

# Türkenkrieg

The Russo-Austro-Turkish War  
1735-1739



Historical Commentary

# Türkenkrieg 1737-1739

*If it were written with a needle on the corner of an eye, it would yet serve as a lesson to those who seek wisdom.*

## Introduction

The Russo-Austro-Turkish War of 1735-39 (sometimes the 4th Austro-Turkish War) is an utterly obscure topic. Which is a pity. An excellent illustration of *Kabinettkrieg*, and of the 'savage wars' against the Turk, it is not short of political lessons. More than any other form of war, perhaps, *Kabinettkrieg* was politics carried out by other means.

But for an utterly obscure topic, it certainly draws its share of contention. The conflict is a sandbox for scholars arguing over the much more glamorous issue of the Eastern Question – that is, the relationship between Austria-Hungary and Russia, and the influence of the Ottoman Empire on that relationship. Of course, when one enters the realm of scholars, one must expect events to be expounded primarily to bolster preconceived arguments.

## The 'Popular' View

Since most people have never heard of this war, it seems strange that there should be a popular view. Perhaps it would be better to say that there *was* a popular view at one time. Pull a generic volume of Austrian or Russian or Turkish history off the shelf and one may learn that the Austrians were intent on expansion, eagerly agreeing to Russia's request for aid in its own war against the Turks. We are told that, as a good Catholic, the Emperor Charles VI was keen to participate in a Crusade against the Infidel.

We are told of a grand campaign down the Danube, with the goal of linking up with a Russian army and ultimately laying siege to Constantinople. But the Emperor, bowing to pressure from glory seekers or through unspecified idiocy, changes his mind and demands Bosnia be conquered. Through mismanagement, bad luck, and Turkish prowess, the campaign fails and the Habsburgs are thrown on the strategic defensive.

Things go from bad to worse, and the war ends with the loss of most of the gains achieved under the great Eugene of Savoy a generation before. Demonstrating the ingratitude of a true aristocrat, the Emperor blames his generals in such an obvious manner that everyone understands it was his own fault. Charles VI then dies of shame, precipitating the War of the Austrian Succession.

The final act of the tragedy, the siege of Belgrade in 1739, reveals the clumsy *Graf von Neipperg* attempting to negotiate a general surrender with the Turks, stymied by the need to first determine the fate of Belgrade. Neipperg tells the Emperor the place is indefensible, and then places himself in isolation in the Turkish camp, where, browbeaten and tricked, he caves in. Meanwhile, the defenders of the fortress convince the Emperor the place can be held indefinitely, but it is too late; the countermanding orders never reach Neipperg.

So much for a randomly selected general history. It is a fact that Neipperg and a number of other generals *were* tried and imprisoned (one was even beheaded) for their failure to beat the Turk, and that the Emperor still received most of the blame – but, curiously, Neipperg, for one, was released by the Emperor's successor and appointed to the critical Silesian command in 1741. Other 'mediocrities', like *Graf von Khevenhüller*, were also given a second chance. The latter man, curiously, was in 1741 placed in charge of the defence of Vienna, and soon after led a brilliant Alpine offensive against Bavaria in the dead of winter. Some generals who were accused of incompetence defected from Imperial service, supposedly out of disgust at the Emperor's

craven refusal to shoulder any blame. Some went to Bavaria and some to Prussia; but their later performance was generally creditable, and one of them rose very high in Prussian service. Obviously, there is more here than meets the eye.

## Sources

The sources for this commentary are listed in the bibliography. It is curious how widely some of them differ, though they reference each other's works. Roeder is probably the best authority in the list. General Brown's five-volume history is essential, as it contains numerous charts and tables drawn directly from the Imperial archives; fortunately Roeder had access to the manuscript and he provides details not found in the microfilm version used by this author.

*[You try reading 19th Century German script white-on-black from five rolls of film that some person (the cognomen is used loosely) has managed to splice multiple times forwards, backwards, and inverted (!)]*

Unfortunately, there is no corresponding history from the Ottoman perspective, at least in English. They did not go in for such things at the time, preferring poetic panegyrics of the Sultan's prowess (the Sultan did not take part in this war). But Hickok's work uses the campaign in Bosnia for an example, and his material is taken from the Ottoman records.

There are massive discrepancies in the troop strengths, a not uncommon occurrence, since older authors often quoted paper estimates and political promises as fact. But it is necessary to try to achieve a certain amount of clarity. Actions which appear inexplicable with 90,000 men might make perfect sense with 24,000. Both the Ottomans and the Imperials claim to have been facing vast numerical superiority, presumably on the one hand to justify defeat, and on the other, to add lustre to victory. In reality their numbers were (probably) comparable: 35-45,000 effectives for the Imperials, out of perhaps 90-100,000 being paid to take part, and 40-50,000 for the Ottomans, with a similar number of hangers on. The numbers appear to have been consistent throughout the war.

And then there is the 'war of the memoirs' waged by the generals, responsible for many discrepancies in the accounting of events. Beyond the expected self-justifications and the unavoidable differences in perspective, there was a primary political issue at stake – the Imperial Succession. Two parties were involved, and each had to discredit the other; a failed war was the perfect backdrop. It helped that some men were embittered by dismissal.

All this means that there is very little that can be said without qualification. One *can* say that the war was started by Russia and that their primary strategic goals were the same as ever – border security – 'we cannot secure our buffer zone without giving it a buffer zone' – and a warm-water port. The Habsburgs' reasons for going to war were mixed, and are therefore a subject of additional debate, but broadly speaking, they entered the fray as an ally of Russia in order to preserve a newly acquired friendship.

*['Austrians' is a colloquial name, just as 'Turks' is for the Ottoman Empire – more correctly, it was the House of Habsburg, or Habsburg Empire, if you will, holding simultaneous leadership of a second imperial domain, the Holy Roman Empire. The combined elements of the two entities are often called the Imperials. As for the Ottomans, the bulk of their population was not Turkish, and a high percentage was not even Muslim. The Ottomans were the ruling caste, and a person of almost any ethnicity could be 'Ottoman', if they simply followed the Ottoman Way.]*

**Text Note:** spelling of place and personal names avoids the use of the symbols *ı* and *ş*, since Turkic language software costs money; this is not a problem with the map. The symbol *ı* is used in Turkish and Romanian to denote 'sh' 'th', 'gh'. The symbol *ş* does the same in Slavic. 'Nish' in Turkish is thus spelt on the map with the *ı* under the 's'. In Slavic, it is spelt 'Nis' with the *š* over the 's'. Pronunciation is 'Nezh'.

## Scarlet Threads

Russia's war lasted five years – from 1735 to 1739, and the Emperor's war lasted three – from 1737 to 1739. The results for the Imperials (Habsburg-Austrians) were twofold: a politico-military disaster that led directly to the attempted dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire in 1741, and a friendship with the Bear that lasted until the Crimean War. One might argue that a lost minor war was worth that long-term gain. The Ottomans, for their part, had no reason for going to war other than self-defence, but once at war they were able to take back some lost territory and regain some lost prestige.

The reasons for Habsburg involvement in Russia's war dated back to the start of the 18th Century. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713/14) separated the Spanish throne from the House of Habsburg. By the end of the war, Charles VI was head of the Austrian Branch of the House of Habsburg, and ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, positions he would retain until his death in 1740, but his dynasty came out of that war poorer in both land and money, losing both Spain and southern Italy to the Spanish Bourbons (though Charles did gain the Austrian – *née* Spanish – Netherlands and the richer lands in northern Italy). Undaunted, Charles continued to seek recognition as rightful King of Spain. He also sought recognition for the Austrian Branch's rights to the remaining Habsburg holdings, including their semi-hereditary position as Emperors. This last was much more important. Ultimately, he would surrender the goal of Spain in trying to achieve an hereditary imperial succession.

### The Pragmatic Sanction

What an odd name for a treaty: 'The Pragmatic Sanction'. But that is exactly what it was. Unlike its modern connotation as a form of international censure, the term *sanction* implied a bilateral deal between a dynasty and one of its possessions, coupling recognition of the dynasty's suzerainty with a reciprocal recognition of the particular territory's laws and customs, especially the system of governance and taxation – a very pragmatic matter (though the term *pragmatic* really had to do with presenting the deal to Europe as a matter of *realpolitik*). I.e. 'we *sanction* the collection of one-sixth of the revenue by the Emperor, to be used for the common defence of the Empire'. People no longer own servants who are tied to the land, so it is a little difficult to grasp, but it really boils down to securing a family entail, inclusive of the people living on the land, but on a massive scale.

With a very large estate and an absentee landlord, a *factor* or accountant would handle things. In the Habsburg case, the scale was greater yet. Here, the lesser nobility, town burghers, clergy, and so forth, were concerned. And the 'rents' amounted to taxes valued in millions. The sheer size of the property and its accretion over centuries meant that a blanket policy could not be formulated. Feudal notions still applied in some areas, while in others, the Habsburgs ruled directly. Free cities operated differently from ducal estates. Serfdom (peasants tied by law to the land) operated in some areas, but not in others.

Because of the War of the Spanish Succession, new lands had come under the rule of the Austrian Branch of the Habsburg family – strategically important lands, like Belgium. They had acknowledged Habsburg sway in the past, but the Austrian Branch was a separate dynasty now, and they had no agreements with it. It was not enough for some congress of Englishmen and Frenchmen to say, 'you are now Austrians'. Europeans were accustomed to having foreign rulers, but they were also accustomed to doing things the way they had always done them.

THE Pragmatic Sanction became one of the premier European issues of the day because Emperor Charles not only needed to arrange the entail on his new possessions, he needed, given the

very high stakes, to have those sanctions guaranteed internationally, particularly by those who might deem themselves rivals for the same property. This issue dovetailed with the issue of the Imperial Succession.

### The Imperial Succession

The Empire was elective. Or, rather, at this stage of its history, the man selected to be Emperor of the *Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation* had to hold the elective office of *King of the Romans* – essentially if ironically, 'King of the Germans'. The Empire itself was of little tangible value. It had great resources, but they were controlled by a horde of petty dynasts rather than a single regime, and the Empire as an institution grew weaker by the decade.

What the ruler of the Empire did have was tremendous prestige. Before the idea of the nation-state made possible the unification of Germany, the Emperor was perceived as the sole unifying force in Central Europe; the alternative, something even the Empire's neighbours did not want, was a political vacuum, and chaos. But the Habsburgs were only one of several princely families who believed themselves capable of running the show.

The crux of the matter was that the Habsburgs had pinned their House's prestige on the Imperial throne. The name alone gave their ambassadors rank over any other deputation. It was the Emperors who settled disputes, who awarded compensation, who doled out gifts in reward of loyalty. The Emperor spoke for Germany. Also, the Imperial Administration was largely employed in the furtherance of Habsburg dynastic interests (because that family spoke not only for Germany, but for much of the rest of Europe as well). Catch-22. Those dynastic interests were the real power behind their claims to the Imperial throne. Take away either prop and the House would fall. The popular view is the correct one – almost. The Habsburgs were the hereditary Emperors of Germany. That picture was just false enough, however, to give the Emperor some uneasy qualms.

What was critical for Charles, given the geopolitical situation in 1713, was that the Houses of Wittelsbach (Bavaria) and Wettin (Saxony) be cut out of the succession. His brother Joseph had been Emperor and head of the House before him. But Joseph had had no surviving sons, which meant that on his death, Charles, as closest male relative – 'the last Habsburg' because the Spanish line was dead – inherited the lot. Charles also became Emperor, not because he was heritor, but because he had already been elected King of the Romans. Becoming Emperor was a rubber-stamp affair. The tricky part was being elected King of the Romans.

Now in Charles' case this had been done while Joseph was alive, a common practice that made it easier to retain the 'elective' position of Emperor in the same family without the risks inherent in late-hour lobbying. Being King of the Romans demanded certain qualifications: particularly that the candidate be male, of age, a ruler of no small estate, and able in war. That is why Charles VI emerged as Emperor. He was the young uncle, but he was created King of the Romans because he fit all the criteria – daughters did not. And a regency over three-hundred-plus states would be the same as having no Emperor at all.

Now, Joseph had two daughters, and these women married into the Wittelsbach and Wettin lines. So the elder line of the Habsburgs was united with two other princely houses, both influential, one of which (the Wittelsbachs) controlled three of the nine Electorates of the Empire (offices that carried with them the right to vote for a new King of the Romans), plus a sizeable army, and, crucially, had the backing of France.

Also at stake was the family inheritance – the Hereditary Lands (*Erblande*), including two whole *kingdoms*, plus a host of peripherals like Belgium, Lorraine, and northern Italy – acquired through marriage and conquest. All of which needed the Imperial

mantle to bind them and which in turn were needed as props to the Imperial Throne.

So the Pragmatic Sanction was an attempt to transfer the patrimony of the Habsburg possessions permanently into Charles' line. The Sanction is sometimes regarded as a device intended to guarantee his daughter, Maria Theresa's, rights of succession. Technically, yes, but when it was first put forward, she had not been born; and even in Charles' last years, no one, including Maria Theresa herself, thought she would become ruler of the Empire or even heiress of the family estate. Charles expected to have a male heir.

Even if he had a son, Charles' line would risk losing its Imperial claim. First, because his was a junior branch of the Habsburgs, second, because the Bavarians had nearly equal leverage in the Empire anyway, and third, because if they made the marriage claim good on just the Habsburg territorial possessions, the House of Wittelsbach would succeed the House of Habsburg as the dominant power in Central Europe.

The obvious complicating factor was that the Habsburg 'state', like the Empire itself, had not developed. Regional particularism was enhanced by the vastness of the realm, and by early attempts to divide the property, German fashion, among various heirs. By the time centralisation came into vogue in Europe, the dynasty had too many enemies, faced too many threats, to devote sufficient time to domestic issues. Ironically, just because the Monarchy's lands were only a patrimony, expansion through marriage alliances was very easy. Expansion was always desirable for reasons of prestige. So the Habsburg domains were huge. And because they were huge, and because they were unstable, they could not be ignored.

So. The question for Europe was whether the Habsburgs were the best dynasty for the job of holding Central Europe together. Until this time, only they had had the prestige and power to make deals with German princes that would stick. Only they could keep the Turk at bay – Defenders of Christendom. Yet it was mainly the Imperial throne that gave them the prestige, and mainly the *Erblande* that gave them the power. No wonder Charles lived and breathed the Pragmatic Sanction for most of his reign.

### **King of the Romans – Francis Stephen of Lorraine**

Franz Stephan *von Lotharingen* enters the picture in the 1730s. His story is critical as an element in the *Türkenkrieg* for two reasons. First, by 1736 he was the focus of the Pragmatic Sanction. Second, his bid for King of the Romans split the Imperial Court right down the middle. And since the Aristocracy and the Officer Corps were one and the same, this meant the Army itself was split at a crucial time.

Here was yet another catch-22. The war against the Ottomans was begun in part as a means of glorifying the Emperor's son-in-law, but at the same time, his very existence hindered its successful prosecution.

By the 1730s Emperor Charles still had no male heir. That is not to say he was in despair of ever having one, but the times were troubled. He did have two daughters to dispose of, and they ought to be given to men who were capable of running the Empire if it came to that – there was no provision for an Empress under German Law. With the War of the Polish Succession gathering headway, Prince Eugene, the Empire's foremost soldier, head of the Army, and self-appointed expert on European relations, recommended Maria Theresa be given to the Bavarian Elector's son, then a boy of ten; an offer came also from Savoy. Acceptance of either would have definitively changed European history. Yet Charles had gone to all that effort to cut the Bavarians out of his will...

He did use the counteroffers when it became necessary to threaten the ultimate bridegroom, Francis of Lorraine, with breach-of-promise! (Francis stuck when he learned the Emperor was giving away his own ancient seat to the ex-King of Poland, the King of France's father-in-law – an event with its own ramifications). At last, in March of 1736, Maria Theresa, daughter of the Emperor, married Francis Stephen. They were given the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in compensation for losing Lorraine, but almost immediately, Francis was summoned to Vienna to take part in the war that was now brewing.

The House of Lorraine was perhaps the best choice for a marriage alliance. The dynasty was an ancient one, linked to that of the Guises, and thus directly related to the Kings of France. They had a long tradition of supplying commanders to the Imperial Army. The Emperor's hope was that Francis would demonstrate his family's hereditary valour and win the election to King of the Romans on the battlefield. When Charles passed on, Francis would become Emperor, and through his wife he would inherit the family property that was so necessary to support him in his new station. Unfortunately, Francis Stephen had some difficulties with the nomination for King of the Romans. He did not impress.

