengthen its own influence. On the other hand, it aimed to legitimise its occupation and create loyalty among these groups. Russia, which had consolidated its influence in the region through its language policy, would thus facilitate the seizure of control after the occupation. Russia's attempts to take the principalities under control also included espionage activities. Throughout history, spies have always been one of the most important tools for states to easily organise and maintain control. Russia also used spies to inform the people of Wallachia and Moldavia to arm themselves.



**Figure 1:** Execution of a Russian Spy (1854)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Erdoğan Keleş, Osmanlı, *İngiltere ve Fransa İlişkileri Bağlamında Kırım Savaşı*, Phd Thesis, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2009), p. 91.

<sup>27</sup> Prints, Drawings and Watercolors from the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection. Brown Digital Repository. Brown University Library. <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:233737>.



**Figure 2:** Capture of a Russian Spy in the Balkan Pass<sup>28</sup>

Russian spies spread throughout the Ottoman territory and incited the population by calling for armaments<sup>29</sup>. The Russian diplomat in Vienna, Feliks Fonton, visited the Principalities in the autumn of 1853, but it seems that his main purpose was to find out whether there was an anti-Turkish uprising in the region. The Russians also found collaborators within the Ottoman Empire and even Baron Alexandre Paul Delesnor, a prominent Wallachian figure in Istanbul, was accused of spying for Russia<sup>30</sup>. Russia created a wide network of agents in the Ottoman territories, urged the population to take up arms and encouraged anti-Turkish uprisings, and tried to manipulate the political situation in the region through diplomatic and espionage activities.

<sup>28</sup> “Capture of a Russian spy in the Balkan Pass” (1854). Prints, Drawings and Watercolors from the Anne P.K. Brown Military Collection. Brown Digital Repository. Brown University Library. <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:233568/>

<sup>29</sup> *Le Spectateur Dijon*, 28 février 1854, page 1. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb344022041/date>.

<sup>30</sup> İbrahim Köremezli, “Shpion vs. Casus: Ottoman and Russian Intelligence in the Balkans during the Crimean War (1853–56)”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 2, (2014), pp. 200-201.

### 2.3. Efforts to Influence the European Powers

During the Crimean War, Russia made great efforts to influence the European powers and to create a perception in its favour. Its propaganda emphasised Russia's role in protecting Orthodox Christians and highlighted the Ottoman Empire's oppression of its Christian subjects. Moreover, Russia portrayed itself as the guarantor of stability in Eastern Europe. Another step to increase the effectiveness of Russian propaganda and the subsequent struggle in this area was to influence other powers and the local population through diplomatic contacts and the press before confronting the great powers of European politics.

Russia called for the liberation of Wallachians and Moldavians, Serbs and Bulgarians, who had been Christians for centuries, from Ottoman rule and appealed to the entire Christian community to help fulfill this holy mission. With such a declaration, the Tsar actually aimed to gain the support of Christian Europe and to create the perception that they should definitely not side with the Turks in a war against Christians<sup>31</sup>. It was obvious that in his manifestos to the Slavs in the region, Tsar Nicholas was trying to create the perception that he was waging a religious war to save them from Muslim domination.

Russia made various diplomatic attempts during the Crimean War in order to gain the support of Europe. In particular, it tried to form an alliance with Austria and Prussia because it thought that these states were more moderate in their attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. However, although Prussia and Austria were not directly involved in the war like Britain and France, they decided to act jointly against Russia's occupation of Wallachia and Moldavia with a treaty signed in Berlin on 20 April 1854<sup>32</sup>. Although the Tsar invited the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph

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<sup>31</sup> Norman Rich, *Why the Crimean War?: A Cautionary Tale*, (London: Univeristy Press of New England, 1985), pp. 93-94. During the Crimean War, Russian General Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich, in his letters to Foreign Minister Gorchakov, stated that the reason for Russia's war with the Ottoman Empire was to increase its influence in the east and emphasised that arming Christians could serve Russia's expansion in the Balkans. This situation reflects that Russia's main aim in the region was to become the sole dominant power beyond religious patronage. For detailed information, see. Kezban Acar, "Kırım Savaşı (1853-56) Döneminde Propaganda: Rus Popüler Kültüründe Savaş ve Düşman İmgesi", pp. 117-118.

<sup>32</sup> Togay Seçkin Birbudak, "1853-1856 Kırım Harbi'nde Osmanlı-Avusturya İlişkileri", p. 248. News from the European press of the period reflected the attitude of the states towards Russia. An article published in the official newspaper of Prussia was also seen in French in one of the Belgian newspapers, and the content of this news item belittled the

(1830-1916) to join him in a joint action against the Ottomans and to liberate the Balkan peoples from the Ottoman rule, Austria took a more anti-Russian stance. However, Tsar Nicholas continued with his plans to destroy the Ottomans, even if he failed to gain the Austrian alliance<sup>33</sup>.

Russia, which could not get the support it wanted from Austria, made active attempts to gain the support of Britain and France, which had a considerable influence on the European front. In these attempts, Russia emphasised its role of protecting the Christians in the Ottoman Empire, especially its mission to defend and protect the rights of Orthodox Christians. Russia tried to create a perception that Christians were being mistreated in the Ottoman-controlled territories and tried to justify its position in the war by contacting European states through its diplomats. Through their diplomatic relations with European powers, the Russians tried to attract powers such as Britain and France to their side by explaining that the occupation was not permanent and that they would not make any changes in the administration. On 12 August 1853, British Diplomat Sir George Hamilton Seymour (1797-1880) reported to British Foreign Secretary George William Frederick Villiers, 4th earl of Clarendon (1800-1870) about his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Count Nesselrode (1780-1862) in St. Petersburg. In the meeting, Count Nesselrode said that they would not prolong the occupation in the Principalities, that they did not make any changes in the administration, that they paid for everything and that they would leave the Principalities in better condition than they found them<sup>34</sup>. In order to change the course of the war, Russia is trying to break the alliance between Britain and France. There are differences of opinion among political experts as to which policy Britain will choose in the event of France's separation from Britain and whether it will continue to provide aid to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman side, on the other hand, received reports from the region that it should take quick and decisive defence measures against Russian attacks and carefully evaluate its diplomatic and military measures in order to secure support from Europe and maintain the satisfaction of the people<sup>35</sup>.

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proclamation of the Russian Emperor. For detailed information, see. BOA., *MKT.UM.*, 139/14-1.

<sup>33</sup> Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War: 1853-1856*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> Harison and Sons, *Correspondence Respecting the Rights and Privileges of the Latin and Greek Churches in Turkey*, 2. Chapter, pp. 49-50.

<sup>35</sup> BOA., *A.MKT.U.*, 139/14-3.

However, Russia's diplomatic efforts were largely unsuccessful, as Britain and France considered it more important for their strategic interests to preserve the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Catholic France and Protestant Britain did not participate in this "holy mission", although the Tsar tried to create the perception that his aggressive attitude towards the Ottoman Empire was motivated by a desire to defend Christianity against Islam. The threatening behaviour of the Russians created a security concern that the European powers could not allow the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and Britain, France, Austria and Prussia decided to act together for peace under the leadership of Austria. Britain and France, in particular, considered it more important for their strategic interests to preserve the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and prevent Russia from reaching the Mediterranean, and therefore supported the Ottoman Empire in the war despite Russia's propaganda efforts.

Russia, which could not find support in the international arena, was trying to get support from the Slavic communities living in the Balkans. Considering that they had the same religious denomination as Russia, it started to implement its perception of the Holy War through these communities. In January 1854, the British consul in Wallachia reported that the Russians 'recruited a corps of volunteers, mostly Greeks, Albanians, Serbs and Bulgarians, into the Russian army as "Greek-Slavonic Legion"'<sup>36</sup>. He noted that they had been called to a "holy war" against the Turks, and that they were to form a crusader group to be equipped and armed at the expense of the Russian military authorities. Although the idea of a Holy War failed to elicit a significant response from the Rumanians, and the Russians had some success among the Bulgarians, only a few hundred volunteered<sup>37</sup>. In particular, the Russians used the Greeks as a propaganda tool and tried to win them over to their side. The Russians, who seemed to be successful in this endeavour, campaigned for the 'Holy War' together with the Greeks. In January 1854, the British consul in Wallachia reported that Greeks also took part in the volunteer units registered in Russia's struggle<sup>38</sup>. This was also reported in the European press, and the French cartoon magazine *Le Charivari* (Figure 3) caricatured Tsar Nicholas trying to persuade the Greek King Otto to enter the war with the promise of reviving the Byzantine Empire.

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<sup>36</sup> Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade*, p. 186.

<sup>37</sup> Radu Florescu, *The Struggle Against Russia in The Romanian Principalities A Problem in Anglo-Turkish Diplomacy, 1821-1854*, (Center for Romanian Studies, 2022), p. 240.

<sup>38</sup> Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade*, p. 186.





**Figure 3:** Tsar Nicholas and Greek King Otto I<sup>39</sup>

Although Russia endeavoured to side with the European powers against the Ottomans because they were members of the same religion, it was wrong. Beyond the political leaders, a public opinion against Russia was formed among the European public as a result of the press activities.

The Ottoman Empire didn't keep quiet about the pro-Russian attitude of the Greeks. Due to the unseemly behaviour of the Greek consul who was present when the Russian troops entered Bucharest, the Ottoman Empire took back the Consular Berat given to him and showed its clear attitude against the Russian-Greek rapprochement<sup>40</sup>.

When Russia could not find support from the European powers, it tried to spread the perception of 'Holy War' by seeking support from Balkan societies, but it had limited success in this endeavour and could not find the support it was looking for in European public opinion. In Europe, in Prussia, Belgium and England, the press activities against the Russian government, which minimised the Russian government, gradually increased<sup>41</sup>. It is generally accepted that the British press played a key role

<sup>39</sup> Robert D. Farber University Archives and Special Collections, Brandeis University Library, <https://www.brandeis.edu/library/archives/essays/special-collections/crimean-war.html>.

<sup>40</sup> BOA., A.AMD., 48/40, H-10.11.1269 (17.07.1853) and also see. BOA., İ.HR.. 330/21271 H-23.11.1269 (28.08.1853).

<sup>41</sup> BOA., A.MKT.UM., 139-14.

by informing the public about the course of the war and the condition of the soldiers. It provided detailed descriptions of the battles and conflicts against Russia. Newspapers such as *the Times*, *the Illustrated London News*, and especially the cartoon magazine *Punch* created a public perception of the justification of the wars against Russia. In Catholic France, *the Union franc-comtoise* and *the Spectateur de Dijon* (Figure 4) also reported on the need to stop the invasion of the Orthodox Tsar<sup>42</sup>.



Figure 4: *Le Spectateur Dijon* (28 Feb 1854)<sup>43</sup>

Russia did not find the support it was looking for from the European states as well as the public opinion. On the contrary, the European press played an important role in informing and guiding public opinion by creating a strong perception of the justification of the wars against Russia. In particular, the press in England and France criticised Russia's aggression against the Ottoman Empire, increasing public support for the war and emphasising the need to stop the invasion of the Orthodox Tsar.

<sup>42</sup> Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade*, pp. 202-203.

<sup>43</sup> *Le Spectateur*, 28 Feb.1854, p. 1/4. <https://www.retronews.fr/journal/le-spectateur/28-fevrier-1854/2259/4923740/1>.

### 3. How Successful was Russia with these Activities?

The Russians were generally unsuccessful in propaganda and perception management in Wallachia and Moldavia during the Crimean War. Although Russia tried to impose the idea of a “Holy War” on the Romanian rulers and population, they largely failed. While Russia failed in its efforts to create a united Russian-Romanian union against the Ottoman Empire, the Romanians switched to the Ottoman side and fought alongside the Turks under the command of General Magheru, and the Russian idea of the Holy War was largely ineffective on the Romanians<sup>44</sup>. Petr Vladimirovich Alabin, an officer in the Russian army who occupied the region, stated that although they tried to save the people living in the Principality from ignorance and savagery, they could not get the support they wanted from them<sup>45</sup>.

The activities of the Romanian intellectuals Dumitru Brătianu, Nicolae Golescu and Constantin Rosetti, who defended the autonomy of the Romanian people, showed that Russia’s propaganda did not receive the desired response. With the budget provided to them from London and Paris, they established a Romanian Library for propaganda purposes<sup>46</sup>. They published articles condemning Russia through articles in the daily press and weekly newspapers. As the war progressed, Romanian propagandists became bolder and began to make direct appeals to the public. These activities led to a public perception against Russia. Russia, on the other hand, did not delay in taking measures against the activities of Romanian propagandists. Russia imposed censorship on the press and prevented European newspapers that published in favour of the Ottomans from entering the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, considered this as an act against the independence of the state and protested against Russia<sup>47</sup>.

In order to consolidate their power in the region and ensure the permanence of their rule, the Russians resorted to all means: the establishment of a Russian party, the occupation of certain strategic roads, the prevention of communication with the West, the prevention of travel

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<sup>44</sup> Radu Florescu, *The Struggle Against Russia in The Romanian Principalities A Problem in Anglo-Turkish Diplomacy, 1821-1854*, p. 201.

<sup>45</sup> Lucien J. Frary, Mara Kozelsky, *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>46</sup> Radu Florescu, *The Struggle Against Russia in The Romanian Principalities A Problem in Anglo-Turkish Diplomacy, 1821-1854*, p. 201.

<sup>47</sup> BOA., A.MKT.UM., 139/14-1.

and censorship of the press<sup>48</sup>. Although the Tsar always emphasised that he had come to Wallachia and Moldavia not to disturb order but as the defender of the Orthodox subjects, after a while letters from the principalities were found to bear a Russian stamp<sup>49</sup>.

A British embassy official reported to the Porte about the situation in the region that the Russians had started to plunder the Principalities financially. According to this report, the Russian army did not give money in return for the supplies they took from the people, but only gave promissory notes<sup>50</sup>. On 22 July 1853, according to another report from the region to the Porte, Russian troops had forcibly entered the territory of Moldavia, there were no troops in Babadag, Tolci, Isakci, Măcin, Hârşova and Dobruja, the people were miserable due to the behaviour of the Russians and it was requested to send troops to these region for the protection of these regions<sup>51</sup>. As the Russian invasion of the principalities progressed and the situation of the population became increasingly difficult, the Romanian propagandists became bolder, organising speaking tours and making direct appeals to the population. The main theme of all their speeches was the struggle against Russian oppression<sup>52</sup>.

In fact, the territories of Wallachia and Moldavia became part of Russia's expansionist policy and were subjected to occupation. To become the dominant power in the region, Russia sought to turn the situation in its favor not only through battles on the front lines but also through propaganda activities. Despite considerable efforts, its repressive policies and administrative changes led to public backlash. As a result of all these actions, a perception against the Russians emerged among the people of Wallachia and Moldavia, and they did not receive the support they desired. Although the Russians tried to align with European Powers against the Ottoman Empire, they were mistaken. Due to media activities, a public

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<sup>48</sup> Radu Florescu, "The Rumanian Principalities and the Origins of the Crimean War", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 43 No. 100, (1964), p. 51. During the Russian occupation, which lasted from July 1853 to August 1854, Russia arrested recalcitrant boyars whose support it could not obtain, confiscated food and other basic necessities, officers and soldiers were housed in the homes of local residents, liberals who viewed Russia as an occupier were expelled, strict censorship was imposed on the press, Western books were banned, mass gatherings were banned and firearms were confiscated. For detailed information see. Radu Florescu, *The Struggle Against Russia in The Romanian Principalities A Problem in Anglo-Turkish Diplomacy*, p. 240.

<sup>49</sup> Erdoğan Keleş, Osmanlı, İngiltere ve Fransa İlişkileri Bağlamında Kırım Savaşı, p. 89.

<sup>50</sup> Cezmi Karasu, *Kırım Savaşı Sırasında Osmanlı Diplomasisi (1853-1856)*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>51</sup> ATASE, *Osmanlı-Rus Harbi (Kırım Harbi)*, 8/3/9, M-20.08.1583.

<sup>52</sup> Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade*, p. 170

opinion against Russia formed in Europe. During this process, Russia faced counter-propaganda from Romanian leaders, intellectuals, and the public, as well as from European leaders and public opinion.

### **Conclusions**

Russia's propaganda and perception management over Wallachia and Moldavia was carried out extensively and through various methods. It aimed to influence the people by utilizing the emotional ties of the Orthodox community. Religion was used as an important tool in propaganda and perception management, with Russia's mission to protect Orthodox Christians being a central theme.

Russia made considerable efforts to increase its influence in Wallachia and Moldavia through propaganda activities. Local administrators, the local population and European powers were the main targets of Russia's activities.

Russia tried to legitimize its occupation by establishing diplomatic relations with local administrators and conducting propaganda among the people. Despite attempting to impose the idea of a "Holy War" to create a religious perception, it largely failed to resonate with the Romanians. The repressive policies implemented by Russia during the occupation and the economic exploitation of the people led to various reactions and caused people to question the true intentions of the Russian administration.

Russia assumed that the Christian nations in Europe would join it in this "holy mission." However, its attempts to influence European powers to take a stance against the Ottoman Empire also failed. Russia's expansionist policy conflicted with the interests of major powers. As a result, it did not receive the desired support from either European states or public opinion. Particularly, the press in countries like Britain and France published articles criticizing Russia's actions and questioning the legitimacy of the war. Europeans stood with the Ottomans against Russia's expansionist and aggressive policies. They supported the Ottomans in the propaganda field as well as on the battlefield. The Ottoman Empire also showed various reactions to Russia's propaganda and endeavored to keep the people of the Principalities on its side with the support of European powers.

Despite attempts to create a holy war, neither Wallachia and Moldavia Principalities nor the European states provided sufficient support to Russia. Consequently, Russia did not achieve its goals through

propaganda activities and perception management. While Russia may have failed to bind the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia to itself in terms of propaganda and perception management, this process greatly contributed to Romania's independence. Developments in propaganda activities resulted in the Romanian people gaining the support of European powers like Britain and France. This was a significant turning point on the path to independence because they now knew well from whom and how they could get help.



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## THE OTTOMAN COSSACKS IN THE 1854 DANUBE CAMPAIGN DURING THE EASTERN WAR

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### Abstract

The Eastern War (1853-1856) constituted a pivotal moment in the history of Southeastern Europe's modernisation, giving rise to novel circumstances in the Lower Danube region. One of the most striking examples was the participation of the 1st Regiment of Ottoman Cossacks in the Danube Campaign of 1854. The Ottoman Cossacks were under the command of Mehmet Sadyk Pasha (Michał Czajkowski), who had converted to Islam and become a subject of the Ottoman Empire in 1850. The 1st Cossack Regiment was constituted in Istanbul and Shumen from the Post-Commonwealth gentry, comprising officers and privates of diverse backgrounds, including Cossacks, Bulgarians, Vlachs, and other communities. The Cossack regiment unified individuals from a multitude of ethnic groups, collectively referred to as "small" peoples, in their opposition to Russian imperialism. These individuals formed an alliance with European powers and became part of the reformed Ottoman army. They participated in operations at Silistra, Giurgiu, Bucharest, Galati, Tulcea, and Maximeni, and were subsequently designated as one of the most proficient cavalry units within the Ottoman military. At the conclusion of the 1854 campaign, the Ottoman Minister of War approved the establishment of the 2nd Regiment. In early 1855, Sadyk Pasha's plans included the creation of a territorial Cossack autonomy in the Lower Danube region and the formalisation of Ukraine and Poland as independent states. The very fact of the Ottoman Cossacks' existence had a significant intellectual impact on the process of nation-building in the European part of the Ottoman Empire during and after the Eastern War.

**Keywords:** Eastern War 1853-1856, Danube Campaign 1854, Ottoman Cossacks, Mykhailo Czajkowski (Mehmet Sadyk-pasha), Danube Principalities, Wallachia (Eflak), Moldavia (Bogdan), Bessarabia (Budjak), Dobrudja.

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## **Introduction**

The Eastern War is regarded as one of the conflicts that preceded the First World War. The magnitude of the conflict, the involvement of the world's foremost nations, and the war's ultimate outcome collectively substantiate this categorization. The Eastern War constituted a pivotal moment in the history of the national liberation struggle of the peoples of South-Eastern Europe, giving rise to novel circumstances for their collaboration in the struggle against great power imperialism. One of the most illustrative instances of such collaboration was the battlefield of the 1st Regiment of Ottoman Cossacks. The Ottoman Cossacks constituted a military unit led by Mykhailo Czajkowski (Mehmed Sadyk Pasha) that united representatives of numerous enslaved peoples in the struggle for national liberation, forming an alliance with European powers and operating as part of the Ottoman army. The unit comprised 180 officers and 1,200 cavalymen of Polish, Old-Believer, Jewish, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar, Romanian and other nationalities.

### **1. The Idea of the Cossack Regiment at the Ottoman Army before 1854**

Michal Czajkowski (Mehmet Sadyk Pasha), the inspirer and leader of the Cossack movement, was a prominent writer, military and public figure. The extensive and multifaceted nature of his personality, coupled with his considerable influence on the modernisation of South-Eastern Europe, has long been the subject of intensive and detailed study by historians from Poland, Russia, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Ukraine. Influences from the Pan-Slavic movement, which gained popularity among Russian Empire emigrants from 1831 onwards, led to the formulation of a project for a future Slavic Union in 1837. It was envisaged that Cossack military units would play a distinctive role in the establishment of a Slavic federation. In these plans, the Cossacks were declared a real military force, while at the same time symbolising an inextricable link with the Cossack (Ukrainian) heritage. This Pan-Slavic concept was in conflict with the Slavophilism that was prevalent in the Russian Empire, which posited the exclusive role of the Russian people in the planned Slavic community.

In the 1840s, two factions of political emigrants from the Russian and Austrian empires arrived in the Ottoman Empire: revolutionary democrats and conservatives. The idealism of the revolutionary democrats



constrained the scope of their actions within the Ottoman state<sup>1</sup>. Simultaneously, Adam Czartoryski's conservative faction, colloquially designated as "Hotel Lambert," exhibited greater flexibility in this regard, endeavoring to integrate ostensibly disparate objectives within its Balkan operations<sup>2</sup>:

- 1) To reinforce the position of the Ottoman Empire, an adversary of the Russian Empire.
- 2) To facilitate the ascendance of the so-called minor nations and their self-awareness, predicated upon the anti-imperialist movement.

Czajkowski's considerable diplomatic dexterity, flexibility, and political talent enabled him to serve as Adam Czartoryski's principal agent in the Balkans. He entered the Ottoman service at the request of the Russian government, which demanded his expulsion from Turkey in 1850. Having attained the rank of general and commander of a Cossack regiment, M. Czajkowski, operating under the Ottoman title of Mehmet Sadyk, leveraged his intimate connections with the ruling elite to help the multiethnic population of Dobrudja.

M. Czajkowski's contributions towards the establishment of Cossack units within the Ottoman military are extensively documented in numerous published materials, including memoirs, epistolary works, and literary studies<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the history of the Cossack units in the Ottoman army is covered in the works of Polish<sup>4</sup>, Turkish<sup>5</sup>, Bulgarian and Ukrainian

<sup>1</sup> Zigmunt Milkowski (Jez T.), *Od kolebki przez zycie*, (Kraków: Nakł. Polskiej Akademji Umiejętności, 1936), Vol. 1, p. 371.