Not everyone in the Imperial Court wanted the House of Lorraine to succeed. A sizeable faction within Viennese Society was actually in favour of a *Bavarian* Emperor. And this faction comprised more than just Bavarians in Imperial service. Partly, there was a feeling that the son-in-law of a Habsburg was not the same thing as a real Habsburg, partly they thought Charles had not treated his brother's family fairly, but also the men in question had 'interest' at Munich as well as Vienna – other family members, rich patrons, etc. There was also a divide between the (North German) Protestants and the (South German) Catholics – perhaps less a religious issue than one of attitudes to doing business.

### **The Shadow of Eugene**

There was another man who made his personality felt. On April 21st, 1736, the great Prince Eugene of Savoy died. A fact which in no way diminished the effects of his personality. While the Emperor hoped that Francis Stephen would step into the great Eugene's shoes, he needed much schooling. Meanwhile, there were plenty of contenders for the 'next Eugene'.

The Prince had been the Empire's foremost soldier for as long as anyone could remember. It was he, who, in combination with England's Duke of Marlborough, had broken the power of the Bourbons. He was also famous for his solo exploits in Italy, and against the Turk. As President of the Aulic War Council, or *Hofkriegsrat*, he was responsible for the moulding of the Imperial Army, its strategic direction, and its future. His was the most influential voice in foreign policy as well (in those days, men did not specialise in one branch of government). These were very big shoes to fill.

The men of his own generation were too elderly now to engage much in the hurly-burly of service politics. They were mainly interested in preserving the Army institution as Eugene had left it. The new crop of generals had grown up with the legend of Eugene, not the man. Herein lay seeds of destruction.

Under Eugene, the most antagonistic of men had somehow managed to co-operate and do their duty, knowing that the master was depending on them to perform with exactness. They could bury their differences under his invincible *aegis*. All that the new generation knew was that Eugene had succeeded by audacity, risk, boldness, and brooking no rivals. If they wanted to *be* Eugene, they had better behave the same way: 'there could be only one'.

The Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen is a case in point. He was only 34 when in 1737 he was appointed to command the initial offensive into Bosnia. His performance was all right – the

offensive failed for a number of strategic reasons, but he could have collected himself and gone in again – but the point is that in trying to show he was a better general than the commander-in-chief, a man of the previous generation, he overreached. When his boss sent aid, he protested that it was unnecessary and suggested that the man ought to look to his own faltering campaign. The prince was also interested in climbing the corporate ladder, marrying a woman twenty years his senior to cement a political alliance with Savoy. Of course, such things were done all the time – because men were now expected to behave like that.

So there was Eugene's generation, timid with age, or ill, and there was the new generation, full of the science of war, but prima donnas. Eugene had not bothered to pick a successor, though he had his favourites.

The Army as an institution also suffered. Civilian relatives began to dominate the *Hofkriegsrat*. Red tape wound round everything. Nepotism spread downward. Where before an officer without merit would be stopped in advancement at the rank of colonel – a subtle suggestion to the kind of officer who likes to play politics that he should retire – now young aristocrats were buying into the higher ranks as their first career move. The war would show just how dangerous these trends were.

Eugene's tenure as President of the *Hofkriegsrat* had another pernicious effect. It had become traditional for that body to dispense with determining strategy. The *Hofkriegsrat* was in no sense a War College or General Staff. Its role was purely administrative. Strategy was the province of the commander in the field, in this case Eugene, who accepted the responsibility *in toto*. When Eugene died, the *Hofkriegsrat* began experimenting in the issuing of guidelines, but still assumed that the appointed commander-in-chief would do as he saw fit. All very well, unless your subordinates think they can do a better job – even worse if they are right.

## The Russian Connection

The origins of the Habsburgs' involvement with Russia are quite straightforward, though the events themselves were complicated in detail. There are two main points to consider. The first is that the Russians agreed to guarantee the Sanction. So did most of the other states with an interest in Central Europe, including Bavaria and Saxony. But the Russians showed no signs of changing their minds, which counted for something with the Emperor. There were also marriage ties between the Habsburgs and Romanovs. The second point is the signing of a mutual defence pact, in 1726.

Russia had swept onto the European stage with the dynamic reign of Peter the Great. The Habsburgs were quick to realise the newcomer's potential, for good or ill. Contacts were made. The relationship ought to be defined; concessions would no doubt have to be made from time to time, but Russia's strength could also be of great service. It was even felt that as Russia's friend, the Habsburg Monarchy would learn sooner what was in the Bear's mind, and perhaps be able to direct its energies. From the Russian perspective, the Habsburgs could be useful when dealing with Prussia and Sweden, and of course, the Ottoman Empire.

### The Treaty of 1726

In 1725, war loomed. Emperor Charles found himself threatened by a combination led by England, and coincidentally, Russia also found herself at odds with that power. Serious talks between the Imperials and the Russians had begun in 1724. The principle topic then was the final settlement of the Great Northern War that had ended in 1721. 1724 was also the year that a temporary peace was patched up between Russia, Persia, and the Ottomans. Vienna now had less fear of being dragged into a war against the Porte and saw an opportunity to make deals with fewer strings attached.

[*'The Porte' is the name colloquially given to the Ottoman Administration, as 'Vienna' for the Habsburgs and 'St. Petersburg' or 'Moscow' for Russia. It derives from the Bab-i Ali, the gate leading to the Grand Vizier's offices in the Topcapi Palace, which is where the Sultan met foreign guests. As the Grand Viziers assumed more control over the government, foreign representatives fell into the habit of calling on him to do business. 'Sublime Porte' is the French translation of Bab-i Ali – 'Lofty Gate'.]*

Initially, little progress was made, since Prince Eugene, now President of the *Hofkriegsrat* and virtual director of the State, mistrusted Peter the Great. But in 1725, Peter died. At the same time, the situation worsened for Emperor Charles, with an occurrence that at first seemed like a stroke of good fortune. Bourbon France and Bourbon Spain had one of their periodic fallings out.

France accepted and then rejected a Spanish princess for the boy-king Louis XV, choosing instead a daughter of the Polish King. Miffed, the Spanish Bourbons sought a rapprochement with the Habsburgs. Charles asked his new friends if they would like to sign on to the Sanction (a knee-jerk reaction on his part). This was done, and in exchange the Emperor signed a treaty renouncing his claims on the Spanish throne, forming an alliance (in April of 1725), and promising aid in recovering Gibraltar from the English.

Keen to get started, Spain immediately issued a demand to England for the restitution of Gibraltar. This discomfited the Emperor, who had rather hoped they might wait a few decades. Then a disgruntled Spanish courtier defected to the English, making wild claims about the Emperor's ambition to topple the Georgian dynasty, his desire to conquer France, etc. etc. Whether the information was true or not, the English and French were able to arouse most of Europe against Charles, forming the Alliance of Herrenhausen (or Alliance of Hanover – September 3rd, 1725). Prussia, whose Elector, Frederick William I, was usually a staunch Imperial ally, also joined. It looked as if there would be a general war. Losing the mandate of the Empire, and in a panic lest the Sanction become so much waste paper, Charles VI backed down – and Spain, learning that the huge Imperial subsidies they had been promised did not exist, likewise desisted (though there was a brief siege of The Rock in 1727). However, the matter did not end there.

Simultaneously, Russia was engaged in a dispute over the Duchy of Schleswig, a side issue of the Great Northern War. England pushed for the duchy to remain in Danish hands; Russia wanted it to go to the Duke of Holstein, who was related by marriage to the Romanovs and thus a client of Russia. (The Russian desire to control the outlet of the Baltic goes back a long way.) This proposal threatened King George because he had secretly purchased the long-coveted bishoprics of Bremen and Verden from Denmark, in exchange for guaranteeing Danish control of Schleswig. The English went so far as to send a naval squadron to St. Petersburg with an injunction to the new Empress, Catherine I, not to militarily support the Duke of Holstein. The empress acquiesced with bad grace.

These two events threw the Habsburgs and the Romanovs together in their mistrust of England. They also had a common interest in the attitude of Prussia, and of France. There was not much that Russia could do about France and England, but they *could* pressure Prussia. The Elector of Brandenburg owned Prussia. As King *in* Prussia, he came under the knout just like any other Russian client prince.

The purpose of the coming defensive treaty was thus one of mutual support, against England technically, but against France, with her massive army, in practical terms; the probable immediate benefit of a revelation of the treaty, however, would be the intimidation of Prussia.

On October 6th, 1725, amid the ongoing general talks, the Habsburgs and Russians opened bilateral discussions regarding this defensive alliance. The Emperor agreed to recognise Russia's European boundaries, more or less closing the Swedish issue, as that northern kingdom deferred to his advice. With the pressure on, Russia and the Habsburgs signed their alliance on August 6th, 1726. Europe was astounded.

Technically, the Russians were signing on to the Imperial-Spanish alliance, but the defensive clauses did not apply to Spain. This was the very first bilateral agreement between Vienna and St. Petersburg in which both sides were equally represented, and the first to invoke Russian intervention in European affairs. Apart from a number of minor clauses, the main provision called for either party to lend 30,000 men (20,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry) if the other were attacked by a third party.

A number of scholars try to argue that the Ottoman Empire was the primary target of this treaty. However, at the time it was conceived, the concerns of both the Romanovs and the Habsburgs were as previously stated. Still, Russia no doubt saw it as a useful guarantee against her two most aggressive neighbours, Sweden and the Porte. As time went on and the Russians began again to think of expanding southward, the treaty of 1726 took on a new meaning. For the Habsburgs, relations with the Porte remained good throughout most of the 1720s and 1730s. Their primary concern remained the West, particularly France, though, as stated, the immediate effect of the treaty was to frighten Prussia, whose defection from the Alliance of Herrenhausen helped to break it up.

The Ottomans, not privy to the details of this new alignment, naturally believed that *they* really were the primary target, and they protested both the talks and the treaty. But no one in Europe cared; other countries rather hoped they were on the hit list. It must also be said that there was fear, in circles close to the Emperor, that the Turks might be gearing up to revenge the Peace of Passarowitz (1718), which had cost them a great deal of face, as well as territory. For this reason, it would be as well to be prepared.

In November of 1725, a British merchant was arrested at Belgrade carrying papers 'insinuating to the Turks to undertake measures disadvantageous and harmful not only to the interests of His Imperial Majesty but to all Christianity' (quoted in *Eastern Question*, p. 65). To be fair, the target list included not only the Habsburg Monarchy, but Russia, with whom Ottoman relations were becoming sticky again (over Persia), but the Imperials chose to interpret the matter in the worst light. Together, St. Petersburg and Vienna presented a united front, and the Turks backed down.

*[Vienna, by the by, lay on the shortest route, time-wise, between many of the European capitals, including Constantinople and St. Petersburg. All diplomatic mail to those locations passed through Vienna, where it was routinely steamed open and read. This is how the Imperials knew the British merchant was carrying such inflammatory material. They chose to arrest the man in Belgrade, close to the Turkish border, for dramatic effect.]*

Then too, the diplomatic mindset of the day virtually forced one to speak about the Turks as 'the Enemy'. The Emperor was the Defender of Christendom; it was unthinkable that this role not be mentioned in a treaty with a power bordering the Ottoman Empire, even if the Ottomans were not the intended target. The real issue was one of protocol – giving the Habsburgs the greater role because 'our Emperor is the bulwark of Europe against the Infidel; we feel your Czar (Caesar; second in rank to the old Byzantine Emperors) might be a helpful ally on that front and we graciously accept his offer – as regards European affairs, we really don't need any help (*sure we don't*), but thanks for offering (*what a relief*), and we'll certainly call on you if necessary (*a courier has already been dispatched*).'

*[Something that ought to be clarified is that until the mid-Eighteenth Century there was no Eastern Question and no Balkan Question. Pan-Slavism is a product of the 19th Century. The war of 1735-39 is cited by some – but not all – scholars as the first stirrings of these great issues: how should Austria and Russia define their relationship, and who should gain control of what parts of the Balkan Peninsula. But in the 1720s and 1730s, the Ottoman Empire, though weakening, was still far too strong to be dismembered even by two powers acting in concert – as the Türkenkrieg would demonstrate. Admittedly, some in the Administrations of all three countries believed (or feared) the time was ripe. Though Peter the Great had suffered a humiliating defeat on the banks of the Pruth in 1711, and had been forced to give up all he had gained in the Ukraine and Don Basin, the Habsburgs had done wonders in the war of 1716-18.]*

Regardless of the motivations behind the treaty, its application in the case of the Ottoman Empire could only be made along the Danube, in Wallachia – what is now southern Romania. That was fine as long as the fighting was in that area, even if the Russians twisted the wording so it applied to an offensive war. In either case the Russians would provide the main force and the Imperials the auxiliary corps. However, if either party fought in a theatre the other could not reach, the terms of the agreement would become fetters.

This is what happened when the time came. The Russians demanded aid from the Empire, but they repeatedly chose to fight in the Crimea. Since the Emperor could not send a corps that far afield, it was tacitly agreed that he would fight as a full participant in his own backyard. But the treaty did not cover this situation; it assumed the Power which did not initiate the war, was and could only be an auxiliary. The Russians were not obligated to send aid, either men or money, to an auxiliary of theirs. They could, and did, demand aid in return.

*[As will be seen, it was initially believed in Vienna that the risk was acceptable, so long as the war only lasted a year. Mid-war, the situation became dire but the Emperor could do nothing with his ally because they were also fully engaged. Late-war this was not the case, and Russian foot-dragging gave the Emperor a moral excuse for quitting.]*

From the start, Prince Eugene was leery of the treaty specifically because he felt it might lead to war with the Ottomans, and asked for a clause to be inserted that would allow the Habsburgs to decline in the event of a southern war. He also wrote to the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire, direct, to explain matters. Yet the reply from the Porte was so favourable, so indicative of good relations, that he, perhaps unwisely, dropped his demand.

### **Habsburg Relations with the Porte**

The last war the Habsburgs had fought against the Ottomans was in 1716-1718. Ostensibly they had been allies of Venice, who, having acquired lands in the Morea (Peloponnesus) during a period of Ottoman instability, were then at war with the vengeful Turk.

*[Ironically, it was their Greek subjects, Orthodox Christians vehemently opposed to the Catholic Venetians, who prompted the Ottomans in this matter.]*

Prince Eugene led the Imperial Army to a victorious peace. The Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) awarded to the Habsburgs the Banat of Temesvár, Little Wallachia or Oltania, the northern half of Serbia proper (not the Vojvodina, but the region south of the Danube), and a strip of Bosnian territory on the south bank of the Sava River. Belgrade, the key to the Balkans, was in Christian hands. The Venetians never did get the Morea back – the Habsburgs signed a separate peace.

This war changed the Ottoman perception of Vienna. Previously, they had regarded the Habsburgs as a somewhat easy target. Now the Empire was the Great Enemy. On the Habsburg side, there was persistence in seeing the Ottomans as a grave threat, despite a chronic internal weakening of the regime. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the culture of Central Europe caused

people to talk as if the Turk was always at the door, even among responsible political figures who intellectually knew better – a mentality that had its effect on the course of the 1737-39 war.

In the short term, relations between Vienna and the Porte actually improved, helped by a personal understanding between Prince Eugene and the Grand Vizier. Embassies were exchanged to display the splendour of the rival Courts. The embassies also initiated working committees dedicated to hammering out the details of the peace treaty, and these were kept busy for some years. Minor troubles arose in the 1720s, when the Habsburgs' Ostende Company ran afoul of the Barbary Coast, nominal clients of the Sultan, but the situation resolved itself peacefully.

*[The Ottomans, working from the premise that they were the centre of the universe, did not accept nor send ambassadors – your representative was supposed to go and prostrate himself before the All High, scurrying away with a bone or two after being cuffed with a rolled-up newspaper. (In all seriousness, plenipotentiaries visiting the Sultan were escorted by two burly gentlemen assigned the task of ensuring the visitors bowed at the correct angle). Because the Ottomans refused to accredit ambassadors, seeing them (correctly, of course) as spies, it was the Habsburg military machine that conducted diplomacy with them. In fact, the Porte did not begin to accept mediation in disputes until after 1699. They did not sign peace treaties by that name, but granted 'capitulations' – the Sultan 'graciously condescending' to acknowledge that the enemy must be tired after gobbling up so much Turkish territory. All contact with the outside world was unilateral; they accepted representatives, but never dispatched them in ordinary times – that would imply that the other power had equal status, whereas everyone knew the entire world lay in tribute to the Sultan. Only on special occasions did they send envoys and grand embassies – visits to friendly vassal states like France and recalcitrant clients like Russia. The Turks, though they notionally observed diplomatic immunity, did hold the unfortunate representatives responsible for their country's actions, and might torture them, hold them hostage, or even force them to participate in a war against their own side.]*

One incident that created a great furore was the Bonneval affair. The *Marquis de Bonneval* (1675-1747) was a French nobleman from the Limousin district. Arrogant and overbearing, but sensitive to the smallest personal slight, his repeated insolence to his superiors had led to court-martial and dismissal from both French and subsequent Imperial service. He fled to the Ottoman Empire, converting to Islam and calling himself Humbaraci Ahmet Pasha. Finding a patron, he soon rose to prominence as a foreign expert on all matters military, at a time when the Ottomans were attempting to modernise their army. His success was somewhat limited, but his existence remained a bone of contention between Vienna and Constantinople.

However, the primary reason there was peace between the rival empires was that both were involved in wars on other fronts. For the Habsburgs, there was Alliance of Herrenhausen, and then the War of the Polish Succession. For the Ottomans, there was Persia.

## The Other Side of the Hill

### *Devlet-i Âliye-yi Osmâniyye* (The Sublime Ottoman State)

To the West, the Ottoman Empire was not a part of the 'Concert of Europe', but a discordant blast from outside. The Turks reciprocated by treating the nations of Europe as 'barbarians' – a holdover from Byzantine times. By strict Muslim law, no peace could be made with the Christians, only truces, and then of no more than ten years duration. (The 27-year peace made in consequence of the 1737-39 war was thus an innovation.)

At the start of the 18th Century the Ottoman Empire's great power status was still high. Under the aggressive Sultan Sulieman I the Turks went so far as to lay siege to Vienna in 1683, but were repulsed. This was their high-water mark. From the Imperial victory here, the Habsburgs were able to take the laurels of 'Defenders of Christendom', but the threat was not as great as is usually assumed – in attacking Austria the Ottomans were already

well outside their limits of natural expansion. Vienna remained the 'Golden Apple' for decades, but never again would the Turks seriously threaten Central Europe.

The war of 1716-18 and the subsequent Peace of Passarowitz swung the pendulum the other way, leading many to proclaim the immanent demise of the Sultan's regime. They were premature. Nevertheless, the Ottomans gradually came to the conclusion that retaking Hungary was beyond their capability.



**Comte de Claude Alexandre Bonneval**  
A.k.a *Humbaraci Ahmed Pasha* (1675-1747)

Born in the Limousin region, 14th July 1675, to an old aristocratic family. Joined the French 'Marine Corps' at 13 (possibly the bombardier regiment, since the line companies were founded later, and given his predilection for the artillery). Entered the Army at 18 and advanced to the command of a regiment. Served under Catinat, Villeroy, and Vendôme in Louis XIV's Italian Wars, and in the Low Countries under Luxembourg. Established a reputation for courage and military ability.

However, his insolence towards his superiors led to a court-martial in 1704 (the plaintiff being the French Minister of War). It did not help that Bonneval had composed epigrams casting the King's mistress in an odious light. Condemned to death, he fled to Germany and entered Imperial service as a General, with the aid of Prince Eugene, who called him 'the foremost commanding general not only among the Germans but among all the imperial vassals' (quoted in *EQ*, p.61). Present at Malplaquet against the French, wounded at Peterwardein fighting the Turks. After being wounded, the French Army's proceedings against him were dropped and he returned to France. Married a daughter of Marshal Biron.

Did not remain in France long, but returned to fight for Austria; distinguished at Belgrade. Pegged for the highest command, he fell out with Eugene and was sent to the Low Countries as Master of the Ordnance. Here he challenged the Prince's deputy governor (the *Marquis du Prie*) to a duel and was arrested. Another court-martial again sentenced him to death, commuted to one year's imprisonment and banishment on the Emperor's intervention. Bonneval appears to have been an excellent

officer when busy, but the moment he lapsed into idleness he began to quarrel with everyone.

After his release he plotted with certain Italian officials to overthrow Habsburg rule in Italy, but fled on hearing that Imperial agents intended to murder him. The Ottomans arrested him at Sarajevo and intended to deport him, but he claimed amnesty and converted to Islam. As he wrote to Voltaire, 'either I would lose my head or cover it with a turban'.

Becoming a protégé of the Grand Vizier, Topal Osman Pasha (*Topal* = lame), he was made commander of the Bombardiers of the Artillery Corps, an element that had languished from disuse. Men distinguished themselves by adding their profession or post – '*Humbaracı* Ahmed Pasha' essentially means 'commander of Sultan Ahmed's bombardier corps'. (Notice also how an individual's identity became in this way subordinated to the personality of the Sultan.)

Gave good service against Russia and Persia, receiving the governorship of Chios as a reward. Before the war of 1737-39 he instituted a reform of the Artillery Corps on Western lines, greatly improving it. He attempted to do the same with the Janissaries, and has been credited with such a reform, especially after witnesses from the Battle of Grocka reported Turkish infantry fighting in line with bayonets and conducting manoeuvre drills.

In actuality the plans never left the drawing board – he met too much opposition from entrenched interests. The reform went so far as to propose that the Army become a specialised career path with salaries and pensions. The Janissaries were to be reorganised as 400-man battalions fighting with musket and bayonet. This, of course, would mean the loss of 'place' for large numbers of superfluous officers, hence the opposition to the plan. Besides, firearms were regarded as unmanly, despite being an Ottoman 'brand'.

The muskets and bayonets reported at Grocka were probably from stocks recently sold to the Porte by Sweden. It is possible that, since the Turkish grenadiers were an element of the Artillery, Bonneval may have at least trained *them* in the Western manner. It is known that he was present at Grocka.

However, his reform of the Bombardiers *was* expanded to cover the Artillery Corps as a whole. Bonneval brought in foreign experts, mainly French and Scots, established an artillery school with its own barracks and training grounds, and strove to improve musket and cannon foundries and powder works (all traditionally elements of the Artillery). Temporarily out of favour between 1732 and 1734, under Grand Vizier Hekimoghlu Ali Pasha he was able to start an engineering school.

During the war of 1737-39 his influence was at its height. Some sources credit him with planning the Rákóczi affair (1738), where a prince of Transylvania was to set up a 'third force', and with advising on the campaign strategies for 1737-39 (broadly speaking, that the Imperials should be allowed to overextend themselves before being counterattacked). He must have had some influence, as his word assisted in the downfall of the Sultan's nephew, Jeghen Pasha. Ultimately he fell foul of Grand Vizier Silâhtar Mehmet Pasha, who cut off funding for his training programs and then banished him to a remote location on the shores of the Black Sea.

Avoiding Habsburg attempts to poison him (it is reported), he was reinstated near the end of his life, and reputedly meditated a return to Christianity and the West, but he died in Istanbul on March 23rd, 1747.

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### Sultan Ahmet III

Before the 1730s, the Sultan was Ahmet III. Typical of the period, the Janissaries brought him to power: from humble beginnings as the only reliable element of the army, they had achieved influence similar to that of the Roman Praetorian Guard. In fact, the Corps had even more power, since some of its 'regiments' were civil service departments.

Ahmet III was an able Sultan. Well-educated, he maintained an interest in affairs of state even while in 'palace exile' prior to his accession. The first decade of his reign was spent curbing the influence of those who had brought him to power, but once this

had been accomplished, he retired to his estates and let his chief ministers run the government. Under his reign were the Grand Viziers Çorlulu Ali Pasha (1703-10), Baltacı Mehmet Pasha (1710-1711), Silâhtar Damat Ali Pasha (1713-1716), and Nevşehirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha (1717-1730).

Çorlulu Ali's story was one of rags-to-riches (under the Ottoman system of government, even the poorest could advance to the highest offices, with ability, a patron, and a bit of luck). Çorlulu Ali was a 'traditional reformer', a term used to denote those Ottomans who sought to modernise without abandoning the 'Ottoman Way'. Because of his desire to complete his reforms, the State avoided the War of the Spanish Succession and only participated in the Great Northern War defensively. On the domestic scene, this enabled the balancing of the Budget, and a reorganisation of the Janissary Corps, the Navy, and the Cavalry arms.

But the balance of power was shifting with the rise of Russia. Refugees from the Crimea and the Ukraine began arriving at Constantinople in 1709 (after the battle of Poltava), and the Russians began to insist on their extradition – one of the refugees was the erstwhile leader of a Cossack independence movement; another was the man he had allied with, King Charles XII of Sweden. The Ottoman capital became the centre for all manner of anti-Russian intrigue, and this contributed to growing instability within the Ottoman regime. Eventually Çorlulu Ali fell, to be replaced by Baltacı Mehmet Pasha, the choice of the war party, who were themselves split between a faction wanting war with Russia in alliance with Sweden and Poland, and another faction wanting war with Venice.

### Peter the Great

An attempt by the Cossacks to establish their own kingdom in the Ukraine with Ottoman support led to an ultimatum from Peter the Great in 1710. He also tried to subvert the Sultan's Orthodox Christian subjects in Moldavia and Wallachia. Eventually, with promises of an uprising from the notables of those Ottoman Protectorates, the Russians attacked. They were badly beaten. Support from the Moldavians and Wallachians proved lukewarm, and the Czar's army, nay, the Czar himself, was surrounded on the banks of the Pruth. Because the Turks were in almost as bad a way as the Russians, the Muscovites were not destroyed. Instead, Peter was forced to sign the Treaty of Pruth (July 23rd, 1711), giving up his latest gains in the South.

Like the war of 1716-18 fought against Vienna, this campaign had an influence on the war of 1735-39. For one thing, the Ottomans decided to replace the native rulers of Moldavia and Wallachia with Greek *Phanariotes* (leading merchant families from Constantinople who also monopolised the Ottoman 'Foreign Office'), making a well-led uprising in those regions less likely. Second, Russian attempts to harness the nascent power of Orthodoxy in the Balkans received a setback; the locals turned to the Catholic Habsburgs for the time being.

Baltacı Mehmet was dismissed amid allegations that he had 'betrayed Islam' by taking bribes in exchange for peace – if proved, this would lay the Sultan open to a similar charge, so he had to go. Renewed war with Russia looked very likely, but the efforts of more peaceful factions, and more Russian bribes, led to a strengthening of the Pruth agreement. Azov, lynchpin of the Czar's attempt to establish a naval presence in the Black Sea, was abandoned, and the tiny Russian fleet scrapped. For their part, the Ottomans washed their hands of Charles XII and his Cossack henchman.

*[Rostov on the Don was founded in 1749. Before then, Azov, built by the Turks, served the same purpose – a fortress built on the south shore of the Don estuary, intended to keep the Ottoman Fleet out, or the Russian Fleet in – depending on who owned it – and to control trade. The first Russian naval base was at Taganrog across the bight – a better anchorage.]*

## The War of 1713-18

Next up was the war with Venice over the Morea, beginning in 1713. Silâhtar Damat Ali Pasha was appointed Grand Vizier, and was successful in driving the Misbelievers out of the Peloponnesus. However, when Austria entered the fray in 1716, Ottoman overconfidence led to a complete rout in the Danube Theatre, and major territorial losses. More important than the territory was the right the Imperials gained of intervening on behalf of the Sultan's Orthodox subjects, and a resurgence of Catholicism in the region. Vienna was even allowed to protect foreign merchants residing in Turkish territory, and to place consuls wherever they desired. (Given the unrest that the Ottoman Empire was suffering from, this was more a necessity than a concession.) The treaty also left Venice high and dry, with consequences that would be felt in the future.

The Sultan's slave and advisor, Nevshahirli Damat Ibrahim Pasha, replaced Damat Ali through a palace coup. It was the new Grand Vizier who signed the Peace of Passarowitz (July 21st, 1718). On the side of the 'peace party', Ibrahim Pasha was determined to walk softly. For a Grand Vizier, he lasted quite a long time – from 1718 to 1730. It was said that he could act with great energy if warranted, but would behave indolently if the situation required delay. He built his own party in the teeth of fierce opposition, and played his enemies against each other. He amassed a huge fortune, which made him reluctant to risk foreign adventures.

Ibrahim Pasha was the driving force behind good relations with the Imperials. He also kept a tight reign on the Porte's Crimean client – the Tatars. But what made him truly unique was his attempt to reach out to the West. He dispatched embassies and representatives to Paris and Vienna. These men reported back on the doings of the Infidel, particularly their technology, but also about customs and culture. Their reports inaugurated what became known as the Tulip Period.

## The Tulip Period

The Tulip Period was the counterpart to France's *temps du Roi Soleil*. Western manners became a fad of the super-rich, who squandered fortunes in conspicuous consumption – building miniature copies of Versailles, buying western furniture and clothes, and collecting rare tulips (presenting an exotic strain to the right person could earn you high office). For the lower orders, there were coffee houses and taverns (!). Western art was all the rage, including representations of the human form (shudder). There was an intellectual flowering as well, fuelled by the introduction of the printing press, which was used to disseminate Ottoman as well as Western works. Secular poetry was popular. The Movement was originally intended to divert the Sultan and the Court so that Ibrahim Pasha could rule unchecked, but it got out of hand.

The State put on vast military displays to divert the people; more practically, there was an attempt at internal reform. The Janissary Corps was reduced in size 'to restore discipline' – in reality this was a budget cut. Foreigners – Frenchmen, Hungarians, and even some Scots – were imported and instructed to impose Western ideas and technology on the army, but with only temporary success.

Across the empire, taxes, inflation, and outbreaks of plague were on the increase. There was famine. While the rich wallowed in luxury, the people starved. Peasants and soldiers began to revolt, forming outlaw bands; '*levents*' (from which, 'to levant') and 'rebels' went around insulting the authorities and making mischief as a protest against taxation and corruption. Many were soldiers who had not received their pay – the *levents* were a form of marines. Topping everything was an unwanted war with Iran.

## War with Persia

In the 1720s, a ragtag band of Afghans from Kandahar pillaged their way across Iran and succeeded in deposing the Shah, leading to political chaos. One of the factions caught up in the struggle for power applied to the Ottomans for aid; at the same time, the Russians began to meddle in the region. *Back to the future.*

Initially, things went well for the Turks, and the Russians occupied Persian Daghestan (the western shore of the Caspian, including Baku). But it appeared that the war might spread. The Han (khan) of the Crimea began to demand the restitution of Tatar lands to the north of the Black Sea, where Cossack frontiersmen were establishing colonies. Fortunately, a combination of bribery and palace intrigue defused the situation. A bargain was struck: the Ottomans would take Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Shirvan; the Russians Daghestan, Gilan, Mazanderan, and Esterabad (essentially the southwest shore of the Caspian). Concerns over a Christian power taking on Muslim subjects were set aside. The two powers then got the agreement of the new Shah.

However, none of the players had reckoned on the Afghans, who promptly drove the Shah off his throne again. In desperation, the latter called on the aid of a Turkomen tribe led by one Nadr Quli Beg, alias Tahmasp Quli Khan, alias Nadr Han (or Khan), alias Nadr Shah. The Turkomen were even fiercer warriors than the Afghans, and better led. They soon drove the former not only out of Persia, but almost out of Afghanistan as well. This success gave Nadr Han ideas. The Shah was replaced on his throne – under the thumb of Nadr, who insisted on the expulsion of the Russians and Turks from Persian soil. At first it seemed as if another compromise could be arranged, but the deal fell through. Worse, the Persians inflicted a crushing defeat on the Ottoman Army.

*[Nadr Shah is sometimes called a Kurd; actually he was an Afshar, from the Khorasan province of northeastern Persia.]*

## The Petrona Revolt

The Ottoman defeat proved the last straw for an overtaxed populace sickened by the sight of its élites living the high life and aping the Infidel. A band of janissaries, led by an Albanian named Petrona Halil, stormed the Sultan's palace, demanding reform and a return to traditional ways. (The Army was out of the picture, on the other side of the Bosphorus, preparing for a new campaign against the Persians.) Ahmet III had Ibrahim Pasha strangled, but it was not enough. On October 1st, 1730, he abdicated in favour of the 'people's choice', his eldest son, Mahmud I.