<sup>2</sup> Vanda Smochovska-Petrova, *Michał Czajkowski – Sadyk pasha i Bylgarsko vyzrazhdene*, (Sofia: Bolgrska Akademia Nauk, 1973), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Jadwiga Chudzikowska, *Dziwne życie Sadyka Paszy*, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971); Vanda Smochovska-Petrova, *Michał Czajkowski – Sadyk pasha i Bylgarsko vyzrazhdene*, (Sofia: Bolgrska Akademia Nauk, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Franciszek Rawita-Gawronski, *Michał Czajkowski (Sadyk-pasha). Jego zycie, dzialalnosc wojskowa i literacka. Zarys biograficzny*, (Petersburg: Księg. K. Grendyszyńskiego, 1901); Paweł Wierzbicki, "Dziennik generała Feliksa Breńskiego, dowódcy brygady w Dywizji Kozaków Sultanskich", *Akta Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu*, Vol. 5 (2000), pp. 17-94.; Alisiya Kuletska, "Pomizh Pol'shcheyu, Turechchinoyu i Rosiyeyu: Mikhal Chaykovs'kiy (Mekhmet Sadik pasha) i problemi "kozachchini" v XIX st.", *Prichornomors'kiy region u konteksti svitovoï politiki: istoriya ta s'ogodennya*, (Odesa, 2008), pp. 117-125.

<sup>5</sup> Musa Gümüş "Mehmed Sadik Pasa (Michał Czajkowski) ve Osmanlı devlet'nde kazak suvari alayı", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 5/3 (2010), pp. 1362-1375.; Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Metin Ünver, "Wanda ya da

historians<sup>6</sup>. The intellectual interplay between Ottoman Cossack Pan-Slavism and Zionism is another interesting topic of research<sup>7</sup>.

Quite unexpectedly, deep ties between the Ottoman Cossacks and the struggle for independence of the Caucasian peoples were revealed, which was reflected in ideological contacts, as well as in armed and material assistance<sup>8</sup>. M. Czajkowski and his associates considered one of the important tasks of Cossackophile propaganda to be the activation of independent movements among the Cossack population of the Russian Empire<sup>9</sup>.

Moreover, the special services of the Russian Empire revealed Sadyk Pasha's (M. Czajkowski) ties to the Ukrainophile movement in Ukraine. In particular, in the 1850s and 1860s, reports by Russian border and gendarmerie officials repeatedly testified to fears of agitation and other activities by the Ottoman Cossacks. This was particularly evident during the Eastern War of 1853-1856, when several squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks were recruited from prisoners of war of the Russian army, including Ukrainians, Poles and Tatars<sup>10</sup>.

It is of significant importance that the multinational Cossack unit engages in a constructive and informed debate on the subject of historical reconciliation between the Tatars, Ukrainians and Poles. This concept had already been explored in the literary works of M. Czajkowski. As early as

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Mehmed Sadik (Cayka) Pasa'nin Turkiye Anekdotlari", *Tarih Dergisi*, 2017, №1, p. 99-118.

<sup>6</sup> Ivan Lysyak-Rudnits'kiy, "Kozats'kiy proyekt Mikhala Chaykovs'kogo pid chas Krim's'koyi viyny: analiz idey", *Lysyak-Rudnits'kiy I. Istorichni ese*, (K.: Osnovy, 1994), Vol. 1, pp. 251-263; Alexander Zlatanov, "Michał Czajkowski/Sadik Pasha and His Ottoman Cossack Regiment as Agents of Modernization", *Transforming Southeast Europe During the Long 19th Century: Persons and Personalities as Agents of Modernization in the Ottoman and the Post-Ottoman space*, ed. Antonova-Goleva, B., Masheva, I., (Leiden: Brill, 2024), pp. 33-66.

<sup>7</sup> Andrzej Fabianowski, "Legion żydowski – mistyczny testament Adama Mickiewicza", *Wiek XIX. Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego im. Adama Mickiewicza*, rok VIII (L) 2015, pp. 275-288.

<sup>8</sup> Przemysław Adamczewski, "On the correspondence of Mikhail Czajkowski and Adam Czartoryski with Imam Shamil and his naibs", *Istoriya, Arkheologiya i etnografiya Kavkaza*, Vol. 14, 3, (2018), pp. 40-69.

<sup>9</sup> Andrzej Furier, "Polska aktywność polityczna i wojskowa na Kaukazie w XIX wieku", *Z badań nad historią i współczesnością Rosji, Azji Centralnej i Kaukazu*, (Torun, 2020), pp. 217-244.

<sup>10</sup> Volodymyr Poltorak. "Dokumenty pro M. Chaykovs'koho v Derzhavnomu arkhivi Odes'koyi oblasti", *Chornomors'ka mynuvshyna*, Vyp. 5, (Odesa, 2010), pp. 143-151.

1837, in the novel *Vernygora*, he advocated for an alliance between Poles and Ukrainians and Tatars. In his “Cossack Tales,” he depicted the tragic fate of three friends—a Tatar, a Ukrainian, and a Pole (the novel “Grave”). This emphasised the need for their understanding. Therefore, the participation of Poles, Ukrainians, and Tatars in Cossack units was the embodiment of Mehmet Sadyk’s already established concept.

## **2. Creation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cossack Regiment and Supporting Documents**

Formally speaking, M. Czajkowski (Sadyk) didn’t put forward the idea of creating the Ottoman Cossacks, but of “restoring” them. Historians notes the Polish affiliation of most of these units<sup>11</sup>, however, due to the primary sources, the Ottoman Cossack regiments turned out to be multinational and multiconfessional units<sup>12</sup>.

At that time, the recruitment of soldiers to the Ottoman army was conducted through a lottery system among the Muslim male population aged between 20 and 25. It was possible for conscripts to send a substitute in their place. The period of military service in the Ottoman army was six years in active service and seven years in the reserve (*redif*). Non-Muslims were exempt from military service, instead paying a per capita tax, known as the “*cizye*” after 1855, or the “*iane-i-askeriye*” (military service tax). In contrast, Turkish historians have observed that what has been termed “patriotic sentiment” began to emerge among the non-Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire at the outset of the Eastern (Crimean) War. A total of 3,000 Bulgarians from affluent backgrounds expressed a desire to enlist as volunteers in the Ottoman army. However, as reported in the German newspaper *Berliner Zeitung* on 1 September 1853, they were ultimately not accepted. Similarly, some patriotic Ottoman Armenians and Greeks from Sharukhan and Izmir submitted applications to the Porte requesting to serve in the army, but their requests were respectfully declined. The Ottoman Empire, with a total population of about 35 million, which was roughly half the population of the Russian Empire at the time, had much fewer resources to replenish its army, as it depended on belonging to Islam, while Russia could replenish its army from a much larger population, about

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<sup>11</sup> Jerzy S. Łątka, *Słownik Polaków w Imperium Osmańskim i Republice Turcji*, (Kraków: Księg. Akademicka, 2005), pp. 19–20.

<sup>12</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcyi*, *Dzieło w trzech częściach przez X. K. O. [pseud.]*, (Paryż: Martinet, 1857), p. 107.

four times larger<sup>13</sup>. In this situation, the Cossack regiment, created in 1853, was a unique regular unit formed mostly from the non-Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire.

The texts of two letters on behalf of the “Ukrainian-Bessarabian Secret Committee”, allegedly received by M. Czajkowski in September 1853, provided a kind of ideological cover for the activities of the initiated Cossack regiment. The two documents in question provide an accurate representation of the key points previously outlined by M. Czajkowski in relation to his political concept. The representatives of Ukraine (i.e., the Right Bank) and Bessarabia make requests to accept these territories under the rule of the Sultan, elect a hetman, provide military assistance, etc. It seems likely that these two documents were drafted by M. Czajkowski, possibly in consultation with Reshid Pasha. The documents provided justification for the involvement of Sadyk Pasha’s Cossacks in military operations aimed at liberating Ukraine and establishing a distinct autonomous Cossack Hetmanate (comprising Ukraine and Bessarabia) within the Ottoman Empire. The proposed protectorate of Ukraine and Bessarabia, with the rights of Wallachia and Moldova, was intended to serve as a buffer between the Ottoman and Russian empires. The restored Ukrainian Hetmanate (which was abolished by the Russian Empire in 1764) was thus perceived as a continuation of the long-standing traditions of Cossack-Ottoman relations. In this context, we may view this document as a unique example of mid-nineteenth-century political thought, which posed the question of Ukraine’s subjectivity and official status. The documents do not present a contradictory perspective and generally reflect the vision of Turkish politicians in the mid-nineteenth century regarding the future of the Black Sea region.

In January 1854, M. Czajkowski (Mehmet Sadyk Pasha) dispatched one staff officer (Major Voronich) and two junior officers to the lower Danube and Dobrudja with the objective of enlisting volunteers for a Cossack regiment. They initiated formal activities and, in a somewhat informal manner, reported to the commander-in-chief that they had already amassed up to three hundred volunteers”<sup>14</sup>. These were hundreds of Dobrudjan Cossacks, already called up for military service, who were joined by irregular Tatar cavalry under the command of Gun-Mirza<sup>15</sup>. In the spring of 1854, when the Russian army crossed the Danube and entered

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<sup>13</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> [Michał Czajkowski] “Zapysky”, *Russkaya starina*, Vol. 96 (1898. №10), p. 185.

<sup>15</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcyi*, p. 110.

Dobrudja, these irregular Dobrudjean Cossacks and Tatar cavalry, scattered and dispersed, took refuge in Shumla<sup>16</sup>. There, Commander-in-Chief Omer Pasha transferred these Cossacks to the command of Mehmet Sadyk Pasha, who formed two “sotnia” (hundred) of them: Jurilovca and Sarichioi squadrons<sup>17</sup>.

The Ottoman Cossacks received uniform, equipment, weapon and horses from various sources – from donations of the urban communities of Istanbul, and later from the inhabitants of Bucharest and Braila, personal donates or from the stocks of the French and Ottoman armies (although French weapons were received in Rushchuk in June 1854)<sup>18</sup>. In April 1854, English journalists observed in Shumla that the Ottoman Cossacks were divided into irregulars and regulars, armed with spears and rifles, respectively<sup>19</sup>. The regiment was more or less ready to march from Adrianople in January 1854. Sadyk Pasha arrived there on 11 January - and on 8 February the unit arrived as part of three hundred Cossacks in Shumen, where it began its military service in March of 1854<sup>20</sup> and excelled in the Danube campaign.

### **3. “Vatan ve Silistra” or Participation of Ottoman Cossacks in the Defense of the Danube Frontline**

On the basis of these reports, Commander-in-Chief Omer Pasha urgently summoned Mehmed Sadyk Pasha and the Cossacks to his headquarters in Shumla<sup>21</sup>. The 1<sup>st</sup> Cossack Regiment, consisting of 3 irregular and 5 regular squadrons (often referred to in sources as hundreds), joined the Rumelian Army led by Omer Pasha. The Ottoman command used the Cossacks to counteract the Cossacks of the enemy - the Russian army of Field Marshal Gorchakov (later Paskevich), who laid siege to the fortress of Silistra<sup>22</sup>.

In the spring of 1854, the regiment of Ottoman Cossacks was constituted as follows<sup>23</sup>:

<sup>16</sup> The Illustrated London News. April 6, 1854.

<sup>17</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcyi*, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> [Michał Czajkowski] “Zapysky”, *Russkaya staryna*, Vol. 96 (1898. №10) p. 201.

<sup>19</sup> The Illustrated London News. April 6, 1854.

<sup>20</sup> Ivan Krysto Stoychev, *Kazak Alayat na Czajkowski*, p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcyi*, 110.

<sup>22</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, p. 185.

<sup>23</sup> [Michał Czajkowski] “Zapysky”, *Russkaya staryna*, Vol. 96 (1898. №10), pp. 175-176, 206.

The headquarters, comprising the commander, Miralai Sadyk Pasha (Czajkowski), the chief of staff, Mehmet Bey (Luboradsky; subsequently replaced by Captain Osta), and the adjutant, Mahmud-aga (Mukha).

The 1st Hundred was led by Ludwik Piotrowski, who had previously served with the Hungarian Uhlans.

The 2nd Hundred was led by Major Clement Przewolocky, a veteran of the Hungarian campaign of 1848-1849 under Józef Bem. It was formed in Istanbul by volunteers.

The 3rd Hundred was led by Captain Katherin Khodylsky-Ostoya, who had received an education in engineering.

The fifth Hundred regular Cossacks were led by Major Krechulesco, a representative of an ancient Romanian boyar family.

The sixth hundred regular Cossacks were led by Captain Bredelach, who was of Kabardian descent and a prince.

The first irregular hundred of Kuban was composed of Nekrasovians from Binevle (Maynos) and Enos (Enez). The Cossacks were led by Petro Sukhodolsky.

The second irregular hundred of Dobrudja (Nekrasov) Cossacks hailed from Zhurylivka (present-day Jurilovca in Romania).

The third irregular Hundred of Dobrudja (Nekrasov) Cossacks were from Sary-Koi (present-day Sarichioi, Romania).

Omer Pasha himself remained in Shumen with 40,000 troops, but he was undecided as to whether to come to Silistra's aid or to organise a sabotage operation. It is evident that he was disinclined to engage in an open confrontation with the Russian army in a field setting. Consequently, he dispatched Sadyk Pasha's Cossack regiment, a number of irregular cavalry units, and 5,000 militia from Razgrad to occupy positions at a designated distance from the Russian positions<sup>24</sup>. One of the regular Cossack hundreds under the leadership of Iskender Pasha (Ilinsky) was sent to the Kalafat to reinforce the Ottoman cavalry, where they "fought well and made several daring raids"<sup>25</sup>.

Ivan Krysto Stoychev gives slightly different data – according to his sources the advanced brigade led by Sadyk Pasha had about a thousand

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<sup>24</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, p. 185.

<sup>25</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozacyzna w Turcyi*, p. 113.



infantrymen, fifteen hundred cavalrymen and 6 guns<sup>26</sup>. From April to June 1854 these units under the command of Sadyk Pasha, kept watch around the Russian army within the (“Mad Forest”). Thus, M. Czajkowski acted here not only as a leader and inspirer of the Ottoman Cossacks, but also as the head of the advanced brigade of the main forces of the Ottoman army.

In Deliorman, the Cossacks distinguished themselves with several successful operations to provide provisions to the besieged Silistra, and repeatedly conducted convoys to the fortress.

The headquarters of the advanced brigade of the Ottoman army, headed by Sadyk Pasha, was located in the village of Rachman Achaklar (Rachman Aczaklar or Acziklar or Ashiklar - today Okorsh near Dulovo, Bulgaria)<sup>27</sup>. Acziklar, as it is often abbreviated in Czajkowski’s memoirs, controlled the wooded area of Deliorman and was privately owned by Ibrahim Pasha. It was located ten hours from Silistra, equidistant from Shumla and Turkukai (today Tutrakan).

The main task of the advanced brigade was to take control of Deliorman and to establish communication with the besieged Silistra. The Ottoman Cossacks’ advanced raids constantly disturbed the left flank of the Russian siege army and brought convoys with garrison replenishment, ammunition, food and fodder through Aidemir to Silistra. For two months, this allowed the besieged garrison to hold its positions.

Sources preserve details of one of the clashes between Ottoman Cossacks and Don Cossacks on 23-24 May 1854 near the Babuk village<sup>28</sup>. It was the Cossack scouts who were the first to inform the Ottoman command about the withdrawal of the Russian army from Silistra on 23 June 1854<sup>29</sup>. Having received a two-week respite, the Ottoman Cossacks, as part of the vanguard of the main forces of the Ottoman army, took part in the last major battle of the war on the Danube – the battle of Giurgiu.

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<sup>26</sup> Ivan Krysto Stoychev, *Kazak Alayat na Czajkowski*, p. 47.

<sup>27</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcyi*, p. 112.

<sup>28</sup> Ivan Krysto Stoychev, *Kazak Alayat na Czajkowski*, p. 48.

<sup>29</sup> [Michał Czajkowski] “Zapysky”, *Russkaya staryna*, Vol. 96 (1898. №11), p. 457.

#### 4. Ottoman Offensive at the Left-bank of the Danube in 1854

On 3-8 July, four hundred regular and three hundred irregular Ottoman Cossacks were engaged in battles at the Giurgiu crossing, acting against six hundred Don Cossacks and several squadrons of Russian hussars near Fratesti<sup>30</sup>. After successful actions near Giurgiu, Sadyk Pasha again was appointed leader of the advanced brigade of the Ottoman army, which crossed to the left (northern) side of the Danube. His Cossack hundreds were the first to enter Bucharest, abandoned by the Russians, and on 20 July Cossacks settled in barracks and tents around the Wallachian capital town<sup>31</sup>. Sadyk Pasha received an order to become the commandant of the capital of Wallachia and settled in the palace, which a few days before had been the residence of the commander-in-chief of the Russian forces, Prince Gorchakov<sup>32</sup>.

Sadyk Pasha was actively promoting Cossack ideas among the Orthodox population of the Balkans, while coming into conflict with Polish officers and the British command. He spoke negatively about one of the officers who, "like most English officers who bought their positions rather than receiving them for service and achievements, treated their officers like negroes"<sup>33</sup>.

The success of the Cossack service prompted the Ottoman military authorities to issue an order for the creation of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Cossack regiment, whose curator was Prince Władysław Zamoyski<sup>34</sup>. The formation of this unit was delayed, and it never took part in the military operations of the Eastern War<sup>35</sup>.

Meanwhile, the Russian army retreated beyond the Seret, and in September - beyond the Prut. Sadyk Pasha's units, once again in the vanguard of the Ottoman forces, moved towards Fokshan, where they took up positions on the Seret River with their headquarters in Maksymeni<sup>36</sup>. Maps of the Ottoman Cossacks' positions have been preserved, showing the fortification and bridge-building works they carried out<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcyi*, p. 113-114.

<sup>31</sup> The Illustrated London News, September 9, 1854.

<sup>32</sup> The Illustrated London News. August 26, 1854.

<sup>33</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, p. 243.

<sup>34</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcyi*, p. 115.

<sup>35</sup> Ivan Krysto Stoychev, *Kazak Alayat na Czajkowski*, p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> The Illustrated London News, September 9, 1854.

<sup>37</sup> [Michał Czajkowski] SADYK PACHA, Mehmet, "Correspondance officielle, 1854, T.2. Pisma, raporty i listy do Michala Czajkowskiego (Sadyk Paszy) dotyczce

## 5. The end of Eastern War at the Danube

In the 1855 campaign, the primary military units of the Ottoman Cossacks were relocated from their initial position on the left bank of the Danube River to the right bank, where they participated in the subsequent battles in Dobrudja. On 8 January 1855, a Russian unit comprising four battalions and ten squadrons with artillery, under the command of General Ushakov and Colonel Sazonov, initiated an offensive against Tulcea. In his report, Sadyk Pasha states that: The inadequately prepared army, under the command of the ineffectual and frequently inebriated Haji Ali Pasha, a Tatar, would have been entirely vanquished had it not been for the courage and cohesion of the Ottoman Cossacks. To illustrate, a squadron of 63 mounted Cossacks successfully impeded the enemy infantry's crossing of the bridge from Chatal (Fork) Island to the Tulcea bank for a period of three hours. They did not withdraw until the enemy had expended all of their ammunition. By that time, Haji Ali Pasha and his command had evacuated the city. The Cossacks suffered the loss of "the valiant centurion Garchynsky," who was severely injured within the city and subsequently captured by the Muscovites. Additionally, eight individuals from the regular troops and irregulars were killed. Ten severely injured Ottoman Cossacks who had remained in the city were subsequently apprehended by the Russians and imprisoned.

In April 1855, M. Czajkowski was dispatched to evaluate the feasibility of enlisting Slavic Christians in the military. The report presented by Czajkowski to the Grand Vizier included conflicting arguments regarding the feasibility of enlisting such volunteers in the army. He proposed that cavalry units could be recruited from Tyrnovo, Nish, Jeni Pazar, and Sarajevo, and infantry units from Mostar, Iskodra, Janina, and Thessaloniki. However, Lord Stratford de Radcliffe argued against this proposal, stating that it would lead to the formation of an entire Christian army within a few years, one that would be well-trained and capable of fighting<sup>38</sup>. In this context, M. Czajkowski's reports include details of plans to create a Jewish hussar regiment within the Cossack brigade, as well as a project to create Cossack settlements in the Danube delta. Approximately one hundred Poles from W. Zamoyski's Anglo-Polish division, which was disbanded following the conclusion of hostilities, were incorporated into the recently established Cossack

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administracji wojskowej Galaczu", Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, BCz. Rps. 5648. P. 19, 26 op.

<sup>38</sup> Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, p. 341.

dragoon regiment. The remaining personnel of the recently constituted 2nd Cossack (Dragoon) Regiment, comprising up to five hundred soldiers, were drawn from a diverse array of ethnic and national backgrounds, including Tatars, Cossacks from Dobrudja, Bulgarians, Serbs, and French.

In 1855, the Ottoman Cossacks were replenished with prisoners of the Russian army (Poles, Ukrainians, etc.) and immigrants from Crimea. This is evidenced by documents pertaining to the chiftlik of Sadyk Pasha – Sazlybosna, which indicate that a group of Tatars with their families arrived from Gezleve (Yevpatoria) in the suburbs of Istanbul and were accommodated and granted land<sup>39</sup>. The descendants of the Crimean Tatars continue to live in a strong national community, emphasising their belonging to the Crimean Tatar people in every way possible. Memories of Crimea are preserved here, and traditions are carefully passed on. The documents of the Ottoman Empire's archives describe in detail Sadyk Pasha's involvement in community development and provide detailed information about the participation of Tatar "muhajirs" in the service of the sultan in the ranks of the Ottoman Cossacks<sup>40</sup>.

## **6. Personnel of the Ottoman Cossack Brigade during the Eastern War**

After the war, the Ottoman Cossack brigade consisted of 2,000 sabers and bayonets - it was at this time that a special list of the unit's officers was compiled - the "List of Names..."<sup>41</sup>. This document provides a summary of the participation of the Ottoman Cossacks in the Eastern War. It is important to note that the information presented in the document regarding the officers of the Cossack brigade can be considered reliable. The document was published in Paris without delay for propaganda purposes, but it was subjected to scrutiny by the Polish democratic opposition. Therefore, it is unlikely that the information about individuals and their achievements was deliberately falsified. The document, entitled "List...", contains the names of 182 individuals, who were assigned to the general headquarters, two regimental headquarters, and regiments of Cossacks and Ottoman dragoons. Furthermore, the document provides details regarding the ranks, positions, and awards of the officers. The sections pertaining to those who perished, those who were captured and

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<sup>39</sup> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (Presidency of Türkiye Ottoman Archives) (BOA), A. / MKT.MVL., 121/41.

<sup>40</sup> BOA., A. / MKT.UM., 528/72.

<sup>41</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozacyzna w Turcyi*, pp. 355-362.

those who were transferred to other units also contain information of interest. It is now appropriate to consider the information content of each aspect in turn.

The structure of the unit's command is clearly delineated: the main and two regimental headquarters each comprised a general and 12 officers, while two additional officers were detached to other units. In 1857, the Cossack headquarters was comprised of the following personnel: one pasha (general rank), one colonel, one lieutenant colonel (who subsequently departed), one chief of the general staff, four adjutants (one of whom subsequently departed), one director of the office, one secretary of the Turkish office, two senior clerks, and one junior clerk.

A total of eight medical professionals were responsible for the provision of healthcare services to the personnel and horses. The medical personnel comprised one chief doctor, two surgeons, two pharmacists, two veterinarians, and one staff doctor.