The Terror burgeoned into a Sunni religious revival. Those believed most culpable for the corruption of society were butchered. Jews, Christians and other sects were persecuted. All things Western became pariah. The *Sharia* was rigidly enforced. But the rebels went too far. Petrona Halil demanded a share in the government. On the pretext of discussing this topic, Mahmud I invited the ringleaders to the palace and had them strangled.

## Mahmud I (1730-54)

The new Sultan demonstrated his ability to ride the turbulent times. He played musical chairs with his officials to keep them guessing (this is why in the war of 1735-39 there was a different Grand Vizier leading each year's campaign). Although a traditionalist, he recognised the value of reform within limits, particularly regarding the military. It was under his reign that Bonneval arrived.

Mahmud reformed the *timar* system, which was a distribution of the land that had a similarity to feudal forms and that was the foundation of military recruitment and supply. He also built or restored many frontier posts, making the garrison commanders responsible for local defence of the surrounding area, which was also to be their source of supplies and pay. This would be of

benefit when the Austrians attempted their invasion of Bosnia in 1737.

Mahmud did not attempt to reform the Janissaries, beyond putting a reliable man in charge and extorting a promise that they would at least start regular training again. Bonneval is often credited with restructuring the Corps along Western lines, with 400-man regiments fighting in line and using musket volleys. While it is true that the Janissaries were equipped with firearms – had been for centuries – they disdained them as unmanly. Nor were they predisposed to allow an upstart foreigner to meddle with their cherished institutions. Bonneval submitted a comprehensive plan of reform, but the only arm he was permitted to tinker with was his own – the Artillery. Here, while the sun of the Sultan's favour shone upon him, the renegade's improvements had some effect.

### **Nadr Shah**

While all this was going on, Nadr Han and the Persians had not forgotten the Ottomans. Somehow the advancing Persians had been staved off during the Petrona Revolt, and a truce was signed, allowing Nadr Han to fight against the Afghans. Fighting flared up again in 1732 with simultaneous offensives by both sides. The Turks attacked in Iraq, but the Persians, with Russian help, took the Caucasus.

The war dragged on until 1736, culminating in an Ottoman rout at Bogaverd (June 14th 1735) that left Persia in control of Georgia, Armenia, and much of Kurdistan. The disaster left the Turks without an effective army, or so it seemed, and was a critical factor in the Russian decision to risk a general war in order to crush the Tatars. Fortunately, in 1736 the young puppet Shah died and the Ottoman nemesis, Nadr *Shah* was chosen by popular acclamation. Fortunate, because Nadr Shah, now satisfied with his gains in the West and secure in his position, was eager to pursue the conquest of India. His accession also changed the Persian regime's Shia Safavid dynasty to the Sunni Afsharid, making it easier for the Sunni Ottoman regime to come to terms with it.

*[Nadr seems to have been as agnostic as Frederick the Great; raised a Shia, he enforced a Sunni regime to placate the Sunni elements in his army.]*

### **Grand Viziers serving during the War of 1737-39**

Unfortunately, biographical material is sketchy when it comes to Ottoman officials – only the Sultan was considered worthy of comment, and this particular sultan did not go on campaign. There may be details in Turkish language sources. The four men listed below served as Grand Vizier during the war. Hekimoghlu Ali Pasha is one of the more famous figures of the period; though not serving as a Grand Vizier at the time, he did so on three other occasions (generally when things got into a mess):

Silâhdar Seyyid Mehmed Pasha (January 10th 1736 – August 5th 1737). Turkish Ottoman from Dimetoka. 'Silâhdar' means 'guardian of the guns and weapons'; 'Seyyid Mehmed' means 'descended from Mohammed'.

Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha (August 22nd 1737 – December 19th 1737). Turkish Ottoman from Aleppo. Born 1660, died 1749. A former governor of Bosnia.

Jeghen Mehmed Pasha (December 3rd 1737 – March 23rd 1739). Nephew of the Sultan. Nicknamed 'Devil Pasha' and noted for his ferocity and hatred of the Infidel.

Haci Ivaz Mehmed Pasha (March 17th 1739 – June 23rd 1740). Albanian Ottoman.

### **Governor of Bosnia Hekimoghlu Ali Pasha (1689-1758)**

Venetian father, Turkish mother. Father was a medical student at Padua who fell in love with the daughter of an Ottoman merchant and followed her to Istanbul, eventually becoming physician to the Sultan. Ali Pasha was thrice appointed Grand Vizier (1732-35, 1742, 1755). He also served as Governor of Candia (an exile post) and as Governor of Bosnia (as a trouble-shooter) from 1736 to 1739, where he led the successful defence of the province in the war of 1737-39. Governor of Trabzon in 1749. A skilful administrator who also instituted many famous public works,

including an Istanbul mosque named after him. He was also noted for his poetry.

## **Poles, Russians, and Tatars**

### **The Polish Succession Crisis**

So much for the Turk. The Imperials had been having an interesting time themselves. By the 1730s, the general European political tangle had unravelled itself into the War of the Polish Succession. As the closing act of that war, the Russians, ruled throughout the 1730s by a grandniece of Peter the Great, Anna Ivanova, had, for the first time ever, sent an army to the Rhine to see to it that the peace negotiations were carried out 'properly'.

This is yet another topic that requires more paper than can be devoted here. Briefly, Poland was an elective kingdom, another client of Russia's, and a realm in which the Habsburgs also had an interest. The former King had been Augustus II The Strong, concurrently Elector of Saxony, and thus a figure of interest to his feudal overlord the Emperor. He had always made his neighbours nervous, having dreams of grandeur, and an example in Charles XII, Mad King of the North. In particular, he had secretly prepared the way, through marriage with the elder line of the Habsburgs (Joseph's), to acquire a number of their lands upon Charles VI's death; fortunately for the dynasty, Augustus died first, in February of 1733. Upon which the Polish Estates met to debate who should be the next king.

Problem. The Polish Diet was composed of factions totally at odds with one another, more interested in taking bribes from foreign powers than in electing a native ruler who might curb their ambitions – or draw down the wrath of the Bear to the east. Candidates were nearly always foreign choices.

The Austrians, Russians, and Prussians put up Augustus III, son of the late king, as a joint investment under the banner of the Treaty of the Three Black Eagles. Unlike his father, the new Elector of Saxony was of a mild disposition, married to an Habsburg, and willing to let others decide his policy, at least in Poland. The French, interfering by virtue of a subsidy that Augustus II had applied for, put up Stanislaus Leszczyński, father-in-law of Louis XV and a former King of Poland. This was an attempt by France's chief minister, Cardinal Fleury, to increase French prestige at a time when she was diplomatically isolated.

When the Allies declared they would back their candidate with force and sent Russian troops into Poland to prove it, the French were angered. So were the Poles, who, forgetting their personal animosities, voted 'unanimously' for Stanislaus. War broke out.

In the end, despite a dismal performance by Imperial arms, Augustus III was made King of Poland. The Russians were happy, since the last thing they wanted was a Polish King with French ties leading the Polish people, and the Habsburgs were happy, since the Saxon Elector now owed them and would not be putting forth his own claims to the Imperial Succession. Nor would the Poles present any sort of danger to their northeast frontier.

The French were *not* happy, and demanded Lorraine in compensation for the ex-Polish King – and since he was King Louis XV's father-in-law, Lorraine, an Imperial province with a French population, would eventually be annexed to France. This meant that the ex-Duke of Lorraine (Francis Stephen) was not happy either, though in mitigation he was chosen to marry the Emperor's daughter (a love match – even better!) and was thus entitled to a shot at the Imperial Crown.

Despite the favourable result of the 'election', for the Habsburgs the war brought fresh troubles. They lost land in Italy. Their army was in a bad way. And now the Russians were calling for a war against the Turk. The Ottomans had backed the French candidate

and had considered entering the war in 1734, putting them at odds with their northern neighbour.

### The Bear Awakes

The Ottomans ultimately did not involve themselves. They had enough trouble with Nadr Shah. To be on the safe side, Prince Eugene wrote to the Grand Vizier to say that he would guarantee the Poles would not be attacking them. He also expressed the naïve (or duplicitous) belief that the Russians were not plotting against them, either.

Since the 1720s, Russia's foreign policy had been in the hands of a Westphalian Count, Heinrich Johann Friederich Ostermann (1686-1747), one of many foreign experts invited to make their fortunes in Peter's Russia. It was he who sponsored the treaty of 1726. There is some controversy here, as in so much about the war of 1735-39, about what exactly the Russians wanted. It seems that Ostermann, at least, dreamt of expanding Russia to the shores of the Black Sea. Poland and Sweden were no longer major threats in themselves, the Habsburgs were allies, and the Ottomans were tottering. At the very least, Azov was to be recovered.

Ostermann was a political survivor, and at the Russian Court, too, which is enough to explain why his aims were never clearly expressed. He was backed up by the President of the Military Office (i.e. head of the armed forces), Field Marshal Baron Burkhard Christoph von Münnich (1683-1767), a Baltic German who was even more sanguine. He proposed turning the Black Sea into a Russian lake.

Though not all scholars agree, it seems certain that Ostermann was waiting for an excuse to pin the blame on the Ottomans before going to war. (Some claim that even the most brazen aggression would have been excused by Europe in a war against the Turk.) Ostermann soon got his excuse.

### Tatar Raids

Russia had to act before the Ottomans concluded a peace with Persia. In 1732, the Porte asked their Tatar vassals in the Crimea to aid them in the Caucasus. There was nothing unusual in this. The Tatars were the Porte's prime ally, and their Han (khan) was a even a potential successor to the sultanate. But the Russians protested. The Tatars were notorious slavers (somewhere between one and two million Slavs were enslaved between the 15th and 17th centuries – the Tatars called it 'Harvesting the Steppe') and it had long been a Russian goal to get rid of them.

Although they had given up much of their Caucasian conquests to Persia as too costly to maintain, the Russians retained a presence in Daghestan with Nadr Shah's permission. In 1732 (Treaty of Resht) they agreed to withdraw their forces to the Terek River to save them from the chronic attrition of that unhealthy region. However, the Tsaritsa continued to insist on her right to protect the Christian tribes of Kabardia (the foothills of the north-central Caucasus). The chiefs of these tribes had close ties to the Russian Court.

In June of 1733 the Tatars took a shortcut to the Persian Front by marching through Kabardia. Their own Han opposed this move but was overruled by his *divan* (council). The column was stopped and turned back near Derbent by a 4,000-man Russian garrison, with some violence evidenced on both sides. The Ottomans lost an important battle to the Persians in consequence.

The Turks were partly to blame, since the reason the Tatars gave for this rather provocative march was the urgent need to display loyalty to the Sultan, both to ensure the Han retained his position and that the rank and file continued to receive subsidies from the Porte; subsidies which were essential to the Tatar economy since the Porte had forbidden large scale raiding in an effort to maintain

peace with Russia. Also, it was felt necessary to discreetly challenge the Russians in Kabardia, because their influence was eroding the Crimean Tatars' own dominance over the Nogai of the Kuban (plus various 'rebel' Cossack groups they were sponsoring) and opening the region to an influx of the neighbouring Kalmyk Horde to the east.

Ostermann seized upon the Tatars' foray as an excuse to go to war, but hesitated to act. If the Ottomans managed to bring in Sweden and Poland on their side, he would need help. So he investigated the possibility of activating the treaty of 1726, but found no sympathy in Vienna – what with the French invading the Rhineland and all. Prince Eugene replied that the Empire would only make war on the Turk if Poland's security were at risk. On the other hand, Vienna was prepared to mediate. The Ottomans, threatened with a new war, sought help from France; they also concluded a permanent (never broken) peace with Venice.

It was at this point that Ostermann came to a final decision to aid the Emperor in enforcing a settlement of the Polish war in the latter's favour. This was in Russia's own interest. There was a French faction at St. Petersburg, but in general the Russians did not want to see the Bourbons so close to home. The offer was also calculated to embroil the Emperor – he would be unlikely to refuse aid against the Porte a second time if he had just been bailed out. In 1734, desperate for military aid, the Emperor formally agreed to aid Russia if war should break out with the Ottomans. This agreement guaranteed the appearance of Field Marshal Lacy and 13,000 Russians on the Rhine.

In the summer of 1734, the Tatars tried another long march through the Russian sphere and were again turned back. The Turks lost another critical battle with the Persians. This time, the Tatars had threatened that if blocked they would cross the Terek into Russian territory; they were blocked, and a small battle ensued in which 55 Russian troops were killed. The Tatars then sent a second wave through Kabardia in a show of strength.

Some sources suggest that the French, or perhaps French representatives in Constantinople acting alone, had a hand in the Tatar move, hoping to distract the Russians from Poland. In any case the Russian envoy in Constantinople issued a protest as soon as he heard of the Tatars' march. The Grand Vizier countered by pointing out that the Russians had given Daghestan back to Persia, a nation with whom his master was at war. But, Ostermann had already seized on the Tatars' blatant provocation as his pretext for invasion.

*[When the Grand Vizier cited a common religion as a reason for Tatar-Ottoman occupation of Daghestan, the Russians refused to accept it as valid; yet this was to be a common claim of Russia's when interfering with the Orthodox populations of the Balkans.]*

In July of 1735, Ostermann sounded Vienna again. The Polish war was still sputtering, and the political outcome appeared dicey; the Emperor might be seeking a separate peace. His representative in St. Petersburg, *Graf von Ostein*, said he did not see how a Tatar probe into Persian Daghestan constituted a threat to Russian interests. Ostermann placated him with assurances of Russia's peaceful intentions. Then in October of 1735, a Russian army of 40,000 men (all that could be spared since most of the Army was still stamping out armed resistance in Poland) under General Mihail Ivanovich Leont'ev marched down to the Crimea.

Winter came early that year, and the army retreated, suffering 9,000 losses to attrition – they had run out of supplies before even reaching the Perekop Isthmus. His hand shown, in February of 1736 Ostermann again asked the Habsburgs what they planned to do 'when' war came. Again Vienna temporised.

Charles VI owed Anna Ivanova for her support in the War of the Polish Succession, and he had already said 'no' twice. But because the Russians choose to follow a 'Black Sea strategy' at the outset,

the Emperor felt able to resist any calls for participation in a 'grand encirclement' of the Turk. Vienna made sympathetic noises and pleaded exhaustion at the end of a war that had not officially ended – the Habsburgs felt compelled to maintain large contingents on the Rhine and in Italy. The same month, the Grand Vizier, Silâhdar Pasha, complained to the Habsburgs' apparently sympathetic envoy at the Porte, Leopold von Talman, about the Russians' unhelpful attitude.

### Turning the Screw

In the third week of March, 1736, the Ottoman fortress of Azov was invested by the Russians. War was then declared (in that order); the Russians soon executed a second invasion of the Crimea. Azov, on south bank of the Don delta, was the key defensive position for both the Don and the Sea of Azov. This was where Peter the Great had tried to establish a naval presence (a flotilla based at Taganrog – Russia's first naval base). The campaign in the Crimea was intended to lay waste the nomadic Tatars' pasturage, and to destroy the few towns in the peninsula, including the Tatar capital at Bakhchisaray. It was stage one of Ostermann's three-year plan to dominate the Black Sea coast. If all went well, by 1738 the Russians would be at the gates of Constantinople. (Small-scale maps are such inspiring documents.)

The Russian declaration of war was couched as a note to the Porte accusing the Ottomans of 'constant' frontier violations. Ostermann's royal mistress had no choice but to match force with force. On the other hand, St. Petersburg was open to the sending of a negotiating team to examine the border...

This note arrived at the same time as news of the investment of Azov, and was understood to be an ultimatum. After issuing an official protest, the Ottoman *divan* (council) made the decision for war on May 2nd; on May 28th they formally declared war on Russia. For the Ottomans, the situation was already improving. The war with Persia was winding down. The Imperials had not committed themselves and seemed reluctant to do so. Talman was even invited to watch the troops depart Istanbul – the only foreign representative. Azov fell to the Russians in July.

### Will You, Won't You, Won't You Join the Dance?

There is debate (*what a surprise*) among the scholars over Austria's road to war. Some suggest that a secret offensive treaty had been agreed to in 1735, dividing the spoils of a general war against the Turks between Austria and Russia – Russia to take Moldavia and Wallachia, and Austria to take Bosnia and Herzegovina. But this is dubious, and seems to be inferred from the turn events took much later in the century, when carving up the Sick Man of Europe became something of a fad.

First, the Habsburgs were in no position, after straining their economy in the Polish succession war, to immediately take on another massive campaign. Second, although the Habsburg and Romanov empires were 'friendly', there is little likelihood that the former would be keen to see Orthodox Christian puppet regimes on their eastern border, spreading dissension among their own Orthodox subject peoples. These were the days before Pan-Slavism, but religion served the same purpose.

Finally, the records of Vienna show that the main preoccupation of the Emperor and his Privy Conference (the highest deliberative body in the regime) was the Polish war. Only when war broke out between Russia and the Turks were they compelled to face facts. The first thing they did was stall for time.

This was a job for the Conference's Secretary and the Emperor's primary advisor on foreign affairs, Baron Johann Christoph Bartenstein (1689-1767), aided by the ambassador to St. Petersburg, Ostein. It was essential to learn Russia's long-term goals before committing to a course of action. Meanwhile, the rest of the Conference discussed whether war would be beneficial or

not, or even feasible or not. It is noteworthy that one member of the Conference, the new President of the *Hofkriegsrat*, *Feldmarshal von Königsegg*, was a Dove.

*[There was no clear division into a war and a peace party; opinions varied with each nuance, and one man might favour war if... only to be opposed to it when... what there most definitely was not, was a moral bias against War.]*

In argument for peace, the troops and the treasury were exhausted, and the threat from France was not receding. There were exactly five supply ships on the Danube, and the recruit class of 1736 was composed entirely of 'professional deserters and boys'. If war were declared, anything over a single campaigning season would be unacceptable – but the Hawks were saying that would be all it would take.

In argument for war, the Ottoman Empire was reeling after its disastrous war with Persia (in its final year, there were reports of troop losses so great that the Sultan had dramatically called for every able-bodied man to march to the East). It was believed that their Rumelian (European) subjects were disaffected – high taxes, conscription for foreign service in Persia, turf wars among the pashas – but these were just rumours. What gave them credence was the unprecedented scale of friendly overtures from the Porte. The Turks gave Vienna the names of a number of Hungarian malcontents and appeared willing to discuss removing the Han of the Tatars from power; this last is significant, as his family were potential heirs to the Sultan's throne.



*Brod Fortress*

'Realists' declared that the treaty with Russia was worth the sacrifices to be met with in what would obviously be a short war. Indeed, if the Empire did not concern itself, not only would they forfeit Russian goodwill, they would lose out on the spoils. Russia could not be allowed to make massive gains upon the Danube Basin. This would cut off an important Habsburg trade route and make Russia the dominant power in the Balkans.

At the extreme end of the spectrum, there were calls, notably from Talman at the Porte, for a partition of the Balkans along a line from Ruschuk to Thessalonica: 'such a border would place the kingdom of Serbia, the greatest part of the kingdom of Bulgaria, the kingdom of Macedonia, Turkish Dalmatia, the whole kingdom of Bosnia, the provinces of Albania, Epirus, Thessaly, Achaya, etc. under the dominion of the emperor' (quoted in *EQ*, p. 73).

And now we come to the *Türkenkrieg*.

## War!

There were a number of striking similarities with 1716. Back then, the Imperials had just concluded a major conflict. They had no money, a depleted army, and feared renewed hostilities in Germany and Italy. The Ottomans had remained neutral in the preceding war, and the situation had quickly changed in the Imperials' favour. Other enemies had disappeared and the Turks had been revealed as weak. It was felt that the border could be rounded out, so to speak, with little danger, and so it proved. All this was happening again in 1736. Poland was calm. Spain and the Maritime Powers were satisfied. France was tired of war.

However, there were some major differences, too. In the earlier struggle, the Ottomans had first attacked an ally of the Emperor: Venice. Now, they were being forced into war; all Europe saw Russia as the aggressor. Yet while most did not care if the Ottomans were knocked about, they did worry that St. Petersburg might be getting uppity. In the 1730s, instead of coming to the aid of a weak ally, the Habsburgs were faced with the temptation of picking on a weakened neighbour in company with a strong ally.

As noted above, Talman, despite his reputation as a 'Turkophile', and the clique he belonged to, advocated a war of conquest. Even admitting the Habsburg Monarchy was itself weak, the Ottomans were weaker. The Imperials had a strong natural defensive position behind the length of the Danube, the Sava, and the Olt. A massive river flotilla was being constructed out of the remnants of the experimental Adriatic Fleet. And they had Belgrade, Gateway to the Balkans, with a reliable population of German colonists, an impregnable bridgehead. A quote from Count Marsigli sums up the Hawks' attitude:

'Given the slight resistance the [Ottoman] militia can offer and the state of Ottoman finances, [the bordering nations] have only to march, and, without fighting, each has only to occupy that part assigned to him by a [future] alliance' (quoted in *EQ*, p. 72).

The Privy Conference rejected the idea as unrealistic. If there was to be war – IF – then it ought to stop at strategically suitable annexations, such as Bosnia and the odd fortress or two. The *Hofkriegsrat* (Aulic War Council) was under no illusions either. They were going to be acting as auxiliaries to the Russians, which in 18th Century terms meant something very specific. They were not waging war on their own account.

Ideally, an expeditionary corps should have been hustled over to the Ukraine to fight under Russian command, but given the distances involved this was simply not practical. Instead, the Habsburgs would do their best to distract the Turks – with a private reservation to stick their necks out as little as possible. Because should the Ottomans ever appear in the Danube Theatre in strength, the Imperial Army would not have the resources to guarantee victory; might not even have the resources to prevent defeat. And the Russians were not obligated to come and take the pressure off, since they were the primary partners according to the treaty (the Ottomans were officially at war with *them*, not the Imperials).

### Dancing With Bears

Well before the Porte issued its declaration of war, Emperor Charles had signified to St. Petersburg his willingness to 'fulfil his obligations' (May 23rd 1736). This was because in February, Ostein had sent word that St. Petersburg only wanted to take the fortress of Azov and make some minor border adjustments. The Russians were pleased with Charles' response, until they found out it consisted merely of an offer of Habsburg 'good services' in mediation. Only if the talks failed would the Imperials enter the war – and then only if the Russians would provide an auxiliary corps for *them*. St. Petersburg expressed high-minded displeasure,

but in June, Ostein reported that the 'border adjustments' meant reclamation of the 1700 border, the annexation of the Crimea, and protectorates over Moldavia and Wallachia!

If this were true, the experts predicted that when the Russians cracked the Dniester line, they would have the Balkans at their mercy. This could happen within the span of a single campaigning season, or so it was believed. So despite the Emperor's tame offer, Habsburg neutrality was preferable only if the fighting and subsequent peace did not involve the Balkans in any way (i.e. even Turkish concessions in the Balkans granted to Russia in exchange for losses elsewhere would be a bad thing). The Empire would have to go to war in order to prevent her ally from usurping her own pre-eminence in the theatre.

The stopgap notion of mediation was Bartstein's idea, and arose out of the way diplomatic business was conducted. Russia (as always) explained nothing of her intentions. Rumours were not enough. In order for the Emperor to make a decision he needed more information. Was the Bear simply going to punish the Crimea and perhaps bumble around in the Caucasus? Was he intending to seize a few bargaining chips and call it quits? Or was he really planning to sweep into Wallachia and set up a puppet regime?

To restate the obvious, Charles had no desire to help the Russians occupy the Balkans; nor did he want to be left holding the baby on the Danube Front while St. Petersburg annexed the Crimea. Bartstein did not trust Russia: 'one would rather have the Turks as neighbours than an ally so steadfastly loyal [as Russia]' (quoted in *EQ*, p. 74).

Asking the Russians outright did no good. They simply countered with uncomfortable questions of their own – like how soon before the Emperor opened a Second Front? But there was a way around the problem. By remaining neutral, for the time being, and acting as arbiter at a set of talks, the Imperials would have to be told what the Russians wanted – because the Mediator was the one who worked out a compromise with the opposite party, for which full disclosure was needed. If the Russians refused the offer entirely, that would indicate they were up to no good. Once Vienna knew what St. Petersburg intended, the Imperials could either jump on board or ramp up the talks in an effort to avert Armageddon.

On June 12th, 1736, Ostermann accepted the offer of mediation. However, he only gave the Emperor a six-week window for the talks. When pressed about Russian plans, he mumbled something to the effect that St. Petersburg was seeking a reversal of the Treaty of Pruth and the conquest of the Crimea; he also indicated a willingness to send a Russian army to help the Imperials. But these were couched as possibilities only. Then he said that with the Imperials offering to mediate it sounded as if they were trying to dodge their treaty obligations, and by the way, why were they intending to send a Turk-lover like Talman to mediate?

On June 16th, the Grand Vizier marched out of Istanbul with the Sultan's army, enroute to blocking positions at the mouth of the Danube. Although technically at war, the Ottomans were not ready to take the offensive. The Porte was not adverse to a congress, and the Grand Vizier had already written to the Maritime Powers (Britain and Holland) to ask if they would mediate the dispute. The Ottomans were well aware that Maritime Powers suffered from no conflict of interest – unlike the Empire. For it was not until the 28th of July that Talman was officially empowered to mediate, revealing to the Turkish diplomats that the Imperials' main desire was to see how Russia progressed before taking their own line.

By that time, Azov had surrendered to the Russians (July 1st). This was the high-water mark of the campaign. Affairs in the Crimea were going badly, despite the sacking of the Tatar capital

at Bakchisaray, and by early August, the Russians had retreated from the Perekop Isthmus and abandoned the key fortress of Kinburun (guarding the South bank of the Dnieper Estuary).

### **Bartstein's Fifteen Points**

The Russians had still not told their ally what their long-term plans were – unless Ostermann's hints were to be taken at face value. In mid-August, therefore, Ostermann presented a fifteen-point 'project of operations'. This was Bartstein's second ploy. It projected a joint fall campaign, ending the war in 1737. The goals were ambitious: Russian annexation of the Crimea and control of Azov; Imperial annexation of Bosnia, Albania as far as the Drina, Wallachia as far as Braila, and Moldavia as far as the Pruth. What was not stated but obvious was that Russia would, for any future war, be stuck with the Dobruja as her only axis of advance in the West. The Dobruja lay on the other side of the Danube Delta, was hilly, heavily wooded, and lacked good roads.

Some scholars put forward Bartstein's plan as an indication that the Habsburgs were bent on aggression from the start, but the plan is patently unrealistic. It was already August, and the Russians were supposed to muster an army and advance back into the Crimea, without supplies, and take it in a few weeks? And to speak of Imperial regiments, the bulk of them still stationed in the West, and undergoing an intensive overhaul into the bargain, advancing simultaneously into the Balkans and over the Carpathians in a couple of months is ludicrous. Unfortunately, Bartstein, in a memoir he wrote years later for Maria Theresa's heir, Joseph II, claimed he was serious. So the debate continues.

Others suggest that the Habsburgs understood Russia's goals quite well – much better than they pretended to, in fact. These were indeed the taking of Azov and the Crimea, and the establishment of protectorates over both Moldavia and Wallachia. Ostermann's hints were not veiled to prevent his ally's understanding, but simply because it was not safe to say more.

What is hard to grasp is that the Russians would not tell their ally anything – but after all, these are the *Russians*. Anyway, one has to remember that the Emperor was also hedging continually – why did he not commit? Also, the Russian Court was as rife with cliques and agitators as any other court. Ostermann had his ideas, von Münnich had his, the French envoys were persuasive talkers in favour of anything anti-Habsburg, the Guard boisterous, the nobility haughty, and Anna Ivanova was trying to beat her predecessors' record for time spent on the throne.

So in the end, the intent of Bartstein's plan seems to have been to spark a reaction from the Russians. Would they get all hot and bothered at talk of the Imperials annexing Moldavia? Were they in any shape to conduct further operations this year? And so on. It did not have much effect. St. Petersburg was as capable as any one of seeing through the bluff. Ostermann said it sounded like the Imperials wanted to forge a new treaty, and what was wrong with the old one? He then said that in contrast to the grandiose designs of the Emperor, the Tsaritsa 'would astound the world with the moderation of her demands'.

Still, Bartstein's plan was more than just a verbal ploy. On September 8th, the Privy Conference met in Vienna and voted decisively for war – with the proviso that it would be a single campaign. The Emperor, on Bartstein's advice, concurred. At this particular time, nearly everyone believed that the Ottomans, faced with a two-front war, would simply capitulate.

### **Planning for War**

On September 13th, Bartstein made a disastrous mistake (the 'why' is unclear). He renewed the request for a convention, but made two changes. First, he suggested that the troop levels required by the treaty of 1726 be ignored; any number (more, in his mind) should be acceptable. Second, he dropped the demand for full disclosure by the Russians. These two changes would have the unfortunate effect of permitting the Russians to do as they pleased. St. Petersburg agreed, naturally.

By the second half of September, one Imperial army was concentrating in Serbia and Croatia, and another in Transylvania. In all, 70,000 men were being assembled. The initial choice of command fell on *Feldmarshal Graf Johann Pálffy von Erdöd* (1664-1751). He would act as soon as the Russians approached the Balkans. So ran the official circulars.

*[Pálffy was soon dropped, it is not clear why – possibly age or conflict of interest.]*

One wonders if the men involved in planning these operations knew that they were impossible. Or if they knew it, but talked themselves into believing it could be done. Or if it was all bluff. Or just the way things were done. 70,000 men is a paper figure. On paper, the Imperial Army had 160,000 men, 110,000 'Austrian' and 50,000 'Empire' troops. They never achieved that figure in any war prior to the period of mass mobilisation. Actual troop strengths are discussed below, but it can be said here that the forces participating in the Balkan theatre were a fraction of these numbers.

*[Davies gives totals for this campaign of 46,200 foot, 16,100 cuirassiers, 10,900 dragoons, 6,000 hussars, 10,000 grenz (local border troops), and 240 guns, plus 6 river gunboats of significant size.]*

It was far too late in the season to launch an offensive, and the Russians were still retreating – they had no wintering bases nearer than Kiev. These facts were well known to everyone. It would appear that the real goal of the Imperial concentration was simply to be in the game, in case the Russians asked any more awkward questions, and to be better prepared in case something really did happen in 1737.

On September 24th, 1736, the Ottomans signed a peace agreement with Persia and began preparing for war in earnest. Among the Russian officer corps there was dispute over whether Ostermann's goals were realistic. In Vienna, in contrast, war fever was now beginning to alter men's perceptions of the possible.

On October 2nd, the Saxons passed word to St. Petersburg that the Emperor was prepared to attack the Turks in the coming summer. That same day the Russians agreed to Bartstein's proposed conference. Nevertheless, little was done for the next two months. The fault was Ostermann's. Unable to subdue his abrasive, pompous manner, the Habsburg Ambassador had already alienated Ostermann, Empress Anna, and most of the Russian Court. They avoided him. Vienna knew nothing of this and feared Russia was going to sell out, right after dragging the Empire into an unwanted war.

Ultimately, in December of 1736, Ostermann decided to bypass Ostermann and authorised the Russian ambassador in Vienna to handle the affair, a great embarrassment for the Ambassador. Matters proceeded rapidly from this point. The agreement for a convention was combined with an agreement for joint military action that spring. The agreement was signed in only nine days. (The Privy Conference merely rejected a request for the Imperial Army to take the field before any news of Russian troop movements was received.)

The key stipulation was, that failing a peace settlement, the Emperor would contribute 80,000 men to the struggle. Otherwise, the clauses followed a familiar format: no separate peace, no

separate negotiations, the armies to co-ordinate and to come to each other's assistance if attacked by the enemy or a new party. But the agreement had two holes in it.

First, there was no mention at all of strategy. The men who drew up the document were not soldiers and strategy was not their affair. That was, by tradition, left to the generals. Second, although the party facing the main threat was to be aided by its ally, there was no definition of what constituted 'the primary enemy threat'. There was no proviso for the Imperial field commander to opt out of an offensive if the Russians chose not to attack in a location that could be supported by the Imperials, and either side could claim they were facing the greatest threat. These flaws were fatal.

### More Talk

On the Balkan Front, Talman the Hawkish pseudo-Turk-lover was still proposing mediation (after all, he had been selected as the chief negotiator), but in Vienna the *Hofkriegsrat* now became bellicose in their communications with the Porte. On the 28th of February 1737, *Feldmarshal Graf Joseph Lothar Dominik von Königsegg-Rothenfels* (1673-1751), the new President of the *Hofkriegsrat*, specifically told the Ottomans that the Imperials intended to support their Russian ally – but the offer of mediation was not withdrawn.