Additionally, the 1st Cossack Regiment had a distinct unit of "trimbach" (trumpet) players, comprising five musicians under the direction of a staff "trimbach." Additionally, the list of officers of the 1st Regiment includes Nekrasov Cossacks, specifically a serdar (ataman) and four sotnik (centurions). During the course of the war, three Nekrasov Cossack centurions were killed or perished.

The list of the dead and injured contains information regarding the time, circumstances, and place of death of the officer, thereby affording the opportunity to trace the principal features of the brigade's combat path. In 1853, no officers were killed; in 1854, the locations of death were Gropa-Chorba, Girlitz, and Maximeni; in 1855, Zhurilovets, Topali, Aidimirze, and Tulcea; in 1856, Salmania and Varna; and in 1857, Istanbul and Terkas. The statistics regarding casualties are of particular interest. The list of casualties includes three Nekrasov Cossack centurions, one Ukrainian from the Bug Lancers, two Volynians, two Pavlohrad hussars, and one Pole, who was an artilleryman.

The content of Sadyk Pasha's memoirs provides evidence to suggest that Poles constituted only 10% of the personnel of the 1st regiment (mainly officers), despite representing the majority of the incomplete 2nd and 3rd regiments. The "List of names of the brigade of Ottoman Cossacks", published in 1857, provides evidence that the Cossacks comprised individuals of diverse nationalities, including Ukrainians, Russian Old Believers, Bulgarians, Hungarians, and Turks. As

evidenced by this document, the national composition of the regiments was diverse, and there was no systematic organisation of officers according to nationality. Accordingly, the data on officers belonging to one or another nationality (with the exception of the aforementioned deceased officers, for whom this nationality was noted) were calculated by us in accordance with the specific characteristics of surname spelling. This method is not deemed to be entirely accurate, but it does provide a general overview of the situation within the brigade. The national composition of the officer corps was as follows (estimated by surname, first name or other characteristics): 123 Poles, 59 others (1 Ukrainian, 13 Serbs and Bulgarians (Orthodox), 4 Italians, 2 French, 11 Germans or Jews, 5 Hungarians, 1 Wallachian). Additionally, there were 12 Muslims, comprising four individuals in the main headquarters, five in the headquarters of the 1st regiment, one in the formation of the 1st regiment, and two in the headquarters of the 2nd regiment. Furthermore, there were ten Nekrasovites, also known as Old Believers. This indicates that two-thirds of the officers were of Polish origin, with the possibility that some of them were of Ukrainian descent. The remaining one-third were of other nationalities, including Slavs, Turks, Albanians, French, Hungarians, and so on. The approximation of this method of determining nationality is evident from the fact that the Commander of the brigade, Muslim Sadyk Pasha, could be listed as both Polish on the father's side and Ukrainian on the mother's side (as he recognised himself in his memoirs).

The summary table of the officer's composition allows for a clear analysis of the structure of the units of the brigade:

Rank	General Staff	1st regiment	2nd regiment	Dropped	Total
Pasha (general)	1	-	-	-	1
Colonel	-	1	-	1	2
Lieutenant colonel	1	-	1	-	2
Major	-	1	2	-	3
Adjutant Major	1	2	1	1	5
Captain	-	14	6	4	24
Lieutenant	-	13	6	8	27
Second Lieutenant	-	12	10	10	32
Serdar	-	1	-	-	1
Centurion (Sotnik)	-	4	-	3	7
Squadron commander	-	6	-	3	9
Foreman of the platoon (platoon)	-	22	-	-	22
Cadet	-	-	23	-	23
Other	5	14	4	-	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>180</b>
Privates (Evaluation)	-	750	450	?	1100

Another informative element of the “List...” is the list of officers’ awards, which was tabulated by the author of the publication:

Name of the award	Total	General Staff	1st Regiment		2nd Regiment		Retired	Transferred to other units	Died	Prisoners
			Staff	Regiment	Staff	Regiment				
Number of persons / awarded	182/130	8/7	11/11	78/78	10/5	44/11	6/5	14/0	10/3	1/0
Turkish Order “Mejidiye”	12	3	-	7	1	-	-	-	1	-
Turkish gold medal	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Turkish silver medal	114	10	10	75	7	5	5	-	2	-
<b>TURKISH AWARDS in TOTAL</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>
Polish cross	13	2	2	5	3	2	1	-	-	-
Cross of the Legion of Honor	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
(Legion of Honor)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Cross of St. George (St. George)	6	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
English medal	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Sardinian medal	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Hungarian cross	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Holstein cross	27	6	2	8	3	2	6	-	1	-
(Order of St. Anna)	154	19	12	83	10	7	11	-	3	-

As we can see, the main array of awards (especially Ottoman, Sardinian, English) were received by Cossack officers precisely as a result of the Eastern War. The presence of French, Hungarian, Russian, British, Sardinian, Polish, etc. awards is also indicative<sup>42</sup>.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the inaugural Cossack regiment was established in November 1853 and subsequently engaged in the Danube campaign alongside the Ottoman army in 1854. Subsequently, the 2nd regiment was incorporated, thereby forming a Cossack Brigade. A proposal was put forth for the creation of a third regiment. The Ottoman Cossack brigade

<sup>42</sup> [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcyi*, pp. 355-362.



constituted a distinctive entity within the Ottoman military, comprising individuals from a diverse array of ethnic and social backgrounds within the Ottoman population. The designation of “Cossack” permitted the authorities to disguise the distinctive non-Muslim background of the majority of the enlisted personnel and officers. It is also noteworthy that the fundamental principle underlying the formation of the Ottoman Cossacks, namely equality between Christians and Muslims, had a beneficial impact on the performance of duties within a multinational empire.

It is therefore evident that Czajkowski’s Cossack project merits the attention of researchers, given its pivotal role in the processes of nation-building within the Ottoman and Russian empires. The Ottoman Cossacks exerted a profound influence on the processes of national revival in the region. They reinforced the European cultural influence on the peoples of the Ottoman Empire, and the literary works of Czajkowski facilitated historical reconciliation between the peoples and substantiated the right of nations for self-determination in the context of the “Spring of Nations”.

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# ROMANIAN-RUSSIAN-OTTOMAN NAVAL BATTLES ON THE DANUBE DURING THE WAR OF 1877-1878

*Ion RÎȘNOVEANU\**

## Abstract

The Romanian-Russian-Ottoman naval engagements on the Danube during the War of 1877-1878 have been addressed in various papers over the years, but we aim to present new data on the matter. On April 4, 1877, when Russia declared war, the Ottoman Empire possessed an impressive war fleet. Once armor became prevalent in ship construction, the Ottomans invested many resources in rebuilding their fleet. They faced no restrictions, while the Russians were under severe limitations regarding their naval power, as stipulated by the Peace Treaty of Paris of 1856. For Romania, the most important naval battles took place on the Danube. In collaboration with Russian sailors or independently, the Romanians participated in the sinking of important Ottoman warships, including the monitor *Lütf-i Celil*, the monitor *Seyfi*, and the monitor *Podgoritsa*.

**Keywords:** Danube, Independence, Ottoman Empire, Romania, Naval Artillery, Naval Battles.

## Introduction

The Romanian-Russian-Ottoman naval engagements on the Danube during the War of 1877-1878 have been addressed in various papers over the years, but we will attempt to bring new data to the matter<sup>1</sup>. The reopening of the Eastern Question during the period of 1875-1877 led to a shift in Romania's foreign policy. Under these circumstances, the Romanian state, which had initially declared its neutrality, provided moral and material support to the Christian populations in the lands south of the Danube frontier.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicolae Birdeanu and Dan Nicolaescu, *Contributions to the history of the Romanian Navy*, (Bucharest: Scientific Publishing House, 1979), pp. 173-196.

On November 25/December 7, 1877, Vasile Boerescu, Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed "the most lively and sincere sympathies for the Christian populations beyond the Danube frontier." Additionally, the Romanian diplomat stated that if Romania were to become the target of aggression, "we will neither remain unmoving nor indifferent amidst the storms that are brewing around us"<sup>2</sup>.

One of Romania's first diplomatic initiatives in seeking recognition of its independence was the Note of January 4/16, 1876, which reaffirmed the country's unquestionable autonomy and sovereignty. Through this diplomatic document, Romanian authorities informed the European Great Powers that, in the event of a conflict, Romania would remain neutral but would continue its military preparations in case it became involved. The note, signed by Mihail Kogălniceanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and sent to Romania's diplomatic agents, contained the following message: "Faced with all these facts, whose gravity cannot escape you, the princely government has been compelled, out of prudence and foresight, to also make military preparations. For if the neutrality we have maintained until now were to be threatened, either by acts of aggression from Turkey or by the intervention of any power that might wish, regardless of the purpose, to occupy Romania, its duty to the country would not allow it to remain a passive spectator"<sup>3</sup>.

The first measure taken by the Romanian authorities was the approval of the 1876 Budget Law, which granted the Ministry of War "an extraordinary credit of 4,000,000 lei for the supply of ammunition and equipment necessary for the army"<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, by order of the Ministry of War, a Romanian military observer corps led by Colonel Mihail Christodulo Cerchez was deployed along the Danube, with the mission to defend the Danube frontier in the area of Gruia commune and along the river's line. In addition to the military measures necessary for defending the national territory, the authorities in Bucharest initiated diplomatic efforts with the Great Powers, including Russia. Thus, on September 29/October 11, 1876, a meeting took place in Livadia, Crimea, between Romanian and Russian officials, where they negotiated a political and military agreement, as the government in Bucharest was aware of the

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<sup>2</sup> Nichita Adăniloae, *The Military History of the Romanian People*, Vol. IV, (Bucharest, Military Scientific Publishing House, 1987), pp. 587-588.

<sup>3</sup> Nichita Adăniloae, *The Military History of the Romanian People*, Vol. IV, p. 590.

<sup>4</sup> *The Official Monitor of Romania*, No. 28/1877, p. 705.

Ottoman campaign plan, which involved crossing the Danube and, in the first phase, occupying Calafat<sup>5</sup>.

At the same time, between December 11/21, 1876, and January 30/February 11, 1877, an international conference took place in Istanbul, during which the Great European Powers requested that the Ottoman Empire take measures to support the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula and to address the “Eastern Question”.

Following this conference, Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha proposed a constitution that, through Articles 1, 7, and 8, violated Romania’s sovereignty. Under this constitution, Romania was considered a mere “privileged province” within the Ottoman Empire, leading to the emergence of Romanian-Ottoman diplomatic controversies.

Under the new conditions, in March 1877, Colonel George Lupu, the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, took new measures to strengthen the Calafat area. Troops from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade, commanded by Colonel Mihail Christodulo Cerchez, were deployed here, and he was ordered to respond in the event of an Ottoman attack north of the Danube.

### **The Political-military Convention between Romania and Russia**

At the beginning of 1877, Romanian authorities sought to avoid fighting on Romanian territory. Therefore, they continued negotiations for the passage of Russian troops through Romania. At the same time, on March 31/April 12, 1877, a general mobilization of the Romanian Army was decreed. In total, 125,000 military personnel were mobilized under the command of 1,600 officers<sup>6</sup>.

After long and difficult negotiations, on April 4/16, 1877, in Bucharest, Mihail Kogălniceanu, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dmitri Feodorovich Stuart, the Russian Consul General in Bucharest, signed the political-military convention between Romania and the Russian Empire. The preamble of this diplomatic document stated: “Wishing to respect the territorial integrity of the Romanian State, the Imperial Russian Government agreed to conclude a special convention with the Romanian Government regarding the passage of Russian troops

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<sup>5</sup> Nichita Adăniloae, *The Military History of the Romanian People*, Vol. IV, p. 595.

<sup>6</sup> General Radu Rosetti, *The side taken by the Romanian Army in the war 1877-1878*, (Bucharest, 1926), p. 18.

through Romania, in the event of a possible military action by Russia against the European territories of the Ottoman Empire”. Article I of this convention stated: “The Romanian Government grants the Russian Army, which is called to go to Turkey, free passage through the territory of Romania and the treatment reserved for friendly troops”. Article II stipulated the obligation of the Russian Empire not to interfere in internal affairs and to respect the integrity of Romania: “In order that no inconvenience or danger may arise for Romania from the passage of Russian troops through its territory, the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of All-Russia undertakes to uphold and ensure the respect of the political rights of the Romanian State, as derived from internal laws and existing treaties, as well as to maintain and defend the current integrity of Romania”.

By signing this diplomatic act with international value, Russia committed itself to respect the territorial integrity of Romania, its rights, and its internal laws. Thus, the independence of the Romanian State was indirectly acknowledged<sup>7</sup>.

### **Romanian-Russian-Ottoman Naval Battles on the Danube**

At the beginning of 1877, the Romanian Navy consisted of 20 officers, 20 civilian employees, and 246 sailors. On the Danube, the gunboats *Fulgerul* and *România*, the yacht *Ștefan Cel Mare*, the launch *Rândunica*, as well as a few barges were in operation. To avoid their destruction, the Romanian Command withdrew them to the Prut River, near the locality of Cășlița<sup>8</sup>.

On April 4, 1877, when Russia declared war, the Ottoman Empire possessed an impressive war fleet. Once armour became prevalent in ship construction, the Ottomans invested significant resources in rebuilding their fleet. They faced no restrictions, while the Russians were under severe limitations on their naval power due to the Peace Treaty of Paris of 1856.

With one or two exceptions, the Ottoman armoured ships commissioned between 1864 and 1874 had naval artillery positioned either centrally on their decks or along their sides. During this period, the Ottoman fleet had in active service one ironclad of 9,000 tons, four ships

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<sup>7</sup> Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Diplomatic documents*, (Bucharest, 1972), p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolae Bîrdeanu and Dan Nicolaescu, *Contributions to the history of the Romanian Navy*, pp. 173-196.



each over 6,000 tons, another ship of 4,000 tons, and seven ships over 4,000 tons, all equipped with heavy artillery either centrally or on their sides. Additionally, their fleet included two monitors, each with two turrets—*Hıfz-ı-Rahman* and *Lütf-i Celil*—and seven small armoured gunboats. The machine guns were 10, 9, and 7 inches in caliber, based on Armstrong's design<sup>9</sup>.

For their part, the Russians knew they stood little chance in an open engagement with the Ottomans. This is why they withdrew their heavy and slow ships into the enclosed areas of their harbours, just as the Prussians had done in the 1870 campaign. The Russians relied on land mines and torpedoes to harass the Ottomans by attacking their flotillas. Their aim was to block enemy transport and keep the harbours under constant surveillance. Since the Ottomans had neglected the defence of the Danube, their opponents were able to cross it with ease. On the Danube, the Ottomans had the monitors *Hizber* and *Seyfi*, the armoured gunboats *Feth-ül İslam*, *Semendire*, *Böğürdelen*, *İşkodra*, and *Podgoritsa*, the double-turreted ship *Lütf-i Celil*, and about six other wooden ships, all under the command of Dilaver-Pasha. At Sulina, there were the ironclads *Mukaddeme-i Hayr*, *Hıfz-ı Rahman*, *Mecidiye*, *Asar-ı Şevket* and *Muin-i Zafer*, but the strong current of the Danube prevented these ships from taking up better positions<sup>10</sup>.

Later in my presentation, I will focus on three key naval actions that took place during the Romanian-Russian-Ottoman conflict, which were crucial to the war's outcome. Further, along in my presentation I will tackle just three naval actions, which happened during this Romanian-Russian-Ottoman conflict and were the most important in its conclusion. The first Ottoman warship lost in the 1877-1878 war was the double-turreted monitor *Lütf-i Celil*, built at the Bordeaux Shipyards in 1868. At the start of the conflict, the Russians laid mine barrages in the Danube to restrict Ottoman movements. As a result, it remains unclear what exactly hit the monitor—a torpedo or a mine—though the Russians claim it was a round fired by their coastal artillery<sup>11</sup>.

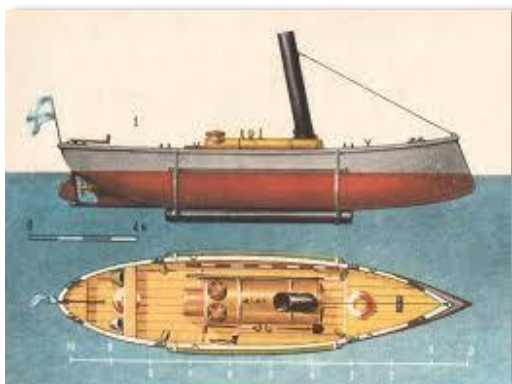
<sup>9</sup> H. W. Wilson, *A sketch of Naval Warfare from 1855 to 1895 with some account of the development of the battleship in England*, Vol. I, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company; London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company Limited, 1896), p. 286.

<sup>10</sup> H. W. Wilson, *A sketch of Naval Warfare from 1855 to 1895 with some account of the development of the battleship in England*, Vol. I, p. 289.

<sup>11</sup> Bernd Langesiepen and Ahmet Gülerüz, *The Ottoman Steam Navy. 1828-1923*, (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1995), p. 6.

On May 11, 1877, three Ottoman monitors attempted to leave the Macin Channel, but Russian coastal artillery near the town of Brăila fired upon them. Shortly afterward, white smoke was seen coming from the *Lütf-i Celil* followed by a cloud of black smoke and steam. When the smoke cleared, it became evident that the ship was sinking. The Russians suggested that a round went through the funnel, which caused the boilers to explode. This would explain the black smoke, likely coal dust from the fuel bunkers. It is also significant that there was no mention of a water splash, which would have indicated a mine or torpedo attack. Nevertheless, Ottoman military commanders attributed the loss to an accident. Following this success, the Russians decided to attack the Ottoman squadron stationed at Brăila, consisting of the armoured ships *Feth-ül İslam* and *Seyfi*, as well as *Kılıç Ali*. On the night of May 24, 1877, Lieutenant Dubasoff, who was entrusted with the command of a formation of four small torpedo boats—*Tsarevich*, *Xenia*, *Tsarevna*, and *Dzigit*—reconnoitred the position of the Ottoman ships deployed near Brăila, on the Macin Channel. The *Tsarevich* torpedo boat, commanded by Lieutenant Dubasoff himself, was actually the Romanian ship *Rândunica* under Russian command. Major Ioan Murgescu, an expert on the Danube, was also on board. Lieutenant Shestacoff commanded *Xenia*, *Tsarevna* was under the command of Ensign Ball, while *Dzigit* was commanded by Ensign Persine. There is a possibility that the Russians were discovered, as the next day the Ottoman squadron changed its position.

The Romanian-Russian attack was set for May 25. This moment was not chosen by chance, as the night was pitch black, and heavy rain limited visibility to only a few meters. On Lieutenant Dubasoff's orders, the four boats formed two attack columns. The first column, consisting of *Tsarevich* and *Xenia*, had the mission of attacking frontally, while the second column, consisting of *Tsarevna* and *Dzigit*, formed the reserve<sup>12</sup>.



Torpedo boat *Rândunica* (*Tsarevich*)

<sup>12</sup> H. W. Wilson, *A sketch of Naval Warfare from 1855 to 1895 with some account of the development of the battleship in England*, Vol. I, p. 290.

Soon, the silhouettes of the three Ottoman ships were observed. *Seyfi* was in the centre, flanked by *Feth-ül İslam* on the right and *Kılıç Ali*



Major Ioan Murgescu

on the left. When the Romanian-Russian naval formation approached within 60 meters of the target, they were spotted by Ottoman sentries and ordered to identify themselves. Since their response was incorrect, the Ottoman sailors raised the alarm, and the gunners opened fire. Under these conditions, Lieutenant Dubasoff, seconded by Romanian Major Ioan Murgescu, ordered full speed ahead and directed the *Tsarevich* at *Seyfi*, striking her between the centre and stern. Upon impact, there was a loud explosion. The torpedo drilled through the hull of the Ottoman ship, causing a powerful blast, with scrap metal and wood hitting the *Tsarevich*.

Under these circumstances, Lieutenant Dubasoff ordered a retreat. Since the mechanic on the *Tsarevich* had his hand crushed, Major Ioan Murgescu took control of the ship and maneuvered it away from the battle site. Meanwhile, a shell fired from one of the Ottoman ships hit *Dzigit*, prompting Ensign Persine to order a retreat for that ship as well. Since *Seyfi* was not sinking, Lieutenant Dubasoff ordered Lieutenant Shestacoff to conduct a second attack run. As a result, *Xenia* once again struck the Ottoman monitor in the aft area, causing another powerful explosion. After just 10 minutes, *Seyfi* sank along with her entire crew. At 3 o'clock in the morning, the attack ended, and the four Romanian-Russian ships retreated to their starting positions. It is also important to note that three Romanians were on board the *Tsarevich*: Major Ioan Murgescu, who helped plan and execute the operation, the ship mechanic Vasile Belea, and the river pilot Gheorghe Constantinescu.

The last Romanian-Russian-Ottoman naval confrontation of the 1877-1878 conflict that I wish to present is the sinking of the monitor battleship *Podgoritsa* by the Romanian battery *Carol I*, one of the most significant naval actions during the war. The Russian command also attempted to sink the *Podgoritsa* monitor. A detachment of 2 officers and 40 sailors arrived in Corabia for this mission, which was later abandoned. Under these conditions, Major Nicolae Dimitrescu-Maică, commander of

the coastal batteries at Calafat, was assigned the mission to bombard the Ottoman monitor with mortar fire. After thorough reconnaissance, Major Maican, in great secrecy, moved a battery of three 150 mm mortars near Canapa Island during the night. This position was 1,850 meters from the monitor. After two weeks of hard work, from October 6 to 21, the battery was ready for action. Each mortar was supplied with 200 shells.

The attack was launched on November 7, 1877, with Major Maican directing the firing from a position on Canapa Island. From there, he was connected to the battery by telegraph wire. On the 77<sup>th</sup> shot, thick smoke engulfed the Ottoman warship as a shell pierced the deck and, upon reaching the powder magazine, caused a devastating explosion. The breach was enormous, and within seconds, water flooded the bow. The Romanian sailors continued firing more accurately after zeroing in on the Ottoman ships. The bombardment ceased only after the *Podgoritsa* sank. Alongside her, the smaller vessel *Socrates* and two nearby barges were also hit.



Major Nicolae Dimitrescu-Maican

The fire lasted nearly an hour, with 112 mortar shells and 17 field cannon shells fired at the four enemy ships. In response, the Ottoman batteries returned fire with 180 shots, but only a few landed near the Romanian positions, injuring one man. Besides the bravery of the sailors, the skill of officers such as Lieutenant of Artillery Peticari, Ensign Mardare, and Mănescu contributed to the victory. By sinking the *Podgoritsa*, the Ottomans lost one of the most powerful ships on the Danube, severely limiting their ability to manoeuvre and take action on the river<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> H. W. Wilson, *A sketch of Naval Warfare from 1855 to 1895 with some account of the development of the battleship in England*, Vol. I, pp. 291-292.

## Conclusions

The naval battles that took place on the Danube during the 1877-1878 war were of great importance for the conduct of land military operations on Bulgarian territory. When the Ottoman ships were hit and sunk, they could no longer ensure tactical superiority through naval artillery. Additionally, the potential transport of Ottoman ground troops along the river could no longer take place due to the lack of vessels. We must also highlight the role played by Romanian sailors, especially Major Ioan Murgescu and Major Nicolae Dimitrescu-Maică, who, with skill, courage, and a spirit of sacrifice, ensured the successful completion of their combat missions.

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# ROMANIA AT 1878: LOSING SOUTH OF BESSARABIA AND WINNING DOBRUDJA

*Adrian-Bogdan CIOBANU\**

## Abstract

At the time of the outbreak of the Eastern crisis, in 1875, Romania's main objective was to preserve neutrality. At that time, Romania was under the collective guarantee of the six Great Powers and under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. However, depending on the events in the Balkans, as well as the internal ones, other objectives emerged. For example, in the context of signing the convention with Russia (4/16 April 1877) regarding the passage of Russian troops on Romanian territory, one of the articles concerned the preservation of territorial integrity. This article was synonymous with a clear objective for the government in Bucharest. On May 9, 1877, independence was proclaimed in Parliament, which meant a new legal status. The road to its recognition was not a simple one, but on the contrary: it meant the participation in the Russo-Ottoman war alongside the Russian Empire. So, new realities, new goals. In this text, will try to answer a few questions: What was the attitude of the decision-makers from Bucharest (Prince, Prime minister, and Foreign Minister) towards the territory received (Dobrogea) / lost (south of Bessarabia) as a result of the Russian-Ottoman war? How did the politicians and the press react to the new territorial realities? How was perceived the new province received in 1878?

**Keywords:** Romania, Russia, Ottoman Empire, South of Bessarabia, Dobrudja.

## Introduction

In July 1878, a few days after the end of the Congress of Berlin, Prince Carol I of Romania wrote to his sister Marie of Flanders: "We must accept the recognition of our enlargement beyond the Danube [...] in order to have access to the Sea, the only way to quicken our trade. These new counties have a great future, we have only to get them out of the pitiful

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state in which the Turks left them; roads and schools must be built immediately. Dobrogea has a worse reputation than it deserves, the country is fertile and the lands of the little Balkan, which I know, are very beautiful [...] Naturally, we would have better kept Bessarabia, which is 1/3 smaller than what we have today, because it was easier to administer and constituted a whole with the country”<sup>1</sup>. The lines written by Prince Carol I lead us to think of several questions: What was the attitude of the decision-makers from Bucharest (Prince, Prime minister, and Foreign Minister) towards the territory received (Dobrogea) / lost (south of Bessarabia) as a result of the Russian-Ottoman war? How did the politicians and the press react to the new territorial realities? How was perceived the new province received in 1878? To try to answer these questions, the main sources of this text will be the autobiographical literature (memoirs, private correspondence) of Prince Carol I, of Mihail Kogălniceanu and Ion C. Brătianu, but also the speeches from the Romanian Parliament.

### General Context

At the time of the outbreak of the Eastern crisis, in 1875, Romania’s main objective was to preserve neutrality. At that time, Romania was under the collective guarantee of the six Great Powers and under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. However, depending on the events in the Balkans, as well as the internal ones, other objectives<sup>2</sup> emerged. After the Russo-Austro-Hungarian agreement in Budapest, from January 1877, and the protocol from London, from March 1877, the decision-makers from Bucharest intensified the negotiations with Russia. Under these conditions, on April 1, Carol I convened the Crown Council, not an official authority, formed of all former prime ministers, except Lascăr Catargi and Ioan Em. Florescu, which also joined C. A. Rosetti. They were looking for the best option that the Romanian state could have. Mihail Kogălniceanu expressed his fear about the rumors that had already begun to circulate about Russia’s intention to recover southern Bessarabia and encourage the formation of a large Slavic state at the south of the Danube, after the defeat of the Ottoman

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<sup>1</sup> Sorin Cristescu, *Carol I. Corespondență personală 1878-1912*, (București: Editura Tritonic, 2005), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> We will not insist here on Romania’s foreign policy in 1875-1876. See our text published last year, Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, “Between Russian Empire and Ottoman Empire: Romanian Foreign Policy in the late 1876”, *Türkiye-Romania Joint Military History Symposium. Proceedings 8-9 May 2023 Istanbul*, ed. Bünyamin Kocaoğlu, Ahmet Taşdemir, (Istanbul: Turkish National Defense University Press, 2023), p. 155-166.

army<sup>3</sup>. In the context of signing the convention with Russia (4/16 April) regarding the passage of Russian troops on Romanian territory, one of the articles concerned the preservation of territorial integrity. This article, synonymous with a clear objective for the government in Bucharest, would be an important one for political decision-makers.

On April 24, 1877, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. However, what had caused concern among the Romanian authorities was the crossing of the Prut River by the Russian army before the Parliament in Bucharest decided on the necessity of signing the convention. What had disturbed Carol I was the unusual proclamation addressed by Grand Duke Nicolae to the inhabitants of Romania. This was accompanied by an appeal to Russian soldiers, by which they were asked to respect the laws of the country where “we will find the same hospitality as our predecessors”<sup>4</sup>. Thus, in the new context, Romanian-Russian relations “began under bad auspices”, fueling the suspicions of those who distrusted the policy of the Eastern Empire<sup>5</sup>. The mobilization of the Romanian army in Calafat was interpreted by European diplomats as an action that foreshadowed Romania’s entry into the war. On April 22, 1877, Romanian-Ottoman diplomatic relations were interrupted<sup>6</sup>. Given that the Ottoman Empire decided to suspend the activity of the Diplomatic Agency of Romania in Constantinople<sup>7</sup> and resorted to acts of provocation along the Danube, the Romanian state considered itself to be in a state of war with the Ottoman Empire. The Great Powers were also officially notified of these events through the Romanian Foreign Minister’s circular of May 2/14<sup>8</sup>. In these conditions, on May 9, independence was proclaimed in Parliament, which

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Kellogg, *Drumul României spre independență*, Trans. by Laura Cuțitaru, edition by Victor Spinei, (Iași: Institutul European, 2002), p. 217

<sup>4</sup> *Memoriile regelui Carol I de un martor ocular*, Vol. IX, (București: Editura Tipografiei Ziarului “Universul”, 1909), p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Dumitru Vitcu, *Rusia și rectificarea granițelor României în 1878. Reacții și atitudini politice, controverse istoriografice*, in „Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «A. D. Xenopol»”, t. XLVI, 2009, p. 326

<sup>6</sup> *Independența României. Documente. Corespondență diplomatică străină 1853-1877 mai*, Vol. II/1, (București: Editura Academiei, 1977), p. 357.

<sup>7</sup> The agency’s archive was left in the custody of the legation of Sweden and Norway, as the legation of Belgium refused to accept it (Veniamin Ciobanu, *Un episod din relațiile româno-suedeze*, in Vol. *Clio în oglindiri de sine. Academicianului Alexandru Zub Omagiu*, Gheorghe Cliveti (coord.), (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2014), p. 491-503).

<sup>8</sup> Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Documente diplomatice*, ed. Dinu C. Giurescu, (București: Editura Politică, 1972), p. 166.

meant a new legal status. The road to its recognition was not a simple one, but on the contrary: it meant the participation in the Russo-Ottoman war alongside the Russian Empire. So, new realities, new goals. We will not insist on the armed participation in the war.

### From Rumors to Certainties

In October-November 1877, several Romanian journals, such as “*Timpu*” and “*Pressa*”, propagated the news that the Russian Empire planned to take back<sup>9</sup>, at the end of the war, the three counties from the south of Bessarabia. Under these conditions, prime minister Ion C. Brătianu decided to have a discussion with Tsar Alexander II. The meeting took place on November 4, 1877, on which occasion the liberal leader had several demands: recognition of independence, control, as a guarantee, of some points on the Danube and participation in peace negotiations. Alexander II replied: “Romania is not going to remain with the damage and that he will remember the sacrifices, which, in their size and weight, were fully appreciated”<sup>10</sup>. The prime minister was not the only one paying attention to what was happening abroad. Also, the foreign minister, Mihail Kogălniceanu emphasized, in a correspondence with the Austro-Hungarian minister Andrassy, from the end of 1877, Romania’s role in this war and the cause for which was fought: “the highest-ranking politicians in Russia are not shy to announce their intention not to return Bessarabia to us, whom they are beginning to occupy militarily. The duty of getting rid of this part of our country was largely the cause of the cooperation of our army before Plevna. We gave our blood not to give our land”<sup>11</sup>.

On 19/31 January 1878, the armistice between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire was signed, opening the way for peace negotiations. The Cabinet from Petersburg informed General Iancu Ghica, on January 13, that Romania’s interests will be defended by Russia and that the sacrifices made would be compensated by giving Dobrogea; and a few days later, he was also officially notified of the claims of the Russian

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<sup>9</sup> In 1856, following the decisions made during the Congress of Berlin, it was decided that the three counties in the south of Bessarabia - Cahul, Ismail and Bolograd - should return to Moldova. The three counties were important for the Russian Empire because they ensured access to the mouths of the Danube. After 1856, Russia constantly pursued their recovery.

<sup>10</sup> I. C. Brătianu, *Acte și cuvântări*, Vol. III (1 mai 1877-30 aprilie 1878), published by Constantin C. Giurescu, (București: Editura Cartea Românească, 1930), p. 135.

<sup>11</sup> *Apud* Nicolae Iorga, *Războiul pentru independența României: acțiuni diplomatice și stări de spirit*, ed. Elisabeta Simion (București: Editura Albatros, 1998), p. 169-170.

Empire, in this case southern Bessarabia. On his way to Adrianople, General Ignatiev stopped in Bucharest where he discussed with Prince Carol. In territorial matters, he conveyed to him that taking Dobrogea in exchange for southern Bessarabia was a gain for Romania<sup>12</sup>. Between this moment and the signing of the Peace of San Stefano, the Romanian side protested vehemently against a possible loss of southern Bessarabia. Special missions were sent to Western cabinets, memos were drawn up and harsh speeches were made in Parliament against Russia. Moreover, a motion was voted in the Romanian Senate at the end of January, voted unanimously by which it was declared that the Senate “is determined to maintain the integrity of the country’s territory and not to admit an alienation from its land, under any name and for no territorial compensation or damages”<sup>13</sup>.

At the beginning of January 1878, the Romanian administration in southern Bessarabia attempted to organize a plebiscite to demonstrate the attitude of the local population towards a possible Russian administration. In this sense, on January 13, the diplomatic agent of Russia in Bucharest, Baron D. Stuart, informed Chancellor Gorceakov about the intention of the Prefect of Ismail. The Russian chancellor’s response was prompt, suggesting that in the area “the Romanian demonstrations should be vigorously combated, relying on the population that judges justly”. In a short time, the Russian military authorities managed to organize the issuance of anti-Romanian petitions signed by residents of Bulgarian origin, addressed to Emperor Alexander II. Parallel to these anti-Romanian demonstrations, a series of telegrams were sent to Bucharest from Cahul, Ismail and other Bessarabian localities in which firm assurances were given that the Romanian population here was ready to make sacrifices to maintain the integrity of Romania<sup>14</sup>.

The issue of territorial exchange is also mentioned in the correspondence between Prince Charles and his father, Karl Anton. The latter would convey to his son the importance of the new territory: “The unproductive territory of Dobrogea certainly does not repay the loss of Bessarabia; however, Dobrogea, together with Constanța, can be welcomed, because the acquisition of this port on the Black Sea will

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<sup>12</sup> *Memoriile regelui Carol I de un martor ocular*, Vol. XIII, (București: Editura Tipografiei Ziarului “Universul”, 1909), p. 8-15.

<sup>13</sup> „Monitorul Oficial”, Saturday, 21 January 1878, p. 446.

<sup>14</sup> Ion Varta, *Rusia și chestiunea basarabeană în perioada războiului pentru independență 1877-1878*, in „Revista istorică”, t.3, nr.7-8, 1992, p. 742

perhaps be of the greatest importance for the future of Romanian trade”<sup>15</sup>. The issue of territorial compensations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, including Romania, was discussed on February 12, at Adrianople, between Safvet Pasha and General Ignatiev. The Russian diplomat brought up the fact that the Bucharest government was demanding 200 million francs as war compensation. Under these conditions, in order to avoid financial issues, he proposed the “territorial exchange”: The Ottoman Empire would give up a part of Dobrogea to Russia, which in turn would give it up to Romania in exchange for southern Bessarabia<sup>16</sup>. Financial aspects and territorial compensation were also discussed three days later, when Russia demanded that the Ottoman Empire pay her 1 billion four hundred and ten million rubles (1,410,000,000) in war reparations. Some of these could be replaced by territorial issues, including those mentioned above<sup>17</sup>.

The peace treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was signed in San Stefano, on February 19 / March 3, 1878, without the participation of the representatives of the South-East European states that had taken part in the war, implicitly without the presence of the Romanian delegate. Through this treaty, signed by P. Ignatiev and Al. Nelidov, for Russia, and Safvet Sadullah, the Ottoman foreign minister, the independence of Romania (Article 5) was established, Montenegro and Serbia. According to Article 19, the south of Bessarabia belonged to Russia, and Romania received Dobrogea (through this article, Russia was assigned the sangeac Tulcea, together with the islands of the Delta and Serpent Island, which reserved the right to exchange it with the south of Bessarabia). At the same time, Bulgaria became an autonomous state under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, the borders of the new state stretching from the Danube to the Aegean Sea and from Lake Ohrid to the Black Sea. In the Caucasus, Russia occupied the cities of Batum, Kars and Biazat and the territory up to Sighenli-dagh. Bosnia and Herzegovina gained autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, and Epirus, Thessaly and Albania gained some self-administration rights. An interesting article was the one which stated that, until the organization, Bulgaria was occupied by Russian troops whose actual number reached up to 50,000 men. Communications were to be ensured through the Black Sea ports and

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<sup>15</sup> *Memoriile regelui Carol I de un martor ocular*, Vol. XIII..., p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on “The Eastern Question”. The Balkan Crisis*, part V (*From the Andrinople armistice to the Treaty of Berlin February – July 1878*), ed. Sinan Kuneralp, Gül Tokay, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2016), p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 92-93.

through Romania (Article 8)<sup>18</sup>. In this context, General Iancu Ghica reported from Petersburg that: “The emperor and the chancellor formally informed me of their intention to take the part from Bessarabia to Chilia; in compensation, Romania will receive the Danube Delta and Dobrogea up to Constanța”<sup>19</sup>.

### Indignation, Protests, and Reactions in Romania

In this atmosphere, the Romanian government became aware, indirectly, of the content of the agreement between the two states through the “Journal de St. Petersburg”. The treaty caused a general indignation in Romania, the political circles in Bucharest vehemently protesting against the stipulations that affected Romania’s sovereignty. In the Parliament sessions, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mihail Kogălniceanu, and other opinion leaders launched virulent attacks towards Russia, considering the act concluded between the two powers as one “which hits the rights and interests of our country from several points, not taking into account the sacrifices made, sacrifices of money, of blood and of all kinds”<sup>20</sup>. On February 25, 1878, Kogălniceanu stated that “the exchange offered by Russia would be essentially prejudicial [...], since the acquisition of Dobrogea would only represent confusion, a burden and, perhaps, a permanent danger”<sup>21</sup>. Prince Carol I was very careful to the issue of territorial compensations resulting from the Treaty of San Stefano. Sensing the Russian danger, he wrote to his brother: “We should bring our matter before the congress, or that is exactly what Russia would like to avoid in the Bessarabia issue, because she wants us to receive Dobrogea from her hands. But here lies another danger, because what gives a great power - and especially Russia - can take it back at the first opportunity. Precisely for Bessarabia we will adopt this attitude and say: Europe gave it to us, only to Europe we can give it back”<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Ion Ionașcu, *Relațiile internaționale ale României în documente (1368-1900): culegere selectivă de tratate, acorduri, convenții și alte acte cu caracter internațional* (București: Editura Politică, 1971), p. 421-422

<sup>19</sup> *Corespondența generalului Iancu Ghica, 2 aprilie 1877- 8 aprilie 1878*, published by Generalul R. Rosetti (București: Editura Cartea Românească, 1930), p. 128.

<sup>20</sup> „Monitorul Oficial” nr. 61, 16 / 28 March 1878, p. 1740

<sup>21</sup> Mariana Cojoc, *Importanța geopolitică a ținutului dintre Dunăre și Mare la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea*, in vol. *Dobrogea. Repere istorice*, Mihai Lupu (coord.), (Constanța: Editura Europolis, 2000), p. 124.

<sup>22</sup> *Scrisorile regelui Carol I din arhiva de la Sigmaringen 1878-1905*, ed. Sorin Cristescu, (București: Editura Paideia, 2010), p. 42.

Russia's reaction to Romania's position created a crisis in the relations between the two countries, especially since on March 21/April 2 General Ghica was told by Gorceakov that, in the event that the Romanian government intended to protest or even oppose the article 8 of the San Stefano treaty, Romania will be occupied and the Romanian army disarmed. The answer from the Romanian side was not long in coming and Carol I conveyed to the Russian government that "an army that fought in Plevna in front of Emperor Alexander II may be destroyed, but it will never allow itself to be disarmed"<sup>23</sup>. At the same time, the Romanian government sent a note of protest against the treaty to the court in Petersburg on March 24/April 5, 1878, its contents being made known through the circular addressed to the agents accredited to the guarantor power. The note emphasized the fact that Romania was outside the collective guarantee of the great powers, and the treaty represented a danger to the moral and material interests of the Romanian nation<sup>24</sup>.

On March 27/April 8, 1878, Chancellor Gorceakov instructed Stuart to inform Carol I that an official would be sent to Bucharest to sign a new military convention, the tsarist diplomacy wanting to transform Romania, through the new convention, in the case of a conflict, into a battlefield with the Western states. The answer of the Romanian side came from M. Kogălniceanu, who declared to the Russian agent that it was impossible to sign a new convention, a fact that determined the dispatch of a telegram from Alexander II to Carol I in which he expressed his dissatisfaction with the Romanian government as well as the desire to see it replaced with another "composed of elements much more agreeable to Russia"<sup>25</sup>.

The signing of the Peace of San Stefano produced discontent not only in Romania, but also in Europe. Western cabinets were dissatisfied with the stipulations, reaching after several negotiations to the solution of organizing a congress in the capital of Germany. On the eve of the opening of the works, Brătianu mentioned that the Romanian government "will not

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<sup>23</sup> Vasile M. Kogălniceanu, *Acte și documente din corespondența diplomatică a lui Mihail Kogălniceanu relative la resboiul Independenței României 1877-1878*, Vol. I/1, (București: Tipografia și Fonderia de litere Thoma Basilescu, 1893), p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> Gheorghe Platon, *Independența României și puterile europene. Reacții și atitudini* in vol. *Românii în istoria universală*, Vol. II/1, I. Agrigoroaie (coord.), (Iași: Editura Universității "Al.I. Cuza", 1987), p. 92.

<sup>25</sup> *Apud* Ion Varta, *op.cit.*, p. 745.



cede a single part of Bessarabia, not even for the most brilliant compensations”<sup>26</sup>.

Both representatives of the former belligerents – the Ottoman Empire and Russia – and the Great Powers took part at the negotiation table in Berlin. Romania’s representatives were not accepted at the negotiations. Instead, Mihail Kogălniceanu and I. C. Brătianu were received to express the Romanian point of view, but in front of a “totally insensitive audience”<sup>27</sup>, which seemed to have already made the decisions behind the scenes. The memorandum presented by the two included five points: Territorial integrity provided in the Convention of April 4, 1877; Romania’s territory should not be a place of retreat for the Russian army; Romania to regain possession of the islands and mouths of the Danube, including Serpent Island; Romania to receive war compensation proportional to the number of participating soldiers; The Great Powers to recognize Romania’s independence<sup>28</sup>.

We can see that Romania’s requests were important. Under these conditions, Russia’s reaction was prompt. The delegates of the Russian cabinet, in this case, Prince Gorceakov and count Şuvaloff, argued that Russia’s adherence to Romania’s independence is „still subject to Romania receiving the retrocession claimed by the Russian government” and that the compensation offered to Romania was “sufficient”, under the conditions in which Dobrogea compensates “excessively” the cession of Bessarabia”. Moreover, Count Şuvaloff wanted to specify the fact that Russia will recognize Romania’s independence only if it receives “the retrocession claimed by the Russian Government”<sup>29</sup>.

The Treaty of Berlin recognized the independence of Serbia, Montenegro and Romania. Article 44 stated that in Romania “the distinction between religious beliefs and confessions cannot be opposed to anyone as a reason for exclusion or incapacity in terms of enjoying civil or political rights”<sup>30</sup>. This article meant the amendment of Article 7 of the Romanian Constitution. Article 45 foresees the retrocession of the counties in the south of Bessarabia to Russia. Through Article 46, Romania received

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<sup>26</sup> Sorin Liviu Damean, *România şi Congresul de Pace de la Berlin (1878)*, (Iaşi: Tipo Moldova, 2010), p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> Dumitru Vitcu, *Rusia şi rectificarea graniţelor...*, p. 338

<sup>28</sup> Dumitru P. Ionescu, *Războiul de Independenţă a României şi problema Basarabiei*, (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei Române, 2000), p. 125.

<sup>29</sup> „Monitorul Oficial”, nr.160, 22 July/3 August 1878, p. 4302-4303.

<sup>30</sup> Sorin Liviu Damean, *România şi Congresul de Pace de la Berlin (1878)...*, p. 123.

Dobrogea, the Danube Delta, Serpent Island, and complementary to them, the freedom of navigation on the Danube and access as a member of the European Commission of the Danube. The destruction of the Ottoman military fortifications on the southern bank of the Danube was also considered<sup>31</sup>. In the text of the Treaty of Berlin, the issue of territorial exchanges does not appear. The Great Powers decided that Romania should give up southern Bessarabia to Russia and the Great Powers also decided that Romania should receive Dobrogea, the Danube Delta, Serpent Island. Although we often find in Romanian historiography the problem of territorial exchange, it was the will of the European cabinets for the loss or gain of some territories.

### After Berlin

In August 1878, through a note from Baron Stuart, the diplomatic agent of the Russian Empire in Bucharest, the Russian government requested the surrender of southern Bessarabia under conditions identical to the cession of 1857, when Russia had ceded this territory to Moldavia<sup>32</sup>. If in 1857 two commissions functioned, one international, made up of representatives of the Great Powers, and one local, made up of Russian and Romanian commissioners, the question was why Russia wanted an international commission, thus complicating a situation that seemed quite simple? The answer can also be found in the note of the Russian representative, who proposed in exchange for the delimitation “the transfer of the part of Dobrogea ceded to the Romanian authorities”<sup>33</sup>. In the reply note to Baron Stuart, it was shown that, although the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin did not satisfy the Romanian government, it was determined to loyally execute the clauses of the treaty<sup>34</sup>. At the end of August, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Kogălniceanu, during a visit to the German capital, declared that the authorities in Bucharest had decided to decline the appointment in the commission of border delimitation. Also, the Romanian cabinet refused to sign a deed of transfer of the territory on the left of the Prut. This attitude was appreciated by Baron Stuart as being

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123-124.

<sup>32</sup> Vasile M. Kogălniceanu, *Acte și documente ...*, p. 251

<sup>33</sup> Daniela Bușă, *Modificări politico-teritoriale în sud-estul Europei între Congresul de la Berlin și primul război mondial (1878-1914)*, (București: Editura Paideia, 2003), p. 49

<sup>34</sup> Gh. Cazan, *Înființarea reprezentanței diplomatice a României la Petersburg*, in vol. *Reprezentanțele diplomatice ale României*, Vol. I (1859-1917), (București: Editura Politică, 1967), p. 213

determined by Romania's intention to attribute its destiny as a "martyr" and not to admit the voluntary surrender of southern Bessarabia<sup>35</sup>.