On January 9th, 1737, St. Petersburg and Vienna renewed the 1726 treaty, and publicly announced their commitment to aid each other. Bartstein relaxed his efforts to discover Russian intentions, as they would soon become apparent. Then began the scramble for Imperial allies.

To match the promises given, the Imperial contingent was increased from 70,000 to 80,000 – presumably with the stroke of a pen, as there were still nowhere near even 70,000 bodies assembled. But war was not formally declared, and in February, a reply regarding the Habsburg offers of mediation came from the Porte. It was peremptory in tone; at peace in the East, the Ottomans were confident they could deal with their enemies on the battlefield. And yet, they did not turn the offer down.

Letters from Istanbul were always peremptory, but rather than ignoring the tone and accepting the olive branch behind it, the men of the *Hofkriegsrat* used the letter as evidence that war was necessary. In Vienna, the debate was now in full spate. Should the Empire send an auxiliary corps to the Ukraine? This was all the treaty of 1726 called for. It would avoid a declaration of war by the Habsburgs, whereas if the latter asked for a *Russian* auxiliary corps, the Empire would be the prime mover, and thus war would have to be declared. These were the rules of the game.

The war party won the debate. Prominent among them were the *feldzugmeisters* Samuel Schmettau (1684-1751) and *Prinz Joseph Friederich zu Sachsen-Hildburghausen* (1702-1787). These men, anxious to win prestige on the battlefield, played on fears of the Old Turk, and pointed out that if the Russians were defeated, as in 1711, the Sultan might come after the Empire anyway. There was another issue. The two men supported the candidature of the Emperor's son-in-law, Francis Stephen of Lorraine, for the title of King of the Romans. A war would be a splendid way to demonstrate his fitness to rule the Empire.

## Nemirov

The Congress of Nemirov is a subject that delights students of the Eastern Question. They conclude that here lies the germ of the Question – the developing relations of Turkey, Austria and Russia. And is there ever disagreement amongst the scholars over the myriad nuances! These were the talks that, despite the slide to war, were still being pressed.

There are a number of theories why the talks were going forward in the midst of war preparations. The Porte had asked the Maritime Powers to mediate, and their representatives had now arrived; these men would be keen to have a try at promoting peace. Or, the peace party at Vienna still hoped for neutrality (de facto, at any rate) – and Talman still held his coveted mediator's post. Or, the Emperor was still trying to figure out what the Russians intended, and hoped this would be revealed at the talks. Or, the Russians might perform well this year and wring some tasty concessions from the Turk; with a presence at an ongoing peace conference, Vienna could appropriate some of them without delay. Perhaps it was a mix of all these.

The irony, of course is that the talks were conducted while all parties, including the *chief mediator*, were at war. Although the plenipotentiaries were appointed in April 1737, the talks did not open until August, long after both the Russians and the Imperials had launched their offensives – indeed after their offensives had run out of steam!

For the Russians and the Ottomans, already at war, there was no difficulty; talks were always useful. But for Vienna, they were now an embarrassment. They would have liked to drop the idea, but could not. The main culprit appears to have been Talman, who, notwithstanding his letters to Vienna advocating an offensive stance, took it upon himself to give no confirmation of Vienna's hostile intentions. He insisted that the Imperial role remained one of mediation. The Porte appears to have believed him, or to have wanted to believe him, even after it received a letter from the *Hofkriegsrat* indicting the Ottomans for their 'warlike behaviour'. The Grand Vizier confirmed the acceptance of Talman as the official mediator at the congress. Vienna collectively gnashed its teeth – how were they to open a 'just war' now?!

Bartstein frantically concocted a list of 'reasonable demands' that the Ottomans would have to reject, but the chief Russian delegate, Ostermann, refused to present them before the conference opened – they would only weaken his bargaining position. Russia was all in favour of a congress running simultaneously with a military offensive.

In a final attempt to put the Porte in the wrong and so allow the Imperials to declare war 'with honour', the *Hofkriegsrat* set May 1st as the expiration date for negotiations; on that date, the parties had only just settled on a site to hold the talks. Talman suppressed the letter. He did not want the talks broken off. The Russians and Ottomans simply carried on as planned.

Talman's reasoning ran as follows. The joint Imperial-Russian offensive ought to swiftly bring the Porte to its knees. The congress would be able to discuss peace on very favourable terms and there would be no delay – this was the same reason Russia was happy to participate. The House of Habsburg would be exalted in the eyes of Europe. Believing he had the measure of the Ottoman pulse, he ignored Vienna's remonstrations. Talman should simply have been recalled, of course, but this would have meant a loss of face for Vienna.

The Habsburgs declared war on June 6th 1737. Now, any one who wanted to could accuse them of unprovoked aggression. In Vienna, the Privy Conference did not sit down to discuss specific war aims until July 9th, and even then postponed discussion until

after commencing operations! So much for Habsburg-Romanov plans for dismembering the Ottoman Empire. Why did they delay?

Partly, Strategy was the purview of the commander in the field. Partly, they were undecided; Russian intentions were still unclear, and even more so were their capabilities. The Bear had not performed well so far. Also, Vienna was aware that the Porte had no real desire for a war of conquest against the Empire. The Ottomans would only be grabbing bargaining chips that could be exchanged for Vienna's own chips. And, Ottoman armies traditionally did not appear along the Danube much before July – a logistical issue.



*Sabatz (Szabács) Fortress*

The enemy made his plans in the winter. With the upcoming congress, and the Habsburgs' late declaration of war, the Grand Vizier would hesitate before committing his army; even then, his plans would have been laid against Russia, giving Vienna a small window of opportunity in which to seize territory before going over to the defensive. But, the Grand Vizier, evidently not fooled by Talman after all, kept his army in Bulgaria, where it could march either west or east, and waited for the verdict of the conference.

### **Preliminaries**

Political stances were clarified before the congress opened. Russia officially demanded the restoration of the pre-Pruth situation. The Habsburgs reserved their demands, waiting to see what befell during the campaign. The Ottomans indicated that they would be satisfied with the *status quo ante-bellum*. Typically, the Russians increased their demands and played them down in concert with reports from the front. The Imperials tried to appear as moderates against the Bear's insatiable ravaging, but, after successful opening moves in Serbia, on August 1st they demanded a settlement *uti possidetis* (retention of all gains achieved by the time peace was declared), reparations to the tune of 12 million *gulden*, and the extension of a 1718 trade agreement – a curious combination.

As a sideline to their main campaign, there are reports that the Imperials sent men (under command of *Feldmarshallieutenant Graf Franz P. von Wallis*) into Moldavia and Wallachia. There is

not much documentation on these operations, except the complaints of Ostermann. As was normal practice, in the border regions of their empire the Turks occupied the towns and the ethnic inhabitants lived in the countryside; avoiding 'incidents', the Habsburg troops apparently remained in the countryside. But this prevented the Russians from seizing the territories – which was perhaps the real intention of this side offensive.

As a counter, Ostermann proposed giving the Principalities to Poland. In a statement to the Russian Army intended to smooth things over, he said 'we do not want them, we only wish to rid them of the Turkish yoke and leave them as separate principalities, moreover this is not contrary to Imperial interests and is it is very useful...' (quoted in *Habsburgs and Ottomans*, p. 274). Ostermann also indicated his willingness to open side talks with the Porte on the subjects of the Dnieper River fortresses of Kinburun and Oczakov, and of Azov – the war was going poorly at that point – and perhaps sign a separate peace (now that would have been a poke in the Imperial eye).

*[Davies incorrectly names George O. Wallis as commander in Wallachia; he served in Serbia.]*

The Nemirov congress opened on August 16th and ran until late October. The Polish town was only two days from the Ottoman Frontier, and four from the Russian. The Imperial and Ottoman parties installed themselves by the end of May. The Russians disdained to show until July – they wanted to make sure their offensive was on track.

The accounts of the proceedings working up to the conference are amusing and instructive. A month was wasted in preliminaries, mainly questions of precedence. In the end it was settled that the Emperor Charles would have precedence. Besides this weighty question, the Ottomans balked because Charles had been named as the chief mediator on the documents they possessed, which was no longer the case – Talman was representing him, seconded by Ostein (he was present because Ostermann disliked Talman even more than he disliked Ostein). More delay ensued when it was discovered the replacement documents did not have the Sultan's *tughra*, or seal (*now how do you supposed that happened?*). The Russians put in their own spokes (why is our delegate's chair round-backed and not square? ... this Viennese caviar is indigestible... the Turkish delegate smells funny... etc.). That the Mediator was now a belligerent was a fact ignored by the Ottomans, interested at that moment in an early settlement.

On August 12th, while the plenipotentiaries were settling in, word came of the deposition of the Grand Vizier, Silâhdar Mohammed Pasha. Mohammed Pasha and his clique were of the peace party, and his replacement, Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha, favoured war.

### **The Congress**

On August 16th the first session began. It consisted of official speeches and the verifying of credentials, including a sonorous Latin declamation by Ostein that put everyone to sleep. The Imperial and Russian plenipotentiaries faced the Ottomans across a table, the latter reclining on a couch and the former in easy chairs, at equal height. The Imperials took the right hand, as Mediators.

*[Latin was the bureaucratic language of the Holy Roman Empire.]*

On the 18th, the second session opened. Russia began by complaining about Tatar depredations. The Ottomans complained about Cossack inroads. The effectiveness of mediation by the Maritime Powers, rather than the obviously biased Talman, was also discussed, and the Imperials slid into the role of participant.

The third session opened on August 19th. Russia laid her cards on the table, demanding the annulment of all previous treaties (i.e. Pruth), the establishment of a Russian protectorate over the Crimea, the acknowledgement by the Sultan of the Romanov

dynasty as 'imperial' (they were getting tired of being addressed as lapdogs of the Sultan), the exchange of POWs, and freedom of the seas (and land trade routes, but primarily with the Dardanelles in mind), and the maintenance of friendly relations between the Turks and the Poles. The Habsburg delegates were more outraged than the Ottomans. Ostein stormed at his allies until he ran out of steam.

The fact was, that after a great victory at Oczakov on the 13th of July, the Russians had decided to go for broke at the congress. Then, word trickled in that the victory was solely due to a lucky magazine explosion, that Marshal Münnich had nearly thrown in the towel, and that the Russian Army was so battered that it would have to retreat to Kiev, leaving an inadequate garrison in the town. Since everyone, including Ostermann, knew this at the time he made his demands, said demands were deemed particularly insulting.

The Ottomans naturally accepted none of the proposals, reminding the Russians that their demands were not consistent with their declaration of war. They then terminated the session.

The fourth session opened on August 22nd. It was tense. The Imperials were expected to present their own demands. They did so, asking for Bosnia and western Wallachia as compensation for the effort of bullying the Turks. At the time, news from the Danube front was good. They might have asked for the Danube fortress of Vidin, but since the Ottomans still (apparently) held it, Talman and Ostein said nothing. Russia backed down somewhat, only asking for territory up to the Dniester. Disturbingly, the Ottoman delegates made no comment other than that the demands were beyond their purview and would have to be passed to the Grand Vizier. This represented a delay of 40 days – 30 days of travel. They were stalling for time; the Grand Vizier's counteroffensive was gathering steam.

Meanwhile, the Russians opened bilateral discussions with the Turks. This had the effect of splitting the allies' front. The Russians had assumed that the Habsburgs were doing the same, and did not want to be shut out. But the Ottomans were now able to go separately to each party and play one off against the other. They intimated their willingness to sign a separate peace with Russia while at the same time refusing any concessions to the Imperials, against whom the Grand Vizier had committed his army.

On September 4th, new instructions arrived from Vienna; Talman was to offer concessions. It was apparent at the *Hofkriegsrat* that the tide was turning. Specifically, the fortress of Vidin was to be razed if in Ottoman hands, or held by the Imperials otherwise (plus the lands as far as the Lom River – i.e. a strip running half the length of Bulgaria – were to be demilitarised). Nish and all the lands halfway to Sophia were to be annexed outright (this would establish the Habsburgs on the watershed), the border of Wallachia was to be set at the Dimbovitsa River, and the Ottomans, in exchange for the return of all other Imperial gains, were to cede the western Bosnian fortresses of Novi and Bihac to Croatia. The question of reparations was dropped.

*[In 1718 Prince Eugene had rejected asking for Vidin and Nish, saying they were too difficult to support logistically.]*

Of course the news from the Balkans just got worse, and the Ottomans were as well informed as Vienna, so nothing came of this. The Russo-Ottoman discussions did continue, but it became apparent that St. Petersburg would not get any Ottoman fortresses without fighting for them. They now controlled Oczakov, but Talman, questing for peace, suggested they abandon and raze it. The Russians refused.

The Imperials now swung against their ally. They began by producing a letter from the French chief minister, Cardinal Fleury, intimating that too much Russian expansion would be harmful to

Europe, and particularly to the Empire. They then expressed shock and surprise that the Russians had not consulted them about Moldavia and Wallachia before the congress; they also said the Russian goals were unrealistic, and in fact it might be better for all concerned if the Ottomans continued to act as protectors to the Principalities. In all this, the Imperials hoped to salvage their position by friendly overtures to the Porte. They fell between the two stools instead.

At this point the Sultan's reply arrived. It was a demand for the restoration of Oczakov, Kinburun, and the razing of Azov. Offensive in tone, the message did not elicit a favourable response. In high dudgeon the Ottoman representatives then walked out. That was on October 14th. The Ottomans left Nemirov on the 15th (significantly, their servants had already dispatched their baggage before the messenger from Istanbul arrived).

*[Some accounts have the Ottomans leaving on the 21st, after both they and the Russians issued separate protests on the 18th.]*

Nemirov is a minor town in what was the Polish Ukraine (Podolia – at that time extending nearly to the Black Sea). Set in a fruitful region, it was a key Polish fortification and army base. The first irony was that none of the powers present were permitted to be in Polish territory. Another irony lies in the fact that the nobleman who owned the town was the most outspoken of the anti-Russian faction in Poland. The final irony lies in its name. Nemirov means 'no peace'.

## 1737 – The Sword of Ali

### Balkan Plans

While the participants at the congress talked, other men fought. Before commencing operations in the Balkans, a number of operational plans had been examined. Talman's was the most aggressive, proposing an advance up to a line running from Salonika to the Black Sea. Bartstein's grand plan, previously mentioned, was a possibility, but effectively notional, although it unfortunately suggested to the Russians that an offensive in the Ukraine would be supported by an Imperial advance into Wallachia. Descending from the airy realms, the Army suggested the capture of Vidin and Nish in company with an invasion of Bosnia.

By taking Vidin, the Danube would be blocked, Wallachia above the Olt (Little Wallachia) would be relatively safe from Ottoman incursions, and its possession would probably deter the Russians from attempting to take the rest of Wallachia. By taking Nish, the only practical routes over the hills from Sophia or from Skopje would likewise be stopped up. Bosnia would be isolated, defended solely by local forces.

Expecting that this strategically threatening offensive would turn the Empire into the Porte's primary target, the Imperials requested that Russia concentrate on taking the fortress of Khotin, on the upper Dniester – gateway to Moldavia. But unbeknownst to Vienna at the time, Russia's target for 1737 had already been set: the fortress of Oczakov. This lay at the mouth of the Dnieper; supporting it on a peninsula to the south was its twin, Kinburun. Münnich and Ostermann had formulated their plans without reference to their ally.

Though learning of the true state of things as early as January of 1737, the Imperials were forced to continue their plans without change. Ostermann blandly assured Ostein that by attacking Oczakov the Ottoman forces in Persia would be prevented from moving to Europe, and that the Grand Vizier would make every effort to retake the fortress, ignoring the Balkan Front. Vienna remained unconvinced. To forestall further argument, Marshal Münnich left the Russian capital for the Ukraine in February.

Stuck with a bad hand, during April and May Emperor Charles contracted for money and men with the member states of the Empire, and in June, a manifesto was published, portraying the 'intervention on behalf of a loyal and permanent ally' as a Crusade against the 'disastrous plans of the infidels', on the model of the Sacred League of earlier times. Europe was not fooled by claims of Turkish 'aggression', but the right things had been said. There was even a rapprochement with France over the Polish settlement. The Papacy was especially helpful with finances, levying a five-year tax on Church lands in Austria. Enthusiastic support was given by the *Erblände* (Hereditary Lands). The Imperial Diet contributed 3 million *gulden*. A few of the minor German states sent contingents, and of course, their rulers in many cases owned 'Austrian' regiments, but the contributions were mostly financial.