On September 15/27, the Legislative Bodies took note of the decisions and declared that they would submit to the will of Europe. However, among the Romanian parliamentarians, rather harsh opinions were expressed on the European powers, but especially in Russia. V.A. Urechia took a stand in the Parliament and strongly argued that: "the land of Bessarabia was never the land of the Russian Empire" and that "as long as there are Romanians, Bessarabia cannot be forgotten". Then followed G. Misail who exposed the turbulent history of Moldova, starting with the treaty signed by Dimitrie Cantemir with Tsar Peter the Great in 1711 and up to 1878 when the Treaty of Berlin approved the second seizure of Bessarabia. P.P. Carp also intervened in these debates, admitting that the loss of Bessarabia was a memory deeply embedded in the hearts of Romanians and concluded that "I am of the opinion of receiving what we cannot stop"<sup>36</sup>. Also, the Romanian deputy Nicolae Furculescu paraphrases a Latin maxim: "Timeo Russos et donna ferentes" (I'm afraid of the Russians even when they bring gifts)<sup>37</sup>.

On October 10, 1878, one day after the transfer of southern Bessarabia to the Eastern Empire, the Russian bishop, Pavel Lebedev, delivered a sermon in the cathedral of Ismail, in which he showed that this moment was "eagerly awaited by the Russian people, of the reunification of the brothers taken by force and the restoration of Bessarabia in its natural borders". The new territory was perceived as "an outpost of both the Russian people and the Russian church, an outpost through which the Russian people and the Russian church come into contact with peoples of the same faith and blood as us"<sup>38</sup>. In the bishop's speech, some classic ideas of the expansionist policy of the Russian Empire appeared: the belonging of the south of Bessarabia to the Russian space, the Romanian "domination" considered as "foreign", the provisions of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856 categorized as a "violence" to the integrity of the Russian

<sup>35</sup> Ion Varta, *op. cit.*, p. 749.

<sup>36</sup> Titu Maiorescu, *Discursuri parlamentare*, vol. II (1876-1881), ed. Constantin Schifirneț, (București: Editura Albatros, 2003), p. 228- 229.

<sup>37</sup> „Monitorul Oficial”, Tuesday, 3 October 1878, p. 5548.

<sup>38</sup> *Slovo pri pervom, po vozsoedinenii s Rossijej Rumynskoj Bessarabii, služenii v izmail'skom Pokrovskom sobore, 10 oktjabrja 1878 goda, proiznesennoe Preosvjaščennym Pavlom, Episkopom Kišinevskim i Hotinskim*, p. 2-3

“national body”. Lastly, the religious factor was invoked, through which the Russian Empire provided protection to the Balkans Christians<sup>39</sup>.

On the other hand, on November 14, 1878, Prince Carol I formalized the integration of Dobrogea into the Romanian state, the ceremony taking place in Brăila, where, witnessing the passage of troops and authorities to the new part of Romania, he read the High Order of the Day to the Army, in which it was said, among other things: “The Great European Powers, through the Treaty of Berlin, united Dobrogea with Romania, the possession of our old princes”<sup>40</sup>. Thus, from November, Dobrogea officially came under the Romanian administration.

In the minutes drawn up by the Romanian and Russian delegates on November 23/December 5, 1878, there were differences regarding the border in the Ismail portion - the place where the Prut flows. The Russian side demanded to follow the left bank of the Danube and not the talveg, invoking in this regard the provisions of the Treaty of Paris from 1856. The minutes were signed by Colonel Pencovici and Lieutenant-Colonel N. Demetresco-Maicam, on behalf of the Romanian government, and Colonel Touguenhold, the delegate of the Russian imperial government. The representatives of both parties had the mission to establish in all details the transfer of the territory and to solve the administrative, financial and legal problems. Only when the delimitation was ready, the Russian diplomats could hand over Dobrogea. Russia considered that it was the owner of the Dobrogean territory, given that this region had been in the possession of the Ottoman Empire since the time of Mircea cel Bătrân. Given these aspects, Russia administered this territory for a short time and was not in its possession<sup>41</sup>.

At the end of 1878, a difficult year for Romania, Carol I was satisfied. He wrote to his brother that in the end, the annexation of Dobrogea had “a happy ending” although “it cost us many battles and great difficulties had to be overcome until we reached the goal which the

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<sup>39</sup> Andrei Cușco, *Problema Basarabiei de Sud în discursul imperial rus după 1878: viziuni ale alterității și transferuri instituționale*, in vol. *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, Vasile Ciobanu, Flavius Solomon, Sorin Radu (coord.), Vol. VI, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2011), p. 207-208.

<sup>40</sup> Stoica Lascu, *Mărturii de epocă privind istoria Dobrogei (1878 – 1947)*, vol. I, (Constanța: Editura Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Romanian National Archives, Fund Casa Regală, file 59/1878, p. 1-2.

Russians wanted to postpone to infinite”<sup>42</sup>. Rereading the opinions of both decision-makers and politicians during 1878, we can see that the arguments for keeping southern Bessarabia concerned both strategic and administrative considerations. There were vehement protests against the loss of this territory, and Russia’s attitude towards Romania in the matter of southern Bessarabia led to the cooling of Romanian-Russian relations<sup>43</sup> in the following years. On the other hand, following the decisions taken in the capital of Germany, in the summer of 1878, Romania received the province of Dobrogea, the political leaders gradually realizing its strategic and economic importance.

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<sup>42</sup> *Scrisorile regelui Carol I...*, p. 45.

<sup>43</sup> For more details about Romanian-Russian Relations after 1878, see Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, *Politică și diplomatie la sfârșitul secolului XIX. Din istoria relațiilor româno-ruse (1878-1899)*, (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași 2017).

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# **AMMUNITION TRANSIT TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: THE ATTITUDE OF THE ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE POSITION OF THE GERMAN DIPLOMATS (1915)**

*Claudiu-Lucian TOPOR\**

## **Abstract**

The dispute over the transit of the Ottoman Empire's munitions began in the summer of 1914, even before the government in Constantinople decided to enter the war with the Central Powers and continued long afterwards. The first impression is that the Romanian authorities took a hasty decision: the Romanian government opposed the transit of Turkish ammunition through the orders of Emil Costinescu, the Minister of Finance. The Bucharest government's decision surprised Berlin and caused diplomatic reactions. But the Ottoman government was the first to react, announcing its "embarrassing surprise" at "certain measures" taken in Romania that were not in Turkey's interests. The question of ammunition had become a crucial one in Berlin.

Turkey needed shells, guns, cars etc. not only for the defence of the Dardanelles but also for the battles in Egypt and the fighting in Baghdad. By refusing to allow Turkey to procure the means of defence it required, Romania was actually supporting the action of the Powers, who wanted to dispossess Constantinople of the Straits. This is an unfriendly attitude for the explanation of which Romania cannot invoke even its obligations as a neutral state, as long as the Hague Convention explicitly allows neutrals to accept the passage of munitions of war for the belligerents. Smuggling, bribing customs officials, even transport by zeppelin, notwithstanding the risk of such an aircraft crash. But there was no substitute for the transfer by rail or the passage through Romanian seaports. That is why, as Turkey sank into a difficult war of attrition, the transit of munitions became an object of diplomatic negotiations, and later even of threats from Berlin.

As the shortage of munitions became acute and threatened the preservation of the Dardanelles, German rhetoric took on more threatening

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forms. Finally, there was also talk of drafting an ultimatum designed to intimidate Bucharest, thus forcing the hand of the Brătianu government towards a favourable decision. Running out of immediate solutions, the German strategy towards Romania's opposition to the transit of Turkish ammunition changed on the fly. In fact, Berlin refocused on Serbia. Germany carefully planned a decisive military strike against Belgrade. That would be the source of practical and more significant advantages: unlocking the route to Turkey and drawing Bulgaria into the war.

**Keywords:** World War I, Ammunition, Romania, German Diplomacy, Turkish Government.

### Introduction

The Great War began in 1914 as a carnage waged by coalitions consisting of a mixture of peoples and nations. It ended in 1918 in a general collapse of multinational empires. The peoples of Europe had no choice as to whom to fight but instead entered the war in response to the patriotic calls of political leaders. It was them who decided the end of alliances, the objectives of the war, and who constructed scenarios and strategies with unpredictable evolutions. We certainly believe that the Ottoman Empire's alliance with the Central Powers was also part of a political orientation mirrored at the highest level. We are well aware that the German influence on the shores of the Bosphorus distorted the dynamics of good Romanian-Ottoman relations, which had gone through a tense period during the Balkan wars. But in the end, the German influence proved stronger at the Sublime Porte than in the political circles in Bucharest. Talaat Pasha once told Henry Morgenthau (the American minister plenipotentiary in Constantinople) that fear was the decisive impetus that pushed the Ottoman Empire to become Germany's ally. For the Turks – he believed – there was no alternative. If Germany won the war (and Talaat, the future Grand Vizier, had no doubts about this) and the Ottoman Empire did not contribute to victory, then the Kaiser would probably take revenge on the Turks. Nations – Talaat concluded – could not afford emotions – gratitude, hatred, affection – and therefore only one factor could guide their action, and that was cold-blooded politics<sup>1</sup>. In Bucharest, too, the German political influence had been steadily gaining ground for 30 years. It was the pre-war era, which ended with the long reign of King Carol I. After the monarch's death, the Romanian government led by Ion I.C. Brătianu turned foreign

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<sup>1</sup> Morgenthau Henry, *Ambasador la Constantinopol - Memorii*, (București: Ararat, 2000), p. 131.

policy in a direction that was opposite to the objectives of the past. Contrary to Talaat's beliefs, Brătianu could not imagine how Germany could win the war. The overall strength of the Entente impressed him more than Germany's military organisation. Romania was preparing to enter the battle, not for security reasons, but in order to achieve its national goals. However, it needed significant resources and strong allies. It seemed to finally find the latter by sacrificing its own neutrality early on.

### **1. Historical Background: Some Romanian Munitions Crossed the Straits**

After the Paris Congress (1856), the legal status of the Straits and the geopolitics of the Black Sea created the framework for diplomatic initiatives with the High Porte to ensure the transit of vessels loaded with munitions of war through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Romania had been directly interested in obtaining passage from the Ottoman governments, especially as the sea transport of gunpowder and weapons ordered from German factories would become cheaper. So many requests had accumulated by 1911 that the interpreter of the Romanian legation, Alfons Lahaille, felt it necessary to present to the plenipotentiary minister Ioan N. Papiniu a brief history of the previous situations in which negotiations with the Ottoman authorities for the passage of Romanian ammunition had taken place. The document mentioned that the first attempt was made around March 1884, when the ship "Românul" was stopped before the Dardanelles forts due to the lack of imperial authorization, which had to be obtained in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Paris of 30 March 1856, the London Convention of 13 March 1871, and Article 63 of the Treaty of Berlin of 15 July 1878.<sup>2</sup> The events unfolded according to a long-practiced routine. The settlement of the affair depended on the "intervention" of the Romanian minister plenipotentiary with the Ottoman authorities, who decided whether to postpone, reject or approve the issuance of the necessary authorization. On June 28/July 11, 1911, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae N. Filodor, also asked Papiniu to follow this frequently used procedure. At stake were the ammunition orders from the Rheinische

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<sup>2</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989, Documents*, Vol. I, ed. Carmen-Sorina Râjnoveanu, (București: Editura Militară, 2023), pp. 253. Nr. 160. January 15/28, 1911. Constantinople. Report of Alfons Lahaille, interpreter for the Romanian Legation, informing the Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople, Ioan N. Papiniu, of previous ships carrying weapons and ammunition ordered by Romania from abroad that were given free passage through the Straits,

Metallwaaren und Maschinenfabrik in Düsseldorf-Derendorf, which were awaiting shipment to Romania. The German factory had initially notified the Ministry of War in Bucharest that the delivery of the ammunition through Austria-Hungary was encountering difficulties, so that a proposal to deliver the cargo by sea, through the company “Deutsche Levante Linie”, with the final destination Galati, was made.<sup>3</sup> Again, the Romanian diplomacy’s request had beneficial results. The transport did not encounter any serious obstacles. The Ottoman government approved the passage of the ship “Athena”, belonging to the German company Dampfer Linie Atlas, through the Dardanelles Strait until September 15, 1911<sup>4</sup>. Other transports followed, some as late as on the eve of the outbreak of the Balkan War in 1912. Titu Maiorescu, Romania’s prime minister, asked Nicolae Mișu, the minister plenipotentiary in Constantinople, to obtain the necessary approvals for the transit of 500 shells with 120 mm gun cartridges, 60 automatic pistols with 1000 flare cartridges and 25 brisant shrapnell shells, all made in Germany and ready for transportation on a German ship from Bremen<sup>5</sup>. The cruiser “Elisabeta” also needed approval to pass through the Straits, and the Ottoman government granted it immediately after the Balkan hostilities broke out<sup>6</sup>. The relations between Bucharest and Constantinople appeared to be normal when suddenly, at the start of the Great War, the Romanian government decided to change the course of events.

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<sup>3</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989, Documents*, p. 257. Nr. 164. June 28/July 11, 1911, Bucharest. Letter from the Secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae N. Filodor, instructing the Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople, Ioan N. Papiniu, to seek Ottoman approval for transit through the Straits of the ammunition ordered by Romania from Dusseldorf factories.

<sup>4</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989, Documents*, p. 259. Nr. 166. August 6/19, 1911, Constantinople. Report of Alfons Lahaille, interpreter for the Romanian Legation, informing the Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople, Ioan N. Papiniu, that the Ottoman government approved the passage through the Straits of the “Athena” vessel.

<sup>5</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989, Documents*, p. 274. Nr. 5. April 9/22, Bucharest. Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Titu Maiorescu instructing the Romanian Minister in Constantinople, Nicolae Mișu, to request approval for the transit through Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits of a weapons and ammunitions transport coming from Germany, ordered by Minsitry of War.

<sup>6</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989, Documents*, Nr. 27. October 29/November 11, 1912, Constantinople. Report of the Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople, Nicolae Mișu, to Titu Maiorescu, President of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of the Foreign Affairs, on the approval for “Elisabeta” cruiser crossing through Straits was issued.

## **2. The Turkish Ammunition Won't Pass through Romania: Determined Reactions in Constantinople**

The dispute over the transit of the Ottoman Empire's munitions began in the summer of 1914, even before the government in Constantinople decided to enter the war with the Central Powers and continued long afterwards. The first impression is that the Romanian authorities took a hasty decision: the Romanian government opposed the transit of Turkish ammunition through the orders of Emil Costinescu, the Minister of Finance. After Prime Minister Brătianu authorised the Director General of Romanian Customs (Morandini) to allow the transit of Turkish ammunition, a train arrived directly at the depots of the "Oborul" Company in Bucharest (belonging to the Romanian Credit Bank). That was when Minister Costinescu's opposition really came into play. He sacked Morandini and withdrew the tax concessions he had previously offered to "Oborul". The customs director, who was on his way out, approached the President of the Council of Ministers, but was surprisingly rejected by Brătianu himself, and the result was that the transport of ammunition on Romanian soil was blocked. From the outside, one would have thought that Brătianu would have given in to Costinescu's intransigence, but those involved in the Romanian Prime Minister's manoeuvres felt that they were in fact witnessing a political juggling act that had been agreed beforehand<sup>7</sup>.

The Bucharest government's decision surprised Berlin and caused diplomatic reactions. But the Ottoman government was the first to react, announcing its "embarrassing surprise" at "certain measures" taken in Romania that were not in Turkey's interests. Enver-Pasha and Talaat-Bey summoned the Romanian Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople (Manu) and briefly presented him with a list of the acts of hostility on Romania's side that they complained about, and on that list were: stopping the shipment of 30,000 sacks of flour for the Red Cross (already loaded on board a ship in Braila before the decree banning the export of flour from Romania was promulgated); and the wrongful withholding of war ammunition ordered from German factories. The latter was described as an extremely harmful action to Turkey. These were hostile acts which appeared all the more surprising in Constantinople because (the two Turkish ministers claimed in unison) at no time had the Ottoman Empire shown hostile intentions towards Romania, and the interests of the two states appeared to be identical at regional level because they aimed to

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<sup>7</sup> Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes Berlin [PA AA], R 9739. Akten betreffend rumänischen Presse. A. 2207. Bukarest, 17/30 März 1915.

prevent the establishment of large Balkan states that could compromise the balance of power in the Peninsula<sup>8</sup>. For almost a year (starting in the autumn of 1914) the Turkish protests continued. Constantin Gheorghe Manu (the minister plenipotentiary) constantly informed Bucharest about the discontent in Constantinople. From the report he sent on 17/30 March 1915 we learn, for example, about the first aggressive positions of the Ottoman Empire and Germany. Personalities representative of the Pera social elite with friendly relations at the German Embassy circulated the rumour that Turkey and Germany might consider the prospect of a separate peace with Russia if Romania continued to obstruct the transit of the artillery and ammunition required in order to defend the Dardanelles. During such talks, Russia could obtain the expected guarantees on the opening of the Straits to its warships. The visit to Berlin by Halil Samy Bey (a Turkish general who had also fought in the First Balkan War, one of Turkey's heroes at Gallipoli) accompanied by Field Marshal Wilhelm Leopold Colmar von der Goltz did not seem unrelated to the preparation of such political combinations<sup>9</sup>.

In April 1915, Minister Manu also reported to Bucharest a discussion with the Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha. It was admitted that Romania had strategic interests in the navigation of the Straits. Of course, these were not to fall into Russian hands. But in the end the discussion slipped into a diplomatic blackmail formula. Manu now learned that Germany and Austria were looking for alternative routes for transporting ammunition to the Ottoman Empire and were preparing the decisive offensive against Serbia. The Grand Vizier was in fact suggesting that Romania, the mandated Balkan balancing force, had a vested interest in making political arrangements with Turkey precisely in order to prevent alternative routes for the transit of munitions from being found, and a final separation from the powers of the German world from being affected. The Grand Vizier's proposed treaty would provide for the secret transit of munitions through Romania using methods that kept it hidden from prying Russian eyes. If information leaked out, however, Said Halim Pasha

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<sup>8</sup> *Românii la Începutul Marelui Război. de la Atentatul de la Sarajevo la Moartea Regelui Carol I*, ed. Mihail E. Ionescu, (București: Editura Militară, 2014), p. 355. Telegram from Constantin Gh. Manu, Romania's minister plenipotentiary in the Ottoman Empire, to the minister of Foreign Affairs, Emanoil Porumbaru. Pera, 16/29 October 1914.

<sup>9</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989, Documents*, p. 363. Nr. 91. March 17/30, 1915. Romania's Minister reports on the reaction of the Ottoman Empire and Germany regarding Romania's decision to block the transports of military equipment to the Ottoman Empire.



believes, Russia would not pursue a threatening policy towards Romania because it did not want an additional enemy in its theatres of war. Prepared for the hypothesis of the rejection of the arrangement in Bucharest, the Grand Vizier quickly moved on to some subtle threats: “(...) By refusing to allow Turkey to procure the means of defence it required, Romania was actually supporting the action of the Powers, who wanted to dispossess Constantinople of the Straits. This is an unfriendly attitude for the explanation of which Romania cannot invoke even its obligations as a neutral state, as long as the Hague Convention explicitly allows neutrals to accept the passage of munitions of war for the belligerents. It would be regrettable if two countries which have always cohabited on good terms, whose peoples are mutually sympathetic and which have no divergent interests, were to find themselves today separated by a dispute likely to leave sensitive traces in their future relations (...)”<sup>10</sup>.

But Bucharest’s reaction was ultimately evasive and inconclusive in terms of accepting the Turkish proposals. The political arrangement proposed by the Grand Vizier was rejected, however, because of too much exposure to Russian pressure. Moreover, Sazonov (the head of the Tsarist diplomacy) reacted decisively from the beginning of the crisis by dismantling all the justifications that the Romanian side could have invoked for ensuring the transit of munitions. He summoned Constantin Diamandy (the Romanian minister in the Russian capital) to show his displeasure at the “complicity” that the Bucharest cabinet was constantly showing Germany by facilitating the transit of weapons, ammunition, officers and gold bullion to Turkey. The Russian Minister in Bucharest was instructed to use harsh language towards Ion I. C. Brătianu, showing the Romanian Prime Minister that the Allied powers would assume full freedom of action regarding the hypothesis of annexing southern Bukovina and Transylvania to Romania<sup>11</sup>.

Also in Bucharest, Sazonov also communicated that Russia would accept the government’s demands regarding the conclusion of the Political Convention only on condition that it prohibited the transit of munitions and war supplies for its enemies. In order to enforce the terms of the agreement,

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<sup>10</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989, Documents*, p. 364. Report by minister Constantin Gh. Manu about his conversation with the Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha, Constantinople, 14/27 April 1915.

<sup>11</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations, 1878-1989, Documents*, pp. 352-353. Telegram from Maurice Paléologue, the French ambassador in Petrograd, addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Petrograd, 9/22 October 1914.

Sazonov also proposed that the Triple Entente be given the right to supervise shipments arriving on Romanian territory<sup>12</sup>. Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu replied to Poklevski-Koziell (the Russian plenipotentiary minister) that he had been, from the outset, against the transit of Turkish munitions through Romanian territory because he was well aware of the kind of disservice it could do to Russia<sup>13</sup>. As he was himself wary of taking responsibility, Brătianu would later (as we have shown above) let Finance Minister Emil Costinescu block the carriages loaded with weapons that were stationed on Romanian territory. And the Romanian Finance Minister did it, of course, in his own style. Completely lacking in diplomacy, Costinescu told the Germans that he would allow the transit of Turkish ammunition only when Romania's arms orders from German factories arrived at the Predeal train station<sup>14</sup>. Probably discreetly warned by Brătianu, Costinescu reversed his initial statements and asked the Turkish plenipotentiary to draw up a statement to the effect that his government wished to continue good relations with Romania. He would personally dictate the text of the document!

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<sup>12</sup> Româniile în Marele Război. Anul 1915. Documente, impresii, mărturii", ed. Mihail E. Ionescu, (București: Editura Militară, 2015, p. 137. Poklevski read out a *avant-projet* of a political convention; point IV on this convention read as follows: "(...) La Roumanie s'engage de s'opposer dès maintenant, de concert avec les Puissances signataires, à tout passage de munitions destinées directement ou indirectement aux adversaires (...)". See, Coded telegram from prime-minister Ion I. C. Brătianu to Constantin Diamandi, the Romanian minister in Petrograd, Bucharest, 25 July/7 August 1915.

<sup>13</sup> *Intrarea României în Primul Război Mondial. Negocierile diplomatice în documente din arhivele ruse 1914-1916*, ed. Vadim Guzun, (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2016), pp. 282-283. Nr. 241, Secret telegram from the minister plenipotentiary in Bucharest to the minister of foreign affairs, 21 April/4 May 1916.

<sup>14</sup> PAAA, R9716. Militär-Angelegenheiten Rumänien, 1916-1920. The Ministry of War (Kriegsministerium) to the Auswärtige Amt. Memo of 28.03 1916. As a consequence of the neutral attitude adopted in Bucharest, the German government banned arms deliveries to Romania. In October 1914 Rheinische Metallwaren und Maschinenfabrik sent 28 wagons of artillery ammunition for the needs of the Romanian War Ministry. In February 1915, Krupp also sent 22 wagons of ammunition. The ammunition was sequestered until the end of 1915 in Hungary, and then the decision was made to return the cargo to Germany. Krupp assumed that shipping the ammunition to Romania was a possible compensation designed by the German Foreign Ministry in case Romania unblocked the transit of weapons to Turkey. As this decision was not taken, the ammunition destined for Romania was returned to the manufacturer.