The support of the Imperial Diet allowed the use of non-Habsburg imperial troops – the *Reichsarmee* – and encouraged the loan of personal forces belonging to some of the larger states – specifically Saxony and Bavaria. Bavaria, with her Elector, Karl Albrecht (Charles Albert – 1726-1745), living in hopes of becoming King of the Romans, stood out when told that his rival, Francis Stephen, would be the nominal commander. Prussia, another important ally, did not help at all. The Emperor had not made enough concessions, and she was beginning to see herself as a rival rather than a supporter. The new King of Poland could not very well join either – his regime had been guaranteed by the Porte through a personal visit to Warsaw by one Mustafa Effendi. Fortunately, August III was also Elector of Saxony, and in this capacity he contributed 15,000 men. Venice, the Christian player in the Levant, was still steamed over the loss of the Morea and refused aid.

*[Given that Venice, despite being an off-and-on ally and virtually bankrolling the dynasty, repeatedly tried to incite other nations to attack the Habsburgs and deliberately set about to ruin Habsburg trade in the Mediterranean, this seems to be a case of the pot calling the kettle black.]*

*[Of the Saxons, 6,000 were really Hessians. It is not clear if August merely contributed money that was used to buy the Hessians, or if he contracted them himself. What is clear is that they did not appear in the Balkans. Perhaps he was paid to hire them and pocketed the money – 'you wanted me to hire mercenaries? I'm sorry, I thought it was a bribe.']*

In 1737, the Ottoman position in the Balkans was very weak. The Rumelian (European) field army was, as noted earlier, poised to move west or east, but there were not enough men to do both at once. The Ukraine would have to be defended by the Tatars, aided by garrison troops. Turkish rule in Serbia was limited mainly to the towns; the countryside was ethnically Serbian, and Christian. Montenegro, also, though its tribesmen were not capable of offensive action, was, as a Serb-dominated and free duchy, hostile to the Turks. Bulgaria (*Silistre*) and Wallachia were relatively safe. The fortress of Vidin was the key to this region, and it was strongly garrisoned. Otherwise, only in Muslim Bosnia was there a strong military presence, mostly militia, but tough and motivated – some 21,000 men. Fortunately they were led by a dynamic individual, a Bosnian ex-Grand Vizier named Hekimoghlu Ali Pasha.

### Protestants and Catholics

Leaving Vienna on May 30th, the new Imperial commander-in-chief and his staff arrived at Belgrade on June 11th. His selection had been the subject of intense debate. With Eugene dead, the second-rankers were clamouring for notice. The man chosen to wear the great man's mantle was *Feldmarschal Reichsgraf Friederich Heinrich von Seckendorff* (1673-1763). He was 63 years old, and would live to be 90. A devoted student of Eugene, he was 'a small man, devoid of grace or charm, but intelligent, tough, and endowed with an immense capacity for work'. Recently back from serving as ambassador to Berlin, and with a wide experience of war, he was easily the best pick. But he had

the lesser fault of an acerbic wit and the greater fault of being unwilling to take counsel.

Seckendorff's appointment was bound to cause ill will. Dubbed the leader of 'the Protestant Triumvirate', he opposed the appointment of the Grand Duke Francis Stephen to supreme command. Indeed, he had been appointed the Grand Duke's *adlatus*, or 'tutor', but he was so vocal in his opposition that the Emperor had bowed to his will (and this when one of Charles' primary goals was to have Francis win a victory). The Grand Duke would accompany the army anyway, in a vain attempt to mediate between opposing cliques (and to report on them).

Because of the bad feeling among the generals, the Emperor ordered Seckendorff to follow the *Hofkriegsrat's* campaign plan to the letter, and to employ his council of war frequently. Although decision-making by consensus was common in Imperial armies, this did not sit well with the commander-in-chief, given his major fault. The first thing Seckendorff did when he arrived on the ground was to throw out the High Command's plan – mentally, that is.

For subordinates, Seckendorff requested the Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen to command the subsidiary Bosnian offensive. He was a friend and supporter of the field marshal, and one of those who favoured the Bavarian Succession. Seckendorff also requested the services of a General Diemar as cavalry commander, and General Schmettau for the infantry. These appointments were only partially approved. In place of Diemar, the field marshal got *General der Cavallerie Graf von Khevenhüller*, a talented general, but a staunch supporter of Francis Stephen, and, with *Johann Graf von Pálffy* (erstwhile commander-in-chief), the leader of 'the Catholic Party'. *Graf von Philippi*, another of that party, was made Chief of Staff. Diemar served in a lesser capacity.

*[The two parties were divided less by religion, and more by service rivalry (for the mantle of Prince Eugene), focused in the persons of Francis Stephen and the Bavarian Elector as competing candidates for King of the Romans. This rancorous split was critical to the Army's repeated failures during the war.]*

Schmettau later libelled Seckendorff, who was his patron, by claiming in his memoirs that the Grand Duke had been officially appointed commander-in-chief, but that the field marshal had ignored him. The reason he made this statement is unclear. There are vague suggestions that he was a supporter of the Grand Duke, and yet he was a vehement critic of Khevenhüller, the Grand Duke's man. Perhaps he and his patron had a falling out. Perhaps he has been misinterpreted. By that time, Seckendorff had gone into Bavarian service. Saxe-Hildburghausen, though an unashamed supporter of Seckendorff, remained a favourite of the Emperor.

Both Khevenhüller and Philippi, though excellent choices in regards talent, were personal enemies of the commander-in-chief. Schmettau, still the generalissimo's man, and Khevenhüller developed their own personal feud to such a pitch that operations were hampered; they refused to share the same camps or march routes. Behind the scenes, the Grand Duke, who was supposed to 'bring the team together', poured oil on the fire, though in Schmettau's memoirs, he was an 'unwitting innocent'.

As a postscript, a General Wurmbrand was tacked onto the 'Orbat' at the last minute. A Protestant, lacking support in either party, he was promptly arrested for insubordination (presumably he refused to drink the right man's health) and his command dispersed among the other generals. He soon died of malaria – another bane of the army in this war.

## Preparations

On paper, in 1737 Seckendorff commanded 53,000 foot and 44,000 horse. Empire-wide, in 1736 the army consisted of 90,929 infantry and 40,084 cavalry. After subtracting about 30,000 for Italy and 10,000 for Belgium, this leaves about 90,000 for Seckendorff, which is what most sources list for his command.

Naturally, detailed figures vary. For example, 30,000 foot and 15,000 horse are mentioned as being assembled at Belgrade alone, while 40,000 Imperial troops are mentioned in Ottoman sources for the Bosnian campaign. However, according to Imperial records, Saxe-Hildeburghausen's Bosnian Corps had only 17-18,000 men (plus border troops), though it was later reinforced.



**Friedrich Heinrich Graf von Seckendorff (1673-1763)**

Born 5th July 1673 in Franconian Königsberg, to an official of the Saxe-Gotha court. Served first under William of Orange in 1693; in 1694 made cornet of a Gotha cavalry regiment in Austrian pay. Joined the Venetian infantry for a time and served under the Margrave of Ansbach in 1697. In 1698 his regiment, the Ansbach Dragoons, was transferred into Imperial service and fought under Prince Eugene against the Turks. Married in 1699, he returned to Ansbach as a court officer.

For the War of the Spanish Succession he served with the Dutch as lieutenant colonel of another Ansbach regiment that was taken into their service. Fought at Ramillies and Oudenarde, and participated in the sieges of Lille and Ryssel (where he was severely wounded). Led the Ansbach Dragoons in a charge at Höchstädt (Blenheim) that took 16 enemy standards. Finding promotion slow, he joined the Saxon-Polish Army as a *generalmajor* and fought as a volunteer at the siege of Tournai and at Malplaquet. Envoy for Poland at the peace deliberations of Utrecht in

1713; in the same year he assisted in the repression of a rebellion in Poland.

In 1715 he was made a Saxon Lieutenant General and commanded against Charles XII of Sweden, at the siege of Stralsund. In 1717 he was made an Imperial *feldmarshallieutenant* (essentially the same rank but with greater prestige) under Prince Eugene, participating at the siege of Belgrade. In 1718 and 1719 he fought in Sicily in the War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718-1720). Made a Count of the Empire in 1719, *Feldzugmeister* in 1721. In 1726 he was promoted to *General der Cavallerie* of the Holy Roman Empire and sent to Berlin as Imperial envoy. His greatest successes diplomatically were the strategic marriage of Crown Prince Friedrich (Frederick the Great) to Princess Elisabeth of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and obtaining the acknowledgement of the Pragmatic Sanction by several courts. Thomas Carlyle's biography of Frederick the Great portrays him as a calculating intriguer bent on serving the Emperor's interests at any cost.

In 1734 he went back to military affairs, becoming Governor of Mainz. He did as well as he could in the War of the Polish Succession, leading 30,000 men against the French at Klausen (20th October 1735). The campaign was a positional one, and his personal enemy, the Prussian Alte Dessauer, thwarted him in achieving any decisive gains. Later in the war he went to Hungary as an Army inspector, which gained him many enemies in the service.

He won Eugene's recommendation as his replacement for the 1737-39 war, with promotion (1737) to *Generalfeldmarshal*. After some initial successes in 1737, he was forced to go on the defensive. His enemies at Court ensured his downfall. Court-martialled and imprisoned in the Fortress of Graz, he was released on the death of Charles VI. When denied his arrears of pay, he resigned all Imperial offices and possessions and entered Bavarian service as a *Feldmarshal*, fighting against Austria in the War of the Austrian Succession. He was the only one of the Bavarian generals able to stand up to and defeat the Imperial armies sent against them, but was unable to hold on alone. He retired from active service in 1744.

In 1745 he assisted in the peace negotiations between Bavaria and Austria (the nominal Emperor Charles Albert VII of Bavaria having died) and was reconciled to the Imperial Court. Confirmed in his possessions by the new emperor, his former enemy Francis Stephen, he lived on his estates until 1758, when, during the Seven Years War, he was captured by Prussian hussars and entertained in the dungeon of Magdeburg for five months as the guest of another personal enemy – Frederick the Great. He died at his estate on November 23rd, 1763.

The best estimate of real numbers is that Seckendorff had roughly 57,000 men (35,000 foot and 21,679 horse), in the Balkan Theatre, if one includes garrisons and the active component of the local border troops. It is unclear if Allied contingents are included in this figure, but probably not. Depending on one's source, the units were either exhausted, starved, wasted by fever, or 'in reasonable shape'. Infantry regiments, originally 4 battalions each, were reduced to 3 battalions across the board as part of an ongoing reformation of the Army. Yet Seckendorff is said have felt he was good for one campaigning season, at least.

[For 1736 there were in Hungary (i.e. from Croatia to Transylvania) 29,048 infantry, 25,503 cavalry, 10,000 border militia, and 80 guns.]

[Davies' numbers quoted earlier include Allied troops. His artillery count appears to include all pieces, not just those in the mobile train.]

Against this can be placed Seckendorff's initial report to the Emperor, when, after complaining that the generals and contractors have appropriated the funds and supplies set aside for the offensive (actually the *Hofkriegsrat* and *Hofkammer*, or Treasury, disputed who had the right to disburse funds), he says,

'I cannot, consistently with my duty to God and the emperor, conceal the miserable condition of the barracks and hospitals. The troops, crowded together without sufficient bedding to cover them, are a prey to innumerable disorders, and are exposed to the rain, and other inclemencies of the weather, as well as from the dilapidated state of the caserns, the roofs of which are in a perpetual danger of being overthrown by the wind. All

the frontier fortresses, and even Belgrade, are incapable of the smallest resistance, as well from the dilapidated state of the fortifications as from a total want of artillery, ammunition, and other requisites. The naval armament is in a state of irreparable disorder. Some companies of my regiment of Belgrade are thrust into holes where a man would not put even his favorite hounds; and I cannot see the situation of these miserable and half-starved wretches without tears. These melancholy circumstances portend the loss of these fine kingdoms with the same rapidity as that of the States of Italy'. Quoted in Abbott's *Austria* (1877), p. 401.

The Emperor is said to have responded by instituting immediate reforms, which cannot possibly have taken effect in time.



*Nish Fortress*

Most sources list large numbers of frontier troops, but Seckendorff did not trust them, because they had mutinied in 1735 (over attempts to convert them to Catholicism). Excepted were the 4,500 Serbians (in 10 companies), mainly mounted infantry, obtainable in that province, and those troops of Croatia and Slavonia who had a semi-regular status. Even they had a limited use in the war outside their own territory, and Saxe-Hildeburghausen is the only commander who appears to have used them offensively, and then only in the 1737 Bosnian campaign, when 4 regiments were involved.

In addition, a number of Empire contingents were available. There were the 9,000 Saxons mentioned earlier, with 8 field guns. But they did not arrive until the campaign was well underway. They were not *Reichsarmee* troops, but elements of the Saxon Army. Also of note were 2 Wolfenbüttel regiments, one fully formed and the other organised as 'auxiliaries'; these regiments later joined the Austrian Line as Alt and Jung Wolfenbüttel. Other contingents, like the 6,000 Hessians paid for by Saxony, were presumably used to bolster the defence of other theatres.

*[Alt Wolfenbüttel was organised like an Austrian line regiment, and may already have been on that establishment; Jung Wolfenbüttel had a different organisation, was listed as 'auxiliaries', and so probably was not. A sample of the difficulties in determining which units were Imperial and which were Austrian, in the pre-Theresian period.]*

## The War Begins

Vienna's original plan was for four separate corps, three Austrian and one Saxon, to operate along the whole frontier from Croatia to Transylvania. Perhaps because the Saxons did not arrive until after the campaign was well underway (General Sulkowsky, by the way, not Saxe-Hildeburghausen, was their commander) the plan had to be altered so that Saxe-Hildeburghausen commanded the troops facing Bosnia. Seckendorff, assisted by generals Schmettau, Khevenhüller, and Philippi, dealt with Serbia, and *Feldmarshallieutenant Graf Franz P. von Wallis* (1677-1737 – he died of malaria) commanded the Transylvanian forces.

After realising that most of his men were not yet assembled, Seckendorff made July 12th the kick-off date. This was an unforeseen delay, and had two important consequences. First, of course, it left less time to accomplish the mission. Second, because of that, Seckendorff had to make a compromise. The original plan called for the taking of Vidin and then a shifting of forces south to take Nish. The former lay downstream from the restrictive hilly zone known as the Iron Gate that separated the Banat and the Pannonian plains from Wallachia. By holding this fortress, and that of Orsova upstream, the Iron Gate would be locked and the Ottomans prevented from advancing up the Danube. Vidin was also the tougher and more important target. Furthermore, it lay in a region notorious for malaria, and ought to be taken before the season became advanced (General Schmettau wrote with grave understatement, 'toward the end of July, the bad air, which dominates the country, reduces greatly the number of combatants'). Now, however, Nish became the primary target.

Nish blocked the possible Ottoman landward lines of advance by way of the mountain passes from either Skopje or Sophia. Once Nish was taken, Bosnia would be virtually isolated, and ripe for conquest – a suitable prize for all the Empire's hard work, and a thorn in the side that should be removed for reasons of safety.

Here, there is controversy. Some say that Seckendorff had no choice, others that he was deliberately flouting the orders he had been given. The reality is that he changed the plan because the Danube waters rose as the season advanced; having started late, heavy flooding now made operations against Vidin impractical. Nevertheless, by the Emperor's desire, Seckendorff should have gone ahead as planned. But since doing so appeared foolish, he was able to vent his ire against his instructions in a way that made sense militarily. It was the way that he did it that was offensive. Vienna was not informed until a countermanding order would have caused more problems than it solved.

June 14th had been the last time the Privy Conference discussed going to war. The news from Belgrade was not good, and there was no word from the Russians. However, the button had been pushed and it was too late to turn back (*at least they were not slaves to a railway timetable*). To the questions of low morale, malaria, and rising waters, the Privy Conference replied that the troops would be more likely to suffer all three if they remained in camp. Seckendorff should do *something*.