### 3. From Concessions to the Pressure: German Diplomatic Intervention in Dispute

Baron von dem Bussche (Germany's diplomatic representative), however, kept a close eye on all this political intrigue from the outset. Naturally, he did not believe for a moment in the little pantomime scene directed by Brătianu. Bussche told the Romanian Prime Minister that the Bucharest government's neutrality towards Germany had ceased to be benevolent and had turned into a hostile attitude. Which Brătianu naturally admitted – as he had no other options – but with some regrets. Behind the political decision, the German plenipotentiary also noted, was the Russian minister, who had influenced Costinescu and other members of the government, through the “corrupt” Take Ionescu, in order to block the Turkish war munitions<sup>15</sup>.

In order not to cause incalculable losses to Turkey, various other solutions were sought for the transit of the munitions. Smuggling, bribing customs officials, even transport by zeppelin, notwithstanding the risk of such an aircraft crash. But there was no substitute for the transfer by rail or the passage through Romanian seaports. That is why, as Turkey sank into a difficult war of attrition, the transit of munitions became an object of diplomatic negotiations, and later even of threats from Berlin. Hans von Wangenheim, the German ambassador in Constantinople, made his point bluntly in June 1915, telling Constantin Langa-Rascanu (the legation counsellor in Constantinople) that the Brătianu government should not refuse a benevolent neutrality to Germany if it acquired concessions from Austria. The question of ammunition had become a crucial one in Berlin. Turkey needed shells, guns, cars etc. not only for the defence of the Dardanelles but also for the battles in Egypt and the fighting in Baghdad. The empire had to strike everywhere at the enemy, but no more than 1000 shells a day were produced by its factories. Romania's strict neutrality – concluded Wangenheim – was of no use to Germany, especially as Italy's entry into the war had prevented the preparation of the offensive aimed to crash Serbia, in order to direct the munitions of war to Turkey through there<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> PA AA, R 1860, nr. 487. Bukarest den 25. Oktober 1914.

<sup>16</sup> *Documente Diplomatice Române*, Series I, volume 1914-1918, ed. Daniel-Valeriu Boboc, Ovidiu Bozgan, Cristian-Tudor Șerban, Delia Voicu, (Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial, 2024), pp. 29-32. Nr. 14. Telegram from Constantin Langa-Rășcanu, legation counsellor in Constantinople, to Emanoil Porumbaru, minister of foreign affairs, regarding

The same benevolent neutrality (which the Germans claimed it reflected the meaning of the decision taken at the Crown Council at Sinaia in August 1914) was also invoked almost simultaneously in the speeches of Baron von dem Bussche Haddenhausen, Minister Plenipotentiary in Bucharest. He stated that it involved the transit of Turkish ammunition in addition to encouraging the export of grain to German silos<sup>17</sup>.

It should also be noted here that the wording “benevolent neutrality”, including the passage of Turkish ammunition, still reflected a questionable position. Gottlieb von Jagow (head of German diplomacy) frankly admitted that this concession accepted by the Romanians would have been tantamount to their definitive compromise in the eyes of Russia. Therefore, benevolent neutrality in the sense desired by Wangenheim and Bussche could be tantamount to Romania’s entry into the war itself<sup>18</sup>. This is probably why even the benefits to be received by Romania have always been in doubt in the camp of the Central Powers. There were financial advantages: loans obtained by Romanians directly from the German capital market, with a low interest rate. Then there were commercial advantages: continued delivery of the amounts of weaponry ordered by the Romanian governments from German factories and approval for the export of medical supplies.

Finally, there were political advantages, coupled with small territorial concessions<sup>19</sup>. The suggestion of political concessions came from Minister Bussche, present in Bucharest, eventually reached Berlin and was negotiated without result in Vienna. On 30 May 1915, Bussche urged Berlin for the first time to demand benevolent neutrality for Romania, including the transit of munitions, by offering advantageous concessions. There was open talk of a political compromise: the autonomy of Transylvania under the 1867 law, the cession of southern Bukovina (Suceava and Rădăuți counties). Should Romania cooperate militarily against Russia, at a time when its intervention could still have strategic value, it would receive Bessarabia and parts of historical Bukovina in return. Bussche was of course expecting vigorous opposition from Austria-Hungary. In order to assuage Vienna’s feelings of frustration, he made it clear that Austria-Hungary should not be frustrated about the concessions

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his meeting with baron Hans von Wangenheim, the German minister in the Ottoman Empire. 9/21 June 1915, Constantinople.

<sup>17</sup> PA AA. R 1876, nr 975. Bukarest den 16. Juni 1915, f. 32.

<sup>18</sup> PA AA. R 1872, nr. 568. Berlin den 30. Mai 1915, f. 36.

<sup>19</sup> PA AA. R 9689, nr. 261. Sinaia den 26. Juli 1915.

promised to Romania, because after the war it would have been impossible anyway to keep all the advantages it had gained<sup>20</sup>. Because of the political stakes which burdened the question of the transit of munitions in Germany's negotiations with Austria-Hungary, the concessions solution eventually failed. Bethmann Hollweg seemed to be able to convince István Tisza of the importance of a series of Austro-Hungarian waivers that ensured Romania's benevolent neutrality, including approval of the transit of Turkish ammunition. Prime Minister Tisza also undertook personally to obtain from Vienna an agreement in principle from Baron István Burian and even to win the goodwill of Count Karl von Stürgkh. The negotiating mandate included the cession of three Bukovinian counties (Câmpulung, Suceava, Gura Humorului) and the granting of concessions, guaranteed by Imperial Edict, for the Romanians in the Hungarian provinces, including electoral reform, positions in the administration, opening middle schools and increasing subsidies for Romanian churches, the use of the Romanian language in court, the extension of the boundaries of the Hajdu Dorogh Episcopate, etc. Basically, all Istvan Tisza refused was the demand for the appointment of a Romanian minister in the government and the establishment of a Romanian state university. More interesting than the agenda of the talks, however, was the tactic of negotiation. If the government in Vienna accepted Istvan Tisza's proposals, the Romanians would immediately be offered (in exchange for the transit of ammunition) the cession of the Bukovinian counties and financial support. However, if Bucharest did not accept the proposal without further concessions concerning the Transylvanian Romanians, the content of the Imperial Edict came into question. For military cooperation against Russia, Romania could also obtain the occupation of Bessarabia<sup>21</sup>.

Although we know how hard he tried, István Tisza did not leave Vienna with Baron Burian's agreement in his pocket. Everything fell apart at the very first point of the offer. Ceding the counties of southern Bukovina was a moral impossibility for Austria-Hungary. Baron Burian would not accept such territorial concessions in exchange for a benevolent Romanian neutrality. The disproportion between the advantages gained and the losses suffered seemed too great in his eyes<sup>22</sup>. It is true, however, that apart from Burian, it was hard to find anyone in Vienna who was so vehemently opposed to Tisza's proposals. Perhaps only a politician like

<sup>20</sup> PA AA. R 1872, nr. 820. Bukarest den 30. Mai 1915, f. 45.

<sup>21</sup> PA AA. R 1876, nr. AS3204. Berlin den 17. 6. 1915, f. 68-69.

<sup>22</sup> PA AA. R 1876, nr. 98. Budapest den 20. Juni 1915, f. 157.

Brătianu in Bucharest would have worked diligently to follow in his footsteps. At a meeting with the Prince of Hohenlohe, Queen Maria's brother-in-law (Ernst Wilhelm Friedrich Carl Maximilian, Prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg sent as Imperial Emissary to Romania,) the Prime Minister again clearly explained his position on the transit of Turkish munitions. Personally, he told Hohenlohe, he would turn a blind eye to the "secret" passage of weapons trains, because he understood the danger of the Straits falling. If he hesitated, it was because of the indiscretion surrounding him. He considered it impossible to have the ammunition be transited "in the open". The internal political situation, coupled with the external one, prevented him from giving his consent. When the other concessions of the Hungarian government came up in their discussion, Brătianu also claimed that they were late in reaching Romania and in any case seemed insufficient at the time. Hohenlohe concluded at the end of the meeting that only a decisive victory of the Central Powers in the war with the Entente could influence the change of political will in Bucharest. It was in fact the only solution for the transit of ammunition<sup>23</sup>.

From concessions, the negotiations moved to pressure. As the shortage of munitions became acute and threatened the preservation of the Dardanelles, German rhetoric took on more threatening forms. Emperor Wilhelm II himself wrote a letter to King Ferdinand, in which he asked Ferdinand to request to the government to remove any obstacles to the transport of Turkish munitions. The news from Constantinople alarmed the German government. There was a danger that the Turkish troops concentrated in Gallipoli would be forced to give up their heroic fight if they did not receive sufficient ammunition from the Allies. The loss of the Straits followed by the fall of Constantinople to the Entente would strengthen Russia's power and consolidate its influence over the Black Sea states. If Romania still aspired to the status of a regional power, it would have been regrettable if the government in Bucharest, having promised benevolent neutrality during the reign of the late King Charles I, no longer allowed the transit of Turkish munitions, and thus contributed to the fall of the Dardanelles, dashing any hopes of its future expansion<sup>24</sup>. The German Emperor's letter was followed by a warning from the Chancellor. Alexandru Beldiman (the Romanian plenipotentiary in Berlin) requested an audience with Bethmann Hollweg to discuss the cooling of German-Romanian relations. The outcome of the meeting was put in a report sent

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<sup>23</sup> PA AA. R 1880, nr. AS 4508. Geheime Aufzeichnung, f. 176-189.

<sup>24</sup> PA AA. R 1878, nr. AS 3499. Wilhelm II to king Ferdinand, f. 85-87.

to King Ferdinand I, and was, of course, copied to Ion I. C. Brătianu. It concluded that the Romanian government had shown a malevolent attitude towards Germany, forcing Berlin to look for another point of support on its way to the East<sup>25</sup>. With all these warning signals, the German military attaché in Bucharest himself commented vigorously on the situation. Bronsart von Schellendorf also disapproved of the Romanian government's decision to ban oil exports to the Ottoman Empire, Brătianu's last controversial measure. As if the situation with the ammunition wasn't enough, gasoline was becoming an issue, too! The military attaché demanded reprisals from the German government in order to stop Romania from deepening its position of hostile neutrality to Germany. The basic argument? The government in Bucharest had banned the transit of Turkish ammunition but apparently tolerated the transport of Russian weapons to Serbia. The Romanians was seen by Schellendorf as blackmailers. Bronsart doubted that Berlin's policy of conciliation would bring the expected results. The Romanians regarded German concessions as evidence of weakness, which always encouraged them to demand more. Only the threat of military intervention and the concentration of troops on the border could make Romania a reasonable partner<sup>26</sup>. Would a show of force, as Bronsart von Shellendorf had demanded, really be necessary? Where would Germany find the necessary troops? Realistically, however, Germany could only use a few plausible arguments against Romania in favour of economic isolation. For example, the blocking of the cash flow, resulting from the low value of trade. Bronsart also believed that the time had come for economic arguments to be used more convincingly in Romania. But the economic pressure exerted by the Germans in Romania greatly displeased Vienna and Baron Burian. The reason? It affected the export of Romanian grain to Central Europe, at a time when the danger of agreements with the Entente on the sale of future grain crops had not been definitively removed. On the contrary, Baron Burian believed that the Romanians needed to be reinforced in their conviction that the business of selling grain remained extremely profitable and even required new continuity agreements<sup>27</sup>. Finally, there was also talk of drafting an ultimatum designed to intimidate Bucharest, thus forcing the hand of the

<sup>25</sup> PA AA. R 1880, nr. AS 4508. Geheime Aufzeichnung, f. 176-189.

<sup>26</sup> PA AA. R 1880, nr. 451. An der königlichen General der Infanterie und Chef des Generalstabes des Feldheeres Herrn von Falkenhayn, Bukarest den 25. Juli 1915, Munitionsdurchfuhr für die Türkei, f. 85-86. See also nr. 464, Bukarest den 28. Juli 1915, Verbot der Petroleumausfuhr nach der Türkei, f. 87-88.

<sup>27</sup> PA AA. R 1879, nr. 886/ AS3798. Grünau (Pless) den 20. Juli 1915, f. 128.



Brătianu government towards a favourable decision. Falkenhayn and Bethmann Hollweg agreed to it, but only half-heartedly. Easy to plan, but hard to put into practice. This ultimatum was a form of direct threat and again involved troop concentrations near the Romanian borders. The whole manoeuvre would have to take place under conditions of maximum discretion so as not to arouse premature reactions from the Romanian government. But it is known that at that moment both available troops and discretion were in short supply. Even though the ultimatum hypothesis remained current for a while, nothing materialized before Romania entered the war. The ultimatum did not please the members of the diplomatic corps. Baron von dem Bussche was resolutely opposed to it. So did Gottlieb von Jagow (the foreign minister), who recommended in 1916 that a protest be drawn up against Romania as a warning for the concentration of troops near the Bulgarian and Austro-Hungarian borders. However, the ultimatum, which had been cautiously talked about since 1915, was a lost cause even in 1916 because it would have thrown Romania prematurely into the arms of the Entente. For the Germans, it did not bring benefits even at the height of the Romanian neutrality crisis. Even in the decisive year of escalating tensions with Bucharest (1916), Germany refrained from aggressive gestures, because the ultimatum was tantamount to halting ongoing trade transactions even in the run-up to the war<sup>28</sup>.

### Epilogue

Running out of immediate solutions, the German strategy towards Romania's opposition to the transit of Turkish ammunition changed on the fly. In fact, Berlin refocused on Serbia. Germany carefully planned a decisive military strike against Belgrade. That would be the source of practical and more significant advantages: unlocking the route to Turkey and drawing Bulgaria into the war. Romania was losing an important strategic battle in the war economy by refusing the transit of Turkish munitions. But it was a strategic battle that the government led by Brătianu had never been interested in winning. The possible military cooperation with the Central Powers thus became a closed subject. If the Romanian government had abandoned neutrality at that moment, entering the war could only be interpreted as an alliance with the Entente. This premeditated political play in Bucharest had in fact exhausted the last chance for Romania and the Ottoman Empire to become, forced by circumstances, allied powers in the battles of the Great War.

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<sup>28</sup> PAAA. R 22258, nr. 218. Telegram from Berlin, 2 March 1916. Secretary of state von Jagow to the minister of state von Treutler.

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## PLANNING FOR WAR: ROMANIA'S VIEW OF THE OTTOMAN ARMY, 1914-1916

*Vlad-Cristian GHEORGHÎĂ\**

### Abstract

This article examines the influence of intelligence on the Ottoman Army on the strategic planning and war hypotheses developed by the Romanian General Staff between 1914 and 1916. During this period, Romania maintained a stance of effective neutrality as the First World War unfolded across Europe. The Romanian General Staff, particularly its 3rd Section responsible for war planning, formulated several strategic scenarios, envisioning potential conflicts against Bulgaria, the Central Powers at large, or the Russian Empire, in response to the shifting dynamics on all battlefronts in the region. While the principal opponents Romania would have to face in any conflict were always going to its neighbors, their coalition partners posed particular challenges the Romanian planners had to consider. This paper emphasizes the role of one of these secondary adversaries, namely the Ottoman Empire.

Drawing on documents from the Romanian National Military Archives, the article argues, in the first place, that the Romanian General Staff possessed a detailed understanding of the Ottoman military. This understanding was informed, among others, by reports from Major Lucian Trantomir, the Military Attaché in Constantinople. Secondly, focusing on the evolution of Hypothesis B, this paper shows how this intelligence shaped Romanian military strategies. The General Staff formulated multiple hypotheses of war, reflecting different strategic scenarios based on the Ottoman Army's potential involvement and threat level. The intelligence of Ottoman troop movements, particularly in the Balkans and Thrace, prompted adjustments to these plans.

**Keywords:** Romanian General Staff, Intelligence, Planning, Ottoman Army, Neutrality.

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## Introduction

Following Europe's descent into war in 1914, Romania entered a two-year period of effective neutrality. For the planners inside the General Staff of the Romanian Army, this was a time of creating and constantly updating war plans in relation to the evolving dynamic on all battlefronts. While they considered a war against the Russian Empire to be the most probable course of action during the summer of 1914, plans for operations against Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria received new emphasis after the Crown Council of Sinaia (July 21/ August 3), the meeting that decided Romania would stay neutral for the moment<sup>1</sup>. Three fundamental scenarios were envisioned by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Section of the General Staff, the department in charge with planning for war: a conflict solely against Bulgaria (Hypothesis A), a conflict against the Central Powers on two fronts (Hypothesis B) and a conflict against the Russian Empire (Hypothesis C)<sup>2</sup>.

The main question this paper aims to answer is "how did intelligence on the Ottoman Army influence the war plans created by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Section of the Romanian General Staff between 1914 and 1916?". To that end, I will first make the claim that the intelligence on the Turkish Army at the disposal of the Romanian General Staff was thorough. As such, this article is structured in two main parts, based on documents found in the Romanian National Military Archives. The first part substantiates the initial claim using reports on the structure, the mobilization process, and the deployment of the Ottoman Army. The latter will give evidence showing the ways in which knowledge about the Turkish capabilities played into the war Hypotheses created by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Section.

### 1. Intelligence in the Ottoman Army

Even before the July Crisis and the start of the war, intelligence on the Ottoman Army was constantly supplied through the work of the Romanian Military Attaché in the Ottoman Empire, Major Lucian Trantomir, though other sources were utilized as well<sup>3</sup>. One report from

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<sup>1</sup> Romanian National Military Archives - ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadrul 39.

<sup>2</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadre 37-39.

<sup>3</sup> More on his work as Romanian Military Attaché in the Ottoman Empire in Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu and Silvana Rachieru, "Reconstituirea unei biografii: pe urmele atașatului military român la Constantinopol – Lucian Trantomir (1913-1916)", *Analele Științifice ale Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași, Istorie*, Tom LXV, 2019, pp. 535-551; Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu and Silvana Rachieru, "Romanian Military Attachés in

June 1914, for instance, described the recent reorganization process underway since the end of the Balkan Wars<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the new Ottoman order of battle maintained the 13 Army Corps with two independent divisions, the difference being the two new divisions added to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Corps. Moreover, the new plan envisioned the creation of 75 new infantry battalions, adding it up to a total of 378. Each battalion consisted of 3 companies, with the possibility of adding a fourth. Yet, the battalions forming Army Corps 6, 7, 8, 12, 13 and the two independent divisions were staffed at only half the preferable capacity<sup>5</sup>. This was due to the deliberate policy of the Ottoman military of maintaining a reduced cadre structure, taken after the Balkan Wars. Units below the division level were systematically cut down, and thus infantry regiments were short one battalion, while battalions were short one company. In peacetime, the Turkish Army preferred a higher number of reduced establishment formations, instead of keeping some front-line formations at full capacity<sup>6</sup>. When it comes to Cavalry however, the number of squadrons was reduced by 52, from 164 to a total of 112. 6 new aviation units were added to the Army Corps, with the provision that new airplanes were ordered from France. While manpower and material were nevertheless still missing, the new order of battle was considered the most the Ottoman Army could achieve at that moment, given its available resources. All these changes were to be implemented in the following years<sup>7</sup>.

Then, as the war started and as the Ottoman Empire declared its initial neutrality, the mobilization process ordered by the government in Constantinople was followed and included in the General Staff's intelligence briefings throughout August, September and October<sup>8</sup>. The contents of these briefings referred to the number of soldiers mobilized, the weaponry at the Army's disposal and the zones of concentration. In addition to these technical details, the dispatches on the mobilization efforts often came with comments describing the general attitude of the population and the soldiers. For instance, these efforts were described as lacking in enthusiasm in the beginning, as many recruits did not understand

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the Ottoman Empire until the First World War", *Review of Military History*, No. 3-4, 2023, pp. 68-78.

<sup>4</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.513, cadre 526-536.

<sup>5</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.513, cadrul 526.

<sup>6</sup> Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.513, cadre 526-536.

<sup>8</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.931, cadre 199-475.

the purpose of this decision. Moreover, the assessment claims that no reserve units were initially mobilized because of deficiencies in organization, and the sanitary units had significant difficulties as well<sup>9</sup>. However, this is an error in the intelligence brief, caused by the discontinuation of the permanently established reserve divisions after 1913 in the Turkish military. Notwithstanding several exceptions, the Ottoman army could not field large units of reserves upon mobilization, drafting more of the regular divisions when in need of additional combat troops<sup>10</sup>. The reports produced in the early stages of the process considered it to be a diversion advised by Berlin, aimed against either the Russians in the Orient, or against Greece and Serbia in the Balkans. Thus, they remarked, as a matter of fact, that there was an important concentration of Turkish troops in Thrace, with 2 armies, and one army in the Caucasus region<sup>11</sup>.

Another briefing from early August underlined the difficult financial position in which the Ottoman Empire found itself. The wars against Italy and those in the Balkans had drained the imperial coffers, and because of the international context, securing new credits was difficult. Thus a 500 million lei loan from France was used to pay the debts accumulated in the Italian war, while the payments due from the Balkan wars remained unpaid after a new 300 million lei loan did not materialize. The overall situation, already made difficult by the failed acquisition of the two English dreadnoughts, was worsened by the mobilization efforts. Yet, a tax providing waivers from military service to draftees offered some help, as it did during the Balkan Wars when between 1 and 2 million Turkish Lira were raised<sup>12</sup>. While the overall mobilization process was accurately seen as slow,<sup>13</sup> in the first weeks of October the intelligence suggested a newfound haste, just as the Empire's entry into the First World War was approaching. The total number of soldiers mobilized was estimated at 1.2 million. The reports make a great deal out of the presence of the German officers and NCOs in the country, approximated at around 6 or 7

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<sup>9</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.931, cadre 202-203.

<sup>10</sup> Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.931, cadre 202-203.

<sup>12</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.931, cadrul 240.

<sup>13</sup> Most Army Corps took significantly more days to mobilize than the number provided for in the Turkish war plan. For instance, Army Corp I mobilized over the course of two months, when it had only 19 days at its disposal. More on this in Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, p. 41.



thousand.<sup>14</sup> The number itself is exaggerated as fully staffed, the German mission would consist of around 1100 men, including officers, NCOs and soldiers<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, when war was declared by Constantinople against the Russian Empire, all these German servicemen gathered in the capital from all around the Ottoman Empire, where they were instructing local troops. The Turkish Fleet was seen as entirely in the control of the Germans. Details of the preparations also point out the work done around important fortifications in the Straits, and to the material arriving from Germany. Moreover, the morale of the Ottoman officers was described as high in those days, encouraged by the presence German officers and by the perspective of cooperating with the Bulgarians with whom a new military agreement was signed<sup>16</sup>. In the subsequent months, the evolution of war and the dynamic of the battlefield, including the Gallipoli Campaign, was once again followed and reported on by the Military Attaché.

On o side note, the Military Attaché Trantomir's comments on the state of the Ottoman Army, especially during the discussed process of mobilization, earned him a reprimand from the Grand Vizier in 1914, as his reports were seen as particularly unfavorable to the Turks. It was usual for his assessments to be published in the official intelligence bulletin of the Romanian General Staff, and that was how the Ottoman Military Attaché to Bucharest, Halil Bey, learned about them, passing the information on to Constantinople. Trantomir then requested that his future reports be seen by fewer people in command<sup>17</sup>.

To further strengthen the claim that the Romanian General Staff had indeed a thorough image of the Ottoman Army, one could point out two documents, each dealing with the deployment of the Turkish troops to different combat zones during the First World War. The first one, dated July 1915, accounts for and identifies 6 divisions fighting on the European shore of the Straits, belonging to Army Corps I, II, III, V and VI; three on the Asian one, part of Army Corp IV and V, and Divisions 13 (A.C. V)<sup>18</sup>, 19, 24 (A.C. VI) and 26 (A.C. VI) who are unaccounted for, but are believed take part in the fighting in the Straits area. Division 10 (A.C. IV)

<sup>14</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.931, cadrul 474.

<sup>15</sup> Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.931, cadre 474-475.

<sup>17</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations 1878-1989: Documents*, Vol. I, ed. Carmen-Sorina Rîjnoveanu and Manuel Stănescu, (București: Editura Militară, 2023), pp. 356-357.

<sup>18</sup> Abbreviation for Army Corp.

was stationed in Adrianople, 5 divisions were positioned north of the Gulf of Saros (1, 2, 4, 6, 8), while 9 Ottoman divisions were deployed to the Caucasus. Similar figures are given for Syria, Arabia and Baghdad<sup>19</sup>. The report correctly identifies most of the Ottoman units fighting in the different theatres in which the state was engaged at the time. For those deployed to Caucasia, where the distance made it more difficult for Romanian Intelligence to operate, the document underestimates the number of divisions that took part in the fighting, omitting two cavalry divisions, two infantry divisions and the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Forces, but accurately establishes the nine infantry divisions and their Army Corps who made up the Third Army positioned there.

On July 9/22 1916, one month before Romania's entry into the First World War, a report prepared by the Intelligence Bureau of the General Staff, assessing the probable deployment of all Central Power armies in the Balkan Peninsula found 15 Turkish divisions located in the European theatre and the Straits and 17 in the Caucasus, out of a total of around 54 divisions in all operational theatres. The document identifies Divisions 19, 20, 49 and 50, from the First Army commanded by Esad Pasa fighting around San Stefano, Çatalca and the shores of the Bosphorus. 8 divisions of the Fifth Army were defending the Dardanelles and the coasts of Izmir<sup>20</sup>. The Third Army under the Command of Vehib Pasa had 17 divisions fighting in the Caucasus region,<sup>21</sup> while the Fourth Army, commanded by Djemal Pasa had four divisions fighting in Arabia: 21 and 22 around Aden, as Divisions 39 and 40 were located around Jemen. The Special Army commanded by Izzet Pasa was deployed to Armenia, consisting of 8 divisions supported by German and Arab troops, acting as a link between the Third and the Sixth Armies, while the Sixth was operating towards Baghdad with 8 divisions: 37, 38, 41, 43, 51, 53-55<sup>22</sup>.

This report is further substantiated by information provided by the then promoted Lieutenant-Colonel Trantomir,<sup>23</sup> the Military Attaché in Constantinople, on the same day the documented discussed above was released, 9/22 July 1916, stating that the Ottomans would be able to

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<sup>19</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadre 568-570.

<sup>20</sup> The division mentioned are 23, 25, 26, 27 and 42 around Dardanelles, while Div. 46, 47 and 48 were spread thinly defending the coasts around Izmir.

<sup>21</sup> The Divisions in question were 2-5, 10, 13, 17, 18, 28-36.

<sup>22</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.519, cadre 531-537.

<sup>23</sup> Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu and Silvana Rachieru, "Romanian Military Attachés in the Ottoman Empire until the First World War", p. 75

provide three divisions, consisting of a total of 40 thousand combatants commanded by Pertev Pasa, to any offensive against Romania undertaken by Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria<sup>24</sup>. A fair conclusion of this chapter would be that the initial claim of the article, namely that the Romanian General Staff had a comprehensive image of the Ottoman Army, still stands, notwithstanding some inaccurate reporting of estimations and the changes within the Turkish military. In what ways did all this intelligence influence Romania's war plans?

## 2. Romanian Hypotheses for War

In this section, I will examine Romania's different hypotheses of war, developed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Section of the General Staff throughout 1914-1916, looking for clues on how they were influenced by intelligence on the Ottoman Army. After the Second Balkan War, premises for a war involving Romania were multiple, ranging from defending against a sole Bulgarian attack, an intervention of the type of 1913 in defence of the Treaty of Bucharest, to wars against Tsarist Russia in the east and, as a novelty, a war against Austria-Hungary with the possibility of a second battlefield in the south. The latter scenario was considered in light of the hostile attitude of the Habsburg Monarchy towards Bucharest during the Second Balkan War, exacerbated by the conditions of the Romanians living in Transylvania<sup>25</sup>. These international conditions led to the creation, in the summer of 1914, of five fundamental War Hypotheses based on three main circumstances: a conflict solely against Bulgaria (Hypothesis A and A1), a conflict against the Central Powers on two fronts (Hypothesis B and B1) and a conflict against the Russian Empire (Hypothesis C) alongside the Central Powers and in accordance with the secret alliance from 1883. For the next years, they were constantly updated with new variants, in relation to the current international conditions and the dynamics of the Great War<sup>26</sup>.

For the purpose of this paper, the most important fundamental hypothesis is B, which accounts for a war in the west and north-west against Austria-Hungary, either with a second front in the south (B), or with a neutral Sofia (B1), the difference being that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Romanian Army designated to conduct operations against Bulgaria would be used as a

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<sup>24</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations 1878-1989: Documents*, Vol. I, pp. 369-370.

<sup>25</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadrul 35.

<sup>26</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadrul 36-42.

general reserve supporting the fight across the Carpathian Mountains<sup>27</sup>. In this initial scenario, the Ottoman Empire was seen as a particular maritime threat. To protect the coast of Romania against Bulgaria's fleet but more importantly the Turkish one, Tsarist Russia's help was needed, especially since it was already at war with Constantinople at the time the plan was finalized in November 1914<sup>28</sup>.

The possibility that the Bulgarian army was aided by the Ottoman one was considered as well, but somewhat played down. The document claimed that the Turkish support would amount to less than 100 000 troops, since most of the Ottoman units stationed in Thrace were meant to either defend against possible Anglo-French operations against the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles or to reinforce the armies fighting in the Caucasus region. Nevertheless, in case the 3<sup>rd</sup> Romanian Army had significant troubles against Central Powers troops on the southern front, the General Staff was counting on the political leadership of the state to bring Greece into the war against Bulgaria, thus dragging Serbia in this fight too, since the two countries were formal allies at the time<sup>29</sup>.

Later, the war's evolution brought about several changes in the Romanian plans too. The presence of 200 thousand Ottoman soldiers in Thrace in October and November of 1914, corroborated with the Bulgarian attitude towards Bucharest and the Austrian offensive in Serbia alarmed the Romanian General Staff, who saw a possibility of a concerted action of the Central Powers against Bucharest: a Bulgarian attack against Dobrogea, aided by Turkish troops and an Austro-Hungarian attack from the south against Oltenia and towards Bucharest, aided by Bulgarian units.

These incentives led to adjustments in Hypothesis B, with three new variations created: B variant 1 (Bv1), B variant 2 (Bv2), B variant 3 (Bv3)<sup>30</sup>. These plans emphasized the importance of the southern flank, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Romanian Army deployed there was strengthened and structured in three groups (West-Central-East), plus a fourth group composed of 2 divisions serving as the general reserve, while the force supposed to be fighting in Transylvania stayed the same. The West Group was meant to fight any incursion coming from Bulgaria as per Bv1, while the Bv2 and Bv3 variants provided for a response to any attack coming from either the

<sup>27</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadrul 38.

<sup>28</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.941, cadre 599-601.

<sup>29</sup> Comisia română de Istorie Militară, *Proiecte și planuri de operații ale Marelui Stat Major Român (până în anul 1916)*, (București: Editura Militară, 1992), pp. 90-94.

<sup>30</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadrul 45.

south (Bulgaria) or the west (through Banat). The Centre Group was assigned operations between the Argeș and Olt rivers, while the East Group was stationed in Southern Dobrogea, just like the previous variants of Hypothesis B<sup>31</sup>.

Turkish units could have either fought alongside the Bulgarians in Dobrogea, or alternatively, they could have fought against the Greek army, freeing up all the Bulgarian army to fight against Romania. In this scenario, as the Austrians were advancing in Serbia, Romania would have been cut off from its main line of communication with its allies in the West: Salonika – Vardar - the Timok Valley - the Danube, thus making any potential offensive in Transylvania ever more difficult to pull off. Given this situation, the General Staff advised the implementation of Hypothesis A, with all the forces at Romania's disposal deployed in the south.<sup>32</sup>

In light of the gradual reduction of Turkish forces from the Balkan Peninsula, as the fights that erupted in the Caucasus region required constant aid, as well as the evolution of the Serbian front, the variants of the Hypothesis B mentioned above were once again significantly modified in November-December 1914, with the aim of limiting the potential operations in the south. Thus, Hypothesis B II emerged, which provided for defence on the southern front. The Romanian units positioned there were given the task of defending the main bridgeheads on the Danube: Turtucaia, Silistra and Cernavodă, the main objective being to push back against any possible incursion on the left bank of the Danube. A temporary loss of Dobrogea was conceded, until victory was achieved on the main battlefield against the Central Powers. The plan also accounted for a great reserve unit to be stationed on the left bank of the Danube, with the purpose of aiding the troops fighting the Central Powers in the south or, alternatively, to aid the Romanian armies fighting in Transylvania, if Bulgaria proved not to be hostile in the end. Later, a B III variant occurred, where three divisions were stationed in Oltenia from the very beginning, in order to counter any Austro-Hungarian offensive coming from the direction of Banat, where a number of troops were concentrated, ostensibly against Serbia.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadre 45-46.

<sup>32</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadre 46-47.

<sup>33</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.940, cadre 51-52.

Hypothesis Z, the last version of the Romanian war plan was finalized in August 1916, providing for an offensive in Transylvania executed by three Romanian Armies, while one army was initially left on the defence against Bulgaria, followed by an ulterior second offensive, this time in the south<sup>34</sup>. The latter provision committing the Romanian Army to not just a two-front war, but to two simultaneous offensives operations was a result of the negotiations of prime-minister Ion I.C. Brătianu with the Allied powers<sup>35</sup>. The basic premises and objectives of this decided upon war plan were practically the same to Hypothesis B. One important criticism brought upon this hypothesis, among others, is its failure to account for any of the possible reinforcements the Central Powers might send, despite the estimates of the initial opponents being quite realistic<sup>36</sup>. In this regard, one can mention the assumption inscribed in the plan that the majority of Bulgarian forces would be drawn towards Salonika and that the Central Powers and the Ottoman Empire would not be able to send additional forces into eastern Bulgaria. As this article has previously shown, reports emerged in July 1916 that Turkish forces were assembling in Adrianople, to be transported to Bulgaria<sup>37</sup>. The assumption held that these forces would be deployed to Salonika. In the end, two Ottoman divisions were to fight on the Romanian Battlefront, in Dobrogea and one across the Danube towards Bucharest<sup>38</sup>.

## Conclusions

To conclude, this article intended to show first that the General Staff had a thorough image of the Ottoman Army and its fighting ways, aided by multiple sources, the most important of which was the Military Attache in Constantinople, Lucian Trantomir. Thus, it could rely on intelligence regarding the structure of the Turkish military, the zones of

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<sup>34</sup> ANMR, Fond Marele Stat Major - Secția 2 Informații, rola 1.1084, cadre 438-456.

<sup>35</sup> Glenn E. Torrey, *The Romanian Battlefront in World War I*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), p. 23.; Glenn E. Torrey, "Romania's Entry into the First World War: The Problem of Strategy", *The Emporia State Research Studies*, Vol XXVI, No. 4, Spring 1978, pp. 4-22; Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 256-262

<sup>36</sup> Glenn E. Torrey, *The Romanian Battlefront in World War I*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>37</sup> *Romanian-Ottoman-Turkish Political and Military Relations 1878-1989: Documents*, Vol. I, pp. 369-370.

<sup>38</sup> The units in question are the 15, 25, 26 Infantry Divisions. Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, p. 134.

concentration, the mobilization process, the weaponry at the army's disposal, its fortifications or its financial situation.

Secondly, its force deployment and the Empire's possible courses of action loomed large in the process of crafting the Romanian war plans. The conceivable hostility of the Ottoman Empire was a reason to update the fundamental plans, being at times responsible for significant changes, such as the three variants of Hypothesis B, created at a time when 200 thousand Turkish soldiers in the Balkan Peninsula alarmed the Romanians. In contrast, when Ottoman soldiers were gradually withdrawing from the Balkans, being deployed to the Caucasus region, to fight the Russian Empire, the plans were once again changed and Hypothesis B was replaced with the B II variant, which provided for a more limited approach in the south and more preparedness to face the Austro-Hungarians and Germans in Transylvania. In spite of the clear image the 3<sup>rd</sup> Section of the General Staff had of the Turkish armies, the chosen Hypothesis of action failed to estimate the extent to which the Ottomans might be able to reinforce Bulgaria in 1916.



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# AFTER THE WAR: MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ROMANIA AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1919-1922)

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## Abstract

This paper analyzes a period in the Romanian-Ottoman relations (1919-1922) that is less frequently mentioned in Romanian historiography. Our objective is to observe how the Romanian authorities tried to connect to the realities in the Ottoman Empire, even though diplomatic relations were interrupted, through the commissioner/political envoy (Gheorghe Filality) sent to Constantinople and the military attaché (Alexandru Glatz), appointed in late 1920. Thus, exploring some aspects of Filality and Glatz's activity in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, we will try to observe, on the one hand, how the two Romanian representatives tried to protect the interests of the Romanian state and its citizens in the context of the major political transformations that eventually led to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye. On the other hand, we will observe how the Romanian envoys to Constantinople were related to the Greco-Turkish war and the relations between the Turks and the Soviets, given the tense relationship between Romania and Bolshevik Russia.

**Keywords:** Romania, Ottoman Empire, Diplomacy, Military Connections, Gheorghe Filality, Alexandru Glatz.

## Introduction

The years 1919-1922 represent a “grey period” in Romanian-Ottoman relations, over which Romanian historians have usually tended to pass rather quickly in order to concentrate on analysing relations between Romania and the Republic of Türkiye. This is despite the fact that in the last decade several studies, monographs and volumes of documents have been published which bring new information/unpublished documents into

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the scientific circuit, thus contributing to a more nuanced knowledge of Romanian-Turkish relations.

Therefore, our approach builds a Romanian perspective on the connections between Romania and the Ottoman Empire, based on published documents from the Romanian Military Archives and documents (mostly unpublished) from the Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also integrates the contributions of Romanian historians on the subject.

Our objective is to present some aspects of how the Romanian authorities and the Romanian representatives to Constantinople sought to reconnect the interests of the Romanian state with the fluid realities of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, we will briefly analyse some elements related to the appointment and activity of Romania's diplomatic/political envoy in Constantinople/Istanbul (Gheorghe Filality) on the one hand, and of the military representatives on the other.

### **1. The Beginning of the Thaw: from “Special Delegate” to Commercial Attaché**

In the context of the Paris Peace Conference, Romania's objectives in relation to the Ottoman Empire were structured by the decision-makers in Bucharest on several levels:

“reimbursement of state property and private individual's goods taken by the Turkish army during 1916-1918; the salvage of Romanian commercial vassels captured by the Turks and defending the interests of the shipping company, to resume trade relations between Romania and Turkey; restauration of telegraph and postal links between Bucharest and Constantinople; regulating the legal situation of Romanians of Turkish territory and the protection of the Romanian diaspora in Istanbul and recognition of capitulations for the Romanian state.”<sup>1</sup>

In this context, in February 1919, Mihail Pherekyde, *ad-interim* foreign minister, sent Ion I. C. Brătianu, who was in Paris at the Peace Conference, some suggestive remarks about the situation in Constantinople.

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<sup>1</sup> Liliana Boşcan, *Diplomatic and economic relations between the Kingdom of Romania and the Republic of Turkey during the Atatürk period (1923-1938)*, (Ankara, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2019), p. 29.

“There are no benefits of the armistice for us found there. Our navigation is not protected; the French naval base is refusing us a costal landing point. Our vessels anchored at sea must make the handling there. This translates in the prohibition of the telecommunication with the country. Our imports tokened 100% (...) Inferiority everywhere as we were never allies. All truces have ignore us. Even after we have made known our situation, we are denied the status of allies.”<sup>2</sup>

Within this framework, the Romanian leaders decided to accelerate the appointment of a representative in Constantinople, who would defend Romania’s interests in relations with the representatives of the Great Powers, but subsequently, through the Spanish Legation (which had taken over the protection of Romania’s interests in the Ottoman Empire since the outbreak of the war), and in relations with the Ottoman authorities. In Bucharest, it was rightly considered that:

“our normal path, our breathing lung is Constantinople and the Straits ... through our maritime and commercial movement which has resumed its activity after four and a half years, we must also be represented in Constantinople”<sup>3</sup>.

At that time, the Romanian state’s contact with the realities in Constantinople was carried out through Epaminonda Papacosta, an employee of the Romanian legation in the Ottoman Empire until 1916, who was in charge of the building of the diplomatic mission during the war years. At the end of the war, Papacosta resumed contacts with the Romanian Foreign Ministry, maintaining regular correspondence<sup>4</sup>, as “special delegate” of the Romanian government<sup>5</sup>. Papacosta was involved in various currency-smuggling and misconduct, and in 1920, after the appointment of a Romanian commissioner in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, he was prosecuted and dismissed<sup>6</sup>. However, it seems that the first

<sup>2</sup> Liliana Boșcan, *Diplomatic and economic relations between the Kingdom of Romania and the Republic of Turkey during the Atatürk period (1923-1938)*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Liliana Boșcan, Călin Constantin Radu, *Activitatea diplomației române în Comisia Internațională a Strămtorilor (1924-1933)*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2021), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, 1878-1938, coord. Carmen-Sorina Rîjnoveanu, responsabil de volum Manuel Stănescu, (București: Editura Militară, 2023), p. 372.

<sup>5</sup> Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, București (hereinafter: AMAE), fond Problema 77/Personal, vol. 20, Epaminonda Papacosta to Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 June 1919.

<sup>6</sup> “Dimineața”, Year 17, 14 August 1920, p. 8.

representative sent by the Romanian government to Constantinople was the commercial attaché, Andrei Balamace, who was subordinate to the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The decision to send a commercial attaché to the Ottoman Empire was taken in March 1919, and documents show that he was in Constantinople at the beginning of June<sup>7</sup>, where he served until March 1921<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, in the last months of 1919, Romania did not yet have an official representative, sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to defend its objectives in an area of major economic and political interests.

## 2. Gheorghe Filality-Romanian Commissioner in Constantinople

In this context, in mid november 1919, Gheorghe Filality was appointed Commissioner of the Romanian Government in Constantinople (on 15 November 1919) but took up his post on late January 1920.

Born in 1864 and educated in Paris, Filality joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by exam in 1888. He trained as a diplomat at several diplomatic missions - Belgrade, Paris, St. Petersburg, Constantinople, The Hague, Brussels - as well as in various posts (sub-director, director) in the central administration of the ministry. On 1 October 1909 he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Serbia, where he served until 1919<sup>9</sup>.

His appointment as Romania's Commissioner in Constantinople, by decree of 15 November 1919, therefore, came as no surprise<sup>10</sup>. Filality was Minister Plenipotentiary 1st class (since 1 October 1919)<sup>11</sup>, had a wide experience in diplomacy and was well acquainted with the situation in the Balkans.

Why didn't Romania send a political envoy to Constantinople sooner? The answer might be because the Romanian authorities concentrated on representation at the Peace Conference, on the Romanian-

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<sup>7</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 77/Personal, vol. 20, A. Balamace to Romanian Ministry of Industry and Trade, 1 June 1919.

<sup>8</sup> Balamace died in Constantinople in early March 1921 (AMAE, fond Problema 77/Personal, vol. 21, Filality to Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 March 1921). In November 1921, the Romanian authorities appointed a new commercial attaché in Constantinople, Nicolae Mănescu (AMAE, fond Problema 77/Personal, vol. 21, Ministry of Industry and Trade to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 November 1921).

<sup>9</sup> Adrian Vițalaru, "In the Capital of the Allied State. Romanian Diplomats in Belgrade (1919-1941), *Analele Științifice ale Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași (seria nouă), Istorie*, tom LXVIII, 2022, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 12.

<sup>11</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 77/Personal, dosar F 12, vol. II, decree no. 16885 from 12 November 1919.

Hungarian dispute, and it was only in the second half of 1919 that Romania “reconnected” on a larger scale with some defeated states<sup>12</sup>, but also with new states, such as Poland. On the other hand, we must also consider the situation in the Ottoman Empire, troubled by political infighting and in the process of disintegration following the implementation of the Mudros armistice<sup>13</sup>. In this framework, troops of the victorious Great Powers (Great Britain, France, Italy) were stationed in the capital of the Empire, contributing to ensuring order in Istanbul and keeping control of traffic through the straits<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the interests of the Great Powers (Great Britain, France, Italy, Italy, the USA, Japan) and Greece in relation to the Ottoman authorities were represented by high commissioners<sup>15</sup>, who, in several cases, were officers of the victorious armies, playing the role of veritable “diplomatic representatives”. Following this model, other winning states<sup>16</sup>, such as Romania, sent their own representatives (commissioners) to Istanbul.

We consider that Nicolae Mișu, Romania’s Foreign Minister at that time, played an important role in the appointment of a Romanian commissioner in Constantinople. Mișu was also a plenipotentiary minister in Constantinople (1911-1912), a member of the Romanian delegation to the Peace Conference and one of the foreign policy advisors to the former Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, Mișu understood very well the importance of appointing a diplomatic representative in

<sup>12</sup> For example, also in 1919 Romania established a Royal Commissariat in Austria (Florin Șinca, *Relații româno-austriece 1918-1938*, (București, RCR Editorial, 2013), pp. 62-63, 70).

<sup>13</sup> Paul Dumont, François Georgeon, “Moartea unui imperiu (1908-1923)”, *Istoria Imperiului Otoman*, Trans. by Cristina Bîrsan, coord. Robert Mantran, (București: Editura BIC ALL, 2001), pp. 537-543.

<sup>14</sup> Claire Le Bras, “Policing and security in occupied Istanbul”, *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies*, 4 (2022), pp. 135-141.

<sup>15</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, “Occupation during and after the war (Ottoman Empire)”, *International Encyclopedia of First World War*, [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/occupation-during-and-after-the-war-ottoman-empire/#toc\\_occupation\\_and\\_resistance\\_in\\_istanbul](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/occupation-during-and-after-the-war-ottoman-empire/#toc_occupation_and_resistance_in_istanbul) (accessed 5.07.2024).

<sup>16</sup> For example, two of the three British High Commissioners to Istanbul between 1918-1924 were military officers (Admirals Sir Arthur Calthorpe - 1918-1919, and Sir John Michael de Robeck - 1919-1920), while diplomat Horace Rumbold headed the British High Commission between 1920 and 1924 (G. R. Berridge, *British Diplomacy in Turkey, 1583 to the Present. A Study in the Evolution of the Resident Embassy*, (Leiden, Boston, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2009), pp. 128-139).

<sup>17</sup> About N. Mișu’s career, see Daniel Cain, *Un trimis al Majestății Sale: Nicolae Mișu*, (București, Editura Anima, 2007), *passim*.

Constantinople, and the one chosen was a diplomat he had met in his diplomatic career. But at the end of November 1919, the government of which N. Mișu was a member was replaced and the new Prime Minister, Al. Vaida-Voevod, assumed the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>18</sup>.

This explains why it was not until 20 December 1919 that the Foreign Ministry in Bucharest informed the diplomatic missions of France, England, Italy and the USA of Filality's appointment as commissioner to Constantinople, with the aim of protecting the interests of the Romanian state and its citizens. With this notification, the Romanian government also requested the support of the High Commissioners in Constantinople to sustain the work of the Romanian representative. However, this did not change the representation of Romania's interests to the Ottoman authorities, which remained, as before, in the care of the Spanish diplomatic mission in Constantinople. Therefore, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the Royal Government of Spain about Filality's appointment and requested the support of the Spanish diplomats for the fulfillment of the mission undertaken by the Romanian Commissioner in Constantinople<sup>19</sup>. Filality was scheduled to leave for Constantinople by ship at the end of 1919, but his trip was delayed because of postponement, several times, of the departure of the ship *Dacia*, from Galați to Constanța and then to Constantinople. Filality arrived in Constantinople on 22 January 1920, when he officially took up his duties<sup>20</sup>.

Filality rapidly integrated into the political-diplomatic scene in Constantinople. He had regular contacts with the Allied High Commissioners, but also with members of the Ottoman government. His frequent meetings with Sefa Bey, the Ottoman Foreign Minister, stand out<sup>21</sup>. As a result of the contacts established, the Romanian diplomat and his collaborators were able to send to Bucharest well-documented reports on the political and military state of affairs in the Ottoman Empire and on its eastern borders.

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<sup>18</sup> Stelian Neagoe, *Ministrii de externe ai României 1862-2016. Mică enciclopedie*, (București, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale "Ion I. C. Brătianu", 2016), p. 174-177.

<sup>19</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 77/Personal, dosar F 12, vol. II, Docan to Spain legation in Bucharest, 23 December 1920.

<sup>20</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 77/Personal, dosar F 12, vol. II, Filality to Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 January 1922.

<sup>21</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 71/Turcia, vol. 1, f. 12, 16-17, 19-20.



He insisted on a better representation of Romania in Constantinople in the field of naval traffic<sup>22</sup>, but also for the defence of the commercial interests of the Romanian state. In a report of July 1920, he said that it would be “of the greatest necessity” for the Romanian authorities to appoint an officer as “Romanian port captain”, hoping that he could be integrated and represent Romania in the Inter-Allied Commission of the port of Constantinople, where the great powers occupying the city had representatives. In addition, Filality argued that the authorities in Bucharest should create a Chamber of Commerce in Constantinople (in conditions where a commercial attaché was functioning), in order to develop trade, which in his view “is extraordinarily neglected”<sup>23</sup>. Filality’s suggestions were considered, and the authorities in Bucharest appointed, on September 20, 1920, Lieutenant Commander Grigore Popovici as Romania’s representative in the International Captaincy of the port of Constantinople and as delegate of the Romanian government for the “fulfilment of the naval clauses imposed by the Peace Conference”<sup>24</sup>. Once in Constantinople, Popovici found that the members of the International Captaincy of the port told him that only representatives of the great powers could be members of that commission.

As Popovici reported what had happened to Bucharest, the Romanian authorities asked Filality for an explanation. Filality claimed that Popovici had done the wrong move, as he should have consulted Romania’s political representative in Constantinople. The International Captaincy gave an answer to Filality’s insistence. They claimed that only representatives of the European Great Powers - England, France and Italy - were members of this Commission. But the diplomat maintained that Popovici’s role, as he perceived it, was to supervise the Romanian ships crossing the Straits, offering the captains specialized assistance<sup>25</sup>. He could also collaborate with the members of the International Captaincy, as did the Greek, American and Turkish captains operating in Constantinople<sup>26</sup>. In this context, Popovici reconsidered his activity in Constantinople, collaborating with the Romanian military attaché and with Filality. He worked in Constantinople until 1 February 1922, when, for budgetary

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<sup>22</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 114.

<sup>23</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 118.

<sup>24</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 122.

<sup>25</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 136.

<sup>26</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 136.

reasons, the Romanian authorities abolished the post of Romanian representative to the International Captaincy of the port of Constantinople.

Romania's Commissariat functioned as a veritable diplomatic mission, and from 1920 until 1922 Filality collaborated with a number of diplomats such as legation attaché Athanasie Atanasiu, legation secretaries C. Laptew, Dimitrie Iuraşcu and Gheorghe Paraschivescu, as well as with the staff of the consulate in Istanbul, headed by consul Gheorghe Ionescu. However, an important role was played by the legation counselor Nicolae Simionescu<sup>27</sup>, who took charge of the Romanian Commissariat when Filality was temporarily away from the capital of the Ottoman Empire<sup>28</sup>. In addition to the Romanian Commissariat, the consulate, the Romanian representative to the International Captaincy of the port (Grigore Popovici), Romania's interests in Constantinople were also protected by representatives of the Romanian Maritime Service, a commercial attaché, and a military attaché<sup>29</sup>. Thus, in 1920, Romania had reconnected through its representatives to the political, economic and military realities of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople being also an observation point for collecting information about the realities in Bolshevik Russia. The signing of the Sèvres peace treaty (August 10, 1920), between the winning states and the Ottoman Empire, did not produce major changes in Romanian-Ottoman relations. Romania did not take part in the negotiation of the treaty although it had interests in the relationship with the Ottoman Empire and the status of the Straits<sup>30</sup>. Unsatisfied with certain provisions of the document<sup>31</sup>, the Romanian authorities have adopted a cautious attitude, waiting to see whether the disputed treaty will be ratified<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Ministerul Afacerilor Străine. Personalul: 21 ianuarie 1922, (Bucureşti, Impimeria Statului, 1922), pp. 29, 58.

<sup>28</sup> During his service as Commissar of Romania, Filality was absent from Constantinople for several periods. Part of his absences were due to the fact that he was appointed to head a negotiating team that negotiated with the Soviets, a fact that shows his skills as a negotiator and the confidence he enjoyed among the leaders in Bucharest.

<sup>29</sup> "Viitorul", Year 13, 16 April 1921, p. 1. For example, in April 1921, the Romanian Maritime Service was represented in Constantinople by L. Heilpern and G. Maleoglu.

<sup>30</sup> Constantin Iordan, *România şi relaţiile internaţionale din sud-estul european: probleme ale păcii, securităţii şi cooperării (1919-1924)*, (Bucureşti, ALL Educaţional, 1999), p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Constantin Iordan, *România şi relaţiile internaţionale din sud-estul european: probleme ale păcii, securităţii şi cooperării (1919-1924)*, p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> Filality analyzed the reactions in Turkey in the context of the signing of the peace treaty, noting that "August 10 was a day of national mourning" (AMAE, fond Problema 71/Turcia, vol. 29, f. 12).

A few months after the signing of the peace treaty, the Ottoman authorities took steps to resume diplomatic relations. At the end of January 1921, Filality sent to Bucharest a request from the Turkish Foreign Minister to appoint a chargé d'affaires, proposing that the Romanian Foreign Minister should sound out whether the Great Powers would agree to such an initiative<sup>33</sup>. The Bucharest authorities' response was swift and clear. Romania could not receive a chargé d'affaires until the peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire was ratified<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, although contacts between the Romanian representatives in Constantinople and the Ottoman authorities were more frequent, the leaders in Bucharest refrained from signaling the resumption of diplomatic relations, as other winning states had done<sup>35</sup>, before they were certain of the ratification of the Sèvres peace treaty.

It was in this context that a moment of symbolic significance but without political consequences took place. On March 24 and 25, 1921, on her return from her trip to Greece, where he attended the marriage between Crown Prince Charles and Greek Princess Elena, Queen Maria of Romania stopped in Constantinople. She was received by the Filality and the members of the military mission, but also had meetings with the Allied High Commissioners and a delegation sent by the Sultan<sup>36</sup>. Queen Maria wrote in her daily notes about the meeting with the Ottoman delegation, which included the Foreign Minister, Abdülatif Sefa Bey, former Turkish plenipotentiary minister in Bucharest between 1908 and 1916<sup>37</sup>, observing that: "We were received with great ceremony and with many sweet, oriental words (...)"<sup>38</sup>.

Even though the Treaty of Sèvres was not ratified, on July 20, 1922, the formal resumption of diplomatic relations between Romania and the Ottoman Empire was accomplished<sup>39</sup>, and, also in this context, the

<sup>33</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 13.

<sup>34</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 14.

<sup>35</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 71/Turcia, vol. 29, f. 13-14, 18-19.

<sup>36</sup> Maria, Regina României, *Însemnări zilnice (Ianuarie 1921 – decembrie 1921)*, Vol. III, (București, Editura Albatros, 2004), pp. 109-114. "Universul Literar", 17 April 1921, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Silvana Rachieru, *Diplomați și supuși otomani în Vechiul Regat. Relațiile otomano-române între 1878-1908*, (Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2018), p. 72

<sup>38</sup> Maria, Regina României, *Însemnări zilnice (Ianuarie 1921 – decembrie 1921)*, Vol. III, p. 113.

<sup>39</sup> *Organizarea instituțională a Ministerului Afacerilor Externe. Acte și documente*, Volumul II, 1920-1947, ed. Ion Mamina, Gheorghe Neacșu, George Potra, Nicolae Nicolescu, (București: Fundația Europeană Titulescu, 2006), p. 561; Metin Omer,

Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved the re-establishment of the honorary consulate in Smyrna (Izmir). This consular office began to operate in September 1922, headed by A. Keun, who had headed the honorary consulate until Romania's entry into the war in August 1916<sup>40</sup>.

### **3. Aspects from the Activity of Military Attaché Alexandru Glatz**

In the summer of 1920, the appointment of a military attaché to Constantinople was discussed in Bucharest, in the context of the signing of the Sèvres Peace Treaty and the growing tensions between the Greeks and the Turks. In mid-September 1920, the Romanian authorities appoint Lieutenant-Colonel Alexandru Glatz (1882-1953) as military attaché in Constantinople<sup>41</sup>. Technically, Glatz was to function alongside the Romanian Commissariat, in the same way as the military attachés of other states that had commissariats in Constantinople. Therefore, as diplomatic relations between Romania and the Ottoman Empire had not yet been resumed, there was no need to obtain the approval of the Ottoman authorities for Glatz's appointment<sup>42</sup>.

Even though Filality wanted Romania's representation in Constantinople to be completed by a military attaché, he warned the authorities in Bucharest that the city was expensive, so it would have been better to send a celibate officer, rather than a married one with children, as Glatz was<sup>43</sup>. Despite these warnings, the decision to send Alexandru Glatz remained unchanged. His appointment was part of a process of expanding Romania's network of military attachés, as during the same period the Romanian authorities also appointed military attachés in other countries such as Belgium and Poland, as well as in Japan and Austria<sup>44</sup>.

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*Emigrarea turcilor și tătarilor din România în Turcia între cele două războaie mondiale*, (Târgoviște, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2020), p. 202.

<sup>40</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 82, vol. 96 (Turcia), f. 167-169. From 1916 until 1922, the Dutch consulate in Smyrna took care of Romanian interests in the consular district and kept the archives of the Romanian consulate.

<sup>41</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 71/Turcia, vol. 29, f. 16.

<sup>42</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 77/ Personal, vol. 29, telegram no. 23850 of October 7, 1920, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of War.

<sup>43</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 77/Personal, vol. 29, Filality to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 October 1920.

<sup>44</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 77/Personal, vol. 29, List of newly appointed military attachés, September 1920.

The Romanian military attaché in Istanbul was born on 14 April 1882 in Craiova, where he also attended the “Carol I” High School<sup>45</sup>. He fought in the Balkan wars and in the First World War, but in 1917 he was transferred to the Intelligence Office of the Second Army Command. After one year he was transferred to the Romanian Army’s General Staff. At the end of the war, Glatz also served at the Higher War School, proving himself to be a well-trained officer with solid skills in the analysis and synthesis of military intelligence<sup>46</sup>.

An important objective of his activity in the Romanian-Ottoman relations was the identification and recovery of Romanian goods seized by the Ottoman armies from Romanian territory. For example, Glatz (promoted to colonel in June 1921) visited 24 Turkish warehouses, until late 1921, where he identified and recovered industrial machinery and dozens of wagons with various materials, which came from Romania. He was assisted by Lieutenant Commander Grigore Popovici, who in turn inspected various factories and warehouses. At the end of May 1921, he reported that the Romanian envoys to Constantinople did not have the financial resources to travel to the territory and to pay the people who gave them information about the locations of equipment and machinery from Romania. It can be seen in this respect that the Romanian Commissioner in Constantinople and the Military Mission collaborated. For example, Filality, having been informed of the existence of machines coming from the Romanian Army’s arsenal, approached the High Commissioners of the Great Powers asking them to take the necessary measures to prevent the machines from being alienated<sup>47</sup>.

Glatz was also involved in the operation to identify and recover large quantities of weapons taken by the Ottoman army from Romania. He asked the Romanian authorities for inventories and photographs of the military material to prove his claims. Having quarrelled with the Allied High Commissioners, but particularly against the reluctance of the British representative, Glatz drew their attention to the fact that “of all the Allied states which took part in the war, only Romania was temporarily occupied

<sup>45</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, “Generalul Alexandru Glatz și relațiile româno-turce în primii ani de după marea unire din 1918”, *Diplomație și diplomați români*, I, coord. Gheorghe Buzatu, Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, Horia Dumitrescu, (Focșani: Editura DM Press, 2001), p. 171.

<sup>46</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, “Generalul Alexandru Glatz și relațiile româno-turce în primii ani de după marea unire din 1918”, pp. 171-172.

<sup>47</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Simona Bucura-Opreșcu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Atașajii militari români în primul deceniu interbelic. Rapoarte*, (Mioveni: Tipografia Mioveni, 2014), p. 124.

by the Turks”. In this context, he proposed that the Romanian authorities should intervene through diplomatic channels to unblock the situation, and he gave details of the cost of repatriating the machines and equipment (about 350 tonnes) to the war minister. His proposals were well received in Bucharest, and the war minister decided to intervene in order to succeed in repatriating the goods from the Ottoman Empire<sup>48</sup>.

Glatz sent to Bucharest substantial reports on the progress of the Greek-Turkish war. During the period 1920-1922, the Romanian state avoided involvement in the Greek-Turkish conflict<sup>49</sup>, despite the dynastic ties built up during this period between Greece and Romania<sup>50</sup>. According to his reports, he made connections among the military delegations in Constantinople. For example, he took information from the French, British and Italians, who also had liaison officers sent to the fighting forces on the front<sup>51</sup>.

Although in many of his reports he has provided only details of the evolution of military operations, avoiding analysis of the political context, we also find papers in which he grasps the complexity of the political scene in the Ottoman Empire. After the Greek army's setbacks, Glatz reported to Bucharest in mid-April 1921 that it was in this context that Kemalist communiqués began to be published in Constantinople. In addition, he noted an increase in Mustafa Kemal's popularity among the population of the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Glatz also commented on the treaty concluded between Soviet Russia and the Grand National Assembly of

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<sup>48</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Simona Bucura-Opreșcu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Atașajii militari români în primul deceniu interbelic. Rapoarte*, p. 148.

<sup>49</sup> As historian Florin Anghel rightly noted: “(...) at the time of the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, Romania felt the need for diplomatic reserve, preferring to follow domestic developments and the nature of international support for the new republican power, including adopting a lack of diplomatic and logistical activism regarding the Greek-Turkish conflict, which ended in 1922” (Florin Anghel, “De la legația în Imperiul Otoman, la Constantinopol, la ambasadă în Republica lui Atatürk, la Ankara: începuturile noilor relații dintre România și Turcia (1924-1929)”, *Secolul armoniei: relații româno-turce 1923-2023/Uyum Yüzyili: Romanya-Türkiye İlişkileri 1923-2023*, coordonator/koordinatör Silvana Rachieru, (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2023), p. 28).

<sup>50</sup> Daniel Citirigă, *Diplomația Coroanei. Casa Regală a României în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est în perioada interbelică. Studii*, (Cluj-Napoca, Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2015), pp. 28-37.

<sup>51</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Simona Bucura-Opreșcu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Atașajii militari români în primul deceniu interbelic. Rapoarte*, pp. 79-81.

Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal<sup>52</sup>. The Romanian officer stated that the Soviets recognised Turkish claims to Thrace, Smyrna and the Straits, but also promised to help Kemal if necessary<sup>53</sup>. Glatz's analysis of the Soviet-Turkish treaty was similar to that of Filality, who felt that the treaty brought strategic and political benefits to the Turkish leader<sup>54</sup>.

Alexandru Glatz, a specialist in intelligence-gathering operations, was also tasked with collecting information on the situation in Soviet Russia, considering that Istanbul was an important crossing point<sup>55</sup>. Glatz rightly stated that the city was a very important centre for monitoring "Bolshevik movements in the East"<sup>56</sup>, just as "Bolshevik agents" were active in the city, who aimed, according to the Romanian officer, "to create a section of the population favourable to them"<sup>57</sup>. Moreover, the Romanian military attaché has transmitted various information, obtained from French and Polish sources, about the concentration of Bolshevik troops on the Romanian border<sup>58</sup>. Glatz was also in contact with representatives of Pyotr Wrangel's army in Istanbul, obtaining information about Red Army troop movements, as he did after the Bolsheviks had conquered Crimea<sup>59</sup>.

Another objective set by the Romanian authorities for the officers sent to Istanbul was to identify Romanian prisoners of war and civilian internees in the Ottoman Empire. To this objective, in mid-August 1919, the Romanian Army General Headquarters requested information about the prisoners and civilian internees from the Ministry of War of the Ottoman Empire<sup>60</sup>. Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also involved Epaminonda Papacosta in this operation, as a liaison person, in 1919, with

<sup>52</sup> Although there was no ideological rapprochement between the Bolsheviks and the Ankara government, they were united by a common fear of the western powers and by a common hostility to the treaty of Sèvres (M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923. A Study in International Relations*, (London, The Macmillan Press, 1983), p. 369).

<sup>53</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Simona Bucura-Oprescu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Atașaii militari români în primul deceniu interbelic. Rapoarte*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>54</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 71/URSS, vol. 72, f. 8-10.

<sup>55</sup> Burak Sayim, "Occupied Istanbul as a Cominternian Hub: Sailors, Soldiers, and Post-Imperial Networks (1918-1923)", *Itinerario*, Vol. 46, Issue 1 (April 2022), pp. 128-149.

<sup>56</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Simona Bucura-Oprescu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Atașaii militari români în primul deceniu interbelic. Rapoarte*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>57</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Simona Bucura-Oprescu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Atașaii militari români în primul deceniu interbelic. Rapoarte*, p. 108.

<sup>58</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Simona Bucura-Oprescu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Atașaii militari români în primul deceniu interbelic. Rapoarte*, pp. 104-105, 111-112.

<sup>59</sup> AMAE, fond Problema 71/URSS, vol. 1, f. 36-40.

<sup>60</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, vol. I, 1878-1938, p. 372.



the Spanish legation and the Ottoman authorities<sup>61</sup>. Towards the end of October 1919, the Ministry of War in Bucharest sent a representative to Constantinople, Lieutenant M. Popescu, with the task of dealing with the situation of Romanian prisoners in the Ottoman Empire<sup>62</sup>. He made efforts to identify the Romanian prisoners who were still on the territory of the Ottoman Empire<sup>63</sup>, but he was also involved in identifying the graves of prisoners who had died in the camps administered by the Turkish authorities<sup>64</sup>. Other Romanian officers, such as Nicolae Macici<sup>65</sup> sent to Constantinople in December 1920, were also involved in this work, collaborating with both the military attaché and Gh. Filality.

Glatz's activity was appreciated by his superiors, as well as by the Romanian Commissioner in Constantinople, and by the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For example, on 20 May 1921, Gh. Filality wrote to the Romanian Foreign Minister, drawing his attention to the fact that the War Ministry had decided to recall Glatz with effect from 1 June. Filality considered that the measure was hasty, given Glatz's work in the five months since he had taken up his post as military attaché in the Ottoman Empire. He therefore asked the Foreign Minister to intervene with his counterpart at the Ministry of War, General Ioan Rășcanu<sup>66</sup>. As a consequence, the Minister of Foreign Affairs informed the War Ministry on 28 May 1921 that:

“Our Commissariat in Constantinople informs us that from the dispositions taken by your department, it would appear that the intention is to abolish, on 1 June, the post of military attaché to the diplomatic office. We consider it absolutely necessary to have a military attaché in Constantinople at this time (...) To suppress this post would be to deprive us of an excellent observation post, just when we need it most”<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, vol. I, 1878-1938, p. 372.

<sup>62</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, vol. I, 1878-1938, pp. 373-374.

<sup>63</sup> Some of the former Romanian prisoners refused to be repatriated, which created problems for the Romanian military mission in the Ottoman Empire (*Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, pp. 375-376).

<sup>64</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, p. 374.

<sup>65</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, p. 377.

<sup>66</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, pp. 377-378.

<sup>67</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, “Generalul Alexandru Glatz și relațiile româno-turce în primii ani de după marea unire din 1918”, p. 176; Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Simona Bucura-

As a result of the Foreign Minister's intervention, and the fact that Glatz mentioned that he could support himself with the money he received from the country, his recall was postponed for a few months. Only on 19 November 1921, Glatz was informed about the decision taken by the War Ministry on 28 October to recall him on 1 January 1922. The measure included Romania's military attachés in Vienna and Brussels and was based on the budget-saving measures that had to be adopted by each ministry of the Romanian government<sup>68</sup>.

Under these circumstances, the Constantinople post was to be "provisionally managed" by the military attaché in Sofia, Ioanichie Filimon<sup>69</sup>. It should be noted that Gh. Filality was not informed about the replacement of Glatz by the military attaché in Bulgaria. The diplomat asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to draw the attention of the Ministry of War "to the impropriety of the procedure"<sup>70</sup>. In mid-1922, Filimon was replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Fotache Pastia, who served both as Romania's military attaché in Sofia and Constantinople<sup>71</sup>.

## Conclusions

The years 1919-1922/23 represented the end of one phase of Romanian-Turkish relations, but also the beginning of a new one. Romania reconnected with the political, economic and military realities of the Ottoman Empire by sending to Constantinople a political/diplomatic representative, as a commissioner, a commercial attaché and a military attaché, as well as other officers with various missions. The consulate in the Ottoman capital was also activated, as Constantinople was a highly transited city. Both the political leaders in Bucharest and the Romanian representatives in Constantinople adopted a balanced attitude, trying not to be drawn into the political disputes between the great powers, but being closer to the French than to the British perspective. Filality and Glatz and their collaborators sent well-documented reports on the situation in the Ottoman Empire, they carefully analyzed information about Soviet Russia and sought to be efficient in identifying and recovering Romanian goods requisitioned by the Ottoman armies. They were also active in identifying

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Oprescu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Atașajii militari români în primul deceniu interbelic. Rapoarte*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>68</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, p. 378.

<sup>69</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, p. 378.

<sup>70</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, p. 379.

<sup>71</sup> *Relații politice și militare româno-otomano-turce 1878-1989. Documente*, Vol. I, p. 379.

Romanian prisoners of war still alive but were also involved in finding the graves of prisoners who had died in the Ottoman Empire.

An element of continuity in the period of transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Türkiye, as well as in the strengthening of ties between Bucharest and Ankara after 1923, was the Romanian authorities' decision to keep Gheorghe Filality as their diplomatic representative in Türkiye from 1919/1920 until 1929. Without having a common border and a dossier of belligerence with many complicated elements, Türkiye and Romania have sought to enhance common interests and find practical solutions in bilateral disputes, which has been the foundation of good relations in the decades that followed.

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