On July 12th the Imperial armies were set in motion. On the 13th, Oczakov fell to the Russians. On the 14th a solemn procession took place in Vienna, beginning with the ringing of the *Türkenglocken* for prayers against the Infidel, signifying a Holy War, and culminating in the reading of the War Manifesto at St. Stephen's. This ratified the war in the eyes of the populace and all Europe. On the very same day, Seckendorff's advance guard arrived before Nish and demanded a surrender from the startled Turkish commandant. Seckendorff's modifications to the original plan appeared brilliant.

*[At first, an advance from Belgrade to Nish seems formidable, until one remembers that the Habsburgs already controlled northern Serbia and the population in the countryside was supportive (ironically, not always the case for those Serbs actually under Imperial administration!), if rather*

*thin (the 4,500 Serbians in the militia constituted most of the able-bodied manpower of the province). Thus a march to Nish would only require a few days, despite the atrocious roads. Also, the Morava River was navigable as far as Nish, so that heavy equipment could be shifted quickly.]*

### Initial Moves

As noted, Seckendorff had divided his forces into three areas of operations: Serbia, Bosnia, and Transylvania. Transylvania was an important, though secondary front. The kingdom needed policing at the best of times; there was also the threat of a Russian probe into Moldavia that could be aided or thwarted, depending on circumstances. Unlikely, but feared, was an Ottoman thrust into the kingdom. On the other hand, if the zone remained quiet, forces from Transylvania could be sent raiding into Wallachia. Indeed, units were soon operating out of Craiova, capital of Little Wallachia, and a cavalry squadron was probing toward Bucharest. Arghesh, Cimpina, Cimpulung, Tirgovishte and several other places north of Bucharest were soon occupied. But Franz Wallis lacked the resources for major operations. As of August 8th in Wallachia he had only 1,581 regular foot, 1,182 regular horse (1,208 horses), and 1,445 militia (mostly mounted).

Seckendorff himself commanded from Belgrade, entrusting the Serbian corps to *Feldmarshal Graf* Georg O. von Wallis and *Feldzugmeister* Samuel Schmettau, who were by now besieging Nish. The commandant had been willing to surrender, but asked for 10 days grace to seek word from Istanbul. Denied this, he shut himself up in the fortress until the Imperial main body appeared, at which, with no relief in sight, he surrendered with honours of war. Unfortunately, the Grand Vizier took a dim view and had him beheaded.

*[Belgrade was not 'miles from the front'. The Sava was navigable well beyond Zagreb, and the Morava, whose confluence was not that far down the Danube, was navigable as far as Nish. Transylvania could be contacted via the Maros upstream on the Danube. All these lines were much quicker than any overland route. And it was only about 7 days to Vienna. Seckendorff sat at Belgrade like a spider in a web.]*

Nish surrendered on July 23rd. Picquets occupied Mustafa-Pasha (Bela) Palanka, Pirot, and Caribrod, all on the road to Sophia – Caribrod indeed is halfway there. Francis Stephen arrived at Nish on the 28th, to accept the keys of the fortress in a propaganda coup.

The worse problem the Imperials faced was an outbreak of malaria among the troops. That particular species of carrier does not normally chase after humans, but thanks to the feuds of the commanders, the infantry camped separately from the cavalry and got the disease. Debilitating with treatment, and lethal without it, malaria has one exceptionally nasty feature. Once you have it, and live, you are going to have it again. It would take its toll on the Army throughout the war.

Meanwhile, a detached column, composed of 1,000 Serbian mounted irregulars and an hussar regiment, under a Colonel Lentulus, ran down to Pech and Kosovo on a recruiting drive that netted a further 2,000 ethnic Serbs from Montenegro. They were officially designated the bodyguard of the Patriarch of Pech, who promised to raise his flock in exchange for being given the Orthodox Metropolitan see of Belgrade. By the end of July, Lentulus had taken Ohrid, Mitrovica, Prishtina, and Novi Pazar.

Novi Pazar was a key installation, lying in southeastern Bosnia. The fortress was occupied by a small garrison of 503 men (before drafts were taken for the Russian Front) in 5 infantry and 2 cavalry companies, 1 artillery, 1 garrison artillery, and 1 volunteer company (this last larger than the others, typical of such units). Their equipment included 7 brass cannon and 360 smaller pieces, but only 2,300 lbs of black powder. Fortunately for Lentulus' men, the garrison had abandoned the place.

This was the high point of operations in Serbia. By August, Lentulus had had to send his hussars away to chase bandits in Hungary. Their replacements, a half-regiment of the Württemberg Dragoons (500 men), were cut up in an ambush by local forces. Seckendorff was forced to send an additional 1,000 foot and 1,000 horse (the Patriarch was a valuable man) but these ran out of food and water and had to retreat. In August, Lentulus abandoned Novi Pazar and conveyed the Patriarch to Belgrade.

*[The Christian population of the Ottoman Balkans rightly regarded overt support for the Habsburgs as too dangerous. Seckendorff also felt that he lacked the infrastructure to support them. And then there were Vienna's limited war aims. The Emperor made periodic calls to arms for propaganda purposes, but no real attempt was made to rouse the people.]*

### Bosna

Affairs in Bosnia did not go so well. Theoretically, the *eyâlet* of *Bosna* should have presented few difficulties. It was isolated from Istanbul and many of the best provincial troops had ridden off to Moldavia the year before. Caught in the destruction wrought by the explosion of a fortress magazine, they would not be returning. But the hill-folk were tough fighters. Bosnia had *chosen* to become Muslim, whereas Croatia and Serbia had not. Hence, the populace supported the local aristocracy. And at just the right time, there had appeared a man in the province who was to galvanise the defence – Hekimoghlu Ali Pasha.

Ali Pasha was a former Grand Vizier, exiled to the governorship of Candia to prevent a faction forming around him at Istanbul. In May of 1736 he had been appointed governor of Bosnia. The former governor, Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha, was to be Grand Vizier when war broke out – another bonus for the defenders of the province. War was looming on the northern border, and to the south, the Montenegrin bandit kingdom appeared to be in communication with the Habsburgs. In Bosnia itself, soldiers had also taken to banditry because their pay was in arrears. Ali Pasha had been sent in as the right man to handle this delicate situation.

Abdullah Pasha's records indicate the presence of 18,725 men garrisoning the various fortifications, plus 330 'special soldiers' at the fortress of Izvornik and a further 1,173 in Herzogovina. When the governor's bodyguard and a few companies of janissaries were added, this came to 20,939 men. Ali Pasha's orders were to wage *jihad* and conduct frontier raids on the Infidel; more to the point, he was told to hang on as best he could, as he was unlikely to be reinforced for some time. Last minute supplies and funds were sent up by ship to Dubrovnik and packed in overland as the Imperials began their invasion.

### Saxe-Hilburghausen's Goals

For Saxe-Hilburghausen, the key objectives were Banja Luka in the Vrbas Valley, Novi to the west of it, Bihac in the Southwest, and the capital, Travnik. Sarajevo (then called Bosna Serai) and several other towns in the interior would also have to be occupied later on. Novi does not appear to have been a direct target. It would have been cut off by the seizure of Banja Luka. Another important target, but a hard nut, was the fortress of Izvornik (Zvornik) on the Drina River – this lay on the eastern boundary of Bosnia at a vital crossroads.

The main thrust was to be from Gradiska, down the Vrbas River to Banja Luka. Crossing the Sava was not an issue, as the Imperials already held the south bank, including a smaller fort, also called Gradiska, which had been the Ottomans' main defence of the Vrbas Valley in the previous generation. After taking Banja Luka it would be an easy matter to take the capital at Travnik.

There are hazy accounts of an assault, or planned assault, against Izvornik in the northeast corner of Bosnia; this post would certainly have to be taken, as it was a district capital, but it was heavily defended and Saxe-Hilburghausen probably did not have the resources to attempt Banja Luka and Izvornik

simultaneously. Some of Seckendorff's forces were expected to take Novi Pazar (as happened) followed by Bosna Serai.

If all went well, the Habsburgs would then be able to go over to the defensive and hold until the Russians made peace with the Ottomans. All this presupposed that the Balkans remained the *secondary* theatre.



**Frederick Joseph, Prinz von Sachsen-Hilburghausen (1702-1787 or 1703-1788).**

Born Erbach, October 5th 1702(03). Third son of the Protestant Duke of Saxe-Hilburghausen and Sophie of Waldeck. After seeing Europe in an aristocratic version of a *Wanderjahr* he joined the Imperial Army at age 16. By 1719 he was a Staff Captain in IR Seckendorff, fighting in the War of the Quadruple Alliance (1717-1720) in Sicily. Conversion to Catholicism in 1728 put him on the Army fast track. In 1729 he made Lieutenant Colonel, and in 1730 Colonel of Pálffy's Regiment. Bought IR Sachsen-Hilburghausen (later IR No. 8) in 1732.

Served in northern Italy in the War of the Polish Succession, but did not see much action. Promoted to *Feldmarshallieutenant* in 1735 and *Feldzugmeister* (General of Infantry) in 1736 (September 25th). Made *Feldmarshal* June 11th 1737. During the war of 1737-39 he commanded the Bosnian Corps (1737) but failed to take the fortress of Banja Luka and was forced to retreat. His corps was broken up. However, he served with distinction for the remainder of the war in a secondary capacity, saving the day at Kornia (1738) and Grocka (1739), in the first case by a cavalry charge and in the second by his deployment of reserves; in both instances he first managed to rally shaken formations.

Post-war he became Governor of Komorn (Komárom) in Hungary. Busied with the formation of the Hungarian regiments raised in the emergency of 1741 (War of the Austrian Succession). 1743 appointed High Military Director and General Commander of Inner Austria, Karlstadt, and Warasdein (the latter two being Military Border commands). Held these posts until relieved by his own request in 1749. When the Seven Years War broke out, he was made Commander of the Imperial Army (spring 1757), but shared the defeat of Rossbach with the French (5th November 1757) and retired from active military affairs in shame. Shortly before his death he was appointed Field Marshal of the Imperial Army (9th November 1785).

The prince always maintained close ties with the Habsburg family, and was a favourite of Emperor Charles VI, who made him a Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1739. In 1741 he stood in for the King of Poland as godfather for Maria Theresa's new son, the future Emperor Joseph.

At one point an aide de camp and protégé of Prince Eugene, in 1738 he married Eugene's heir, the 55-year-old Princess Victoria of Savoy, thereby acquiring a vast fortune. (The marriage was unhappy and they separated in 1752.) The prince had no trouble disposing of the money, and in fact narrowly avoided bankruptcy. His relatives were no better and the Emperor Joseph was forced to take over the Duchy of Saxe-Hilburghausen, appointing the prince as his manager (1769). He also acted as prince regent for the incumbent duke and his siblings, who were incapable.

### Troop Strengths

The Bosnian campaign is a handy illustration of the dangers of bean counting. Saxe-Hilburghausen deployed his men in detached columns along the frontier. Some sources say he had 40-50,000 while others say he had 17-18,000. Both may be accurate figures if one accepts 40,000 along the whole frontier, with 18,000 in the main column. Both sets of numbers were taken from official Court records, however, and should be seen as paper strengths.

From the Ottoman side, a contemporary Bosnian historian recorded 90,000 Austrians and 20,000 Hungarians at Gradiska; 2 battalions northwest of Bihac; 20,000 Austrians plus 15,000 and 'Likas' (Licanner Pandours) to the southwest of it; 15,000 Austrians and Serbs attacking Zvornik; a small detachment from Nish moving against Yeni Pazar. For contrast, the numbers collated by Ottoman Court historians are: 40,000 mixed Austrians attacking Banja Luka plus 10,000 against Cetin, 18,000 against Büzin, 10,000 against Ostrovica. No mention is made of Zvornik or Yeni Pazar, but a fictional attack on another location is mentioned.

According to Brown's *Türkenkrieg*, which has detailed strength returns, at Banja Luka on July 30th, there were 11,912 infantry (including 4,909 'Croats') and 4,345 cavalry, for a total of 16,257 men. After the retreat from Banja Luka in August, he had 8,348 regular foot, 4,998 Croats (making 13,346 foot in all) and 6,071 horse (including 146 mounted Croats), for a total of 19,417. Although the corps took high battle losses, it was reinforced; hence the higher final totals.

With regard to the various moves along the frontier, from the fact that the above numbers include nearly the whole of the regular forces allotted to this front, save for a handful of battalions on line of communications duties in the Adriatic littoral, it would seem that the large numbers listed by the Bosnian authorities were at best frontier forces engaged in probing and demonstration activities, and at the worst, spurious. It is significant that (as will be seen) the operations around the western end of Bosnia started earlier than the main thrust.

Once the numbers have been settled, one can see at a glance why the Bosnians won. They had a concentrated force operating on interior lines against a scattered force that was only slightly stronger in raw numbers.

### The Execution

In June of 1737, the *beylerbeyi* of Bosnia, Hekimoghlu Ali Pasha, called a council of Bosnian notables and Ottoman officials at Travnik. Ali Pasha had problems. He faced a determined Imperial offensive with depleted forces; 7,000 of his best troops, including most of the *sipahi* heavy cavalry and 10% of the militia, had been sent to the Russian Front in 1736. At the time, Ali Pasha had tried to prevent the move, and lost direct authority over those troops in consequence. He now had about 21,000 militia and volunteers, many of them mounted, scattered across the province.

The meeting at Travnik was thus less a council of war and more a reorganisation of the defences. Those forces already on the frontier were alerted, and part-time reservists were called up. At Travnik, a central reserve was swiftly mustered out of the able-bodied population. Ali Pasha sent what aid he could to the garrisons, including all of his janissaries (about 140) to Izvornik under one Ahmed Pasha. Ali Pasha was aided by the fact that the first two weeks of war were relatively quiet.

*[There is some confusion of dates here. Seckendorff did not launch his attack on Serbia until July 12th. Saxe-Hildeburghausen is, in most sources, made to wait until after the securing of Nish at the end of the month before launching his own offensive. However, at least one source makes him start on June 29th. The solution is perhaps a substitution of 'June' for 'July', as Nish was formally handed over on the 28th of July. But it is fairly certain that the siege of Banja Luka was begun on the 27th or 28th of July, and that it took about 2 weeks for the troops to advance and prepare for siege operations, placing Saxe-Hildeburghausen's start time on a par with Seckendorff's.]*

On July 17th an Imperial thrust was made in the west of the province. Bihac, located on an island in the Una River, was beyond the capabilities of the Imperials, and was to have been bypassed by columns cutting through the hills north and south of it. This would permit a blockade. However, the necessary passes were all defended by provincial forces based on *palankas* (Fort Apache'-style posts like those of the American West) at Buzin and Cetin to the north, and at Ostrovica to the south.

The *palankas* were lightly garrisoned. Cetin had one large brass cannon and another small one, plus one small cannon at each corner tower; there was an additional field gun. The fort only held enough ammunition for a light engagement. Buzin only had two large brass cannon, one small one, and a field gun. Cetin's garrison consisted of 421 men, in 4 infantry, 11 cavalry, 4 light infantry, 1 artillery, and 4 garrison artillery companies. Buzin only had 213 men, in 1 infantry, 1 cavalry, 1 light infantry, 1 artillery, and 2 garrison artillery companies. These were not even concentrated in the fort, but were scattered throughout the local area. As one can gather from the numbers, frontier garrison companies were very small, basically administrative formations. However, the forts could rely on the presence of 2,300 militiamen only a day's ride to the south.

This is why an Imperial attack was to be made at Ostrovica. This fort was even weaker. It had no tower, only one brass cannon, a mortar, and a field gun, with about 220 infantry in the fort. But again, some 1,200 militia were scattered about the region in border posts.

The moves against Bihac were led by General Groff. First, artillery was emplaced facing Ostrovica and a siege begun. Appealing for aid, the garrison commander received 5,000 militia and volunteers drawn from the surrounding districts and commanded by a pair of retired officers. This force was engaged by the Imperials, who were routed on the 22nd of July, reputedly losing 600 men (if they were local border troops, it is highly likely that they deserted). Ostrovica was saved. North of Bihac, the Imperial forces facing Cetin and Buzin were pinned down. Given that they never did do anything more, it would seem that the entire operation was a diversion.

### Banja Luka

Banja Luka was a substantial fortress lying on the west bank of the Vrbas. Two tributaries of this river – the Vranja and the Rudnichka – ran in an arc across the northern approaches to the town. The best approaches for any relieving force lay to the south, on the western bank, where there was a rudimentary road net. The Imperials would approach from the north, also on the western bank.

The fortress had seven outer towers and a central donjon. The towers contained 16 large brass cannon and 3 large iron cannon,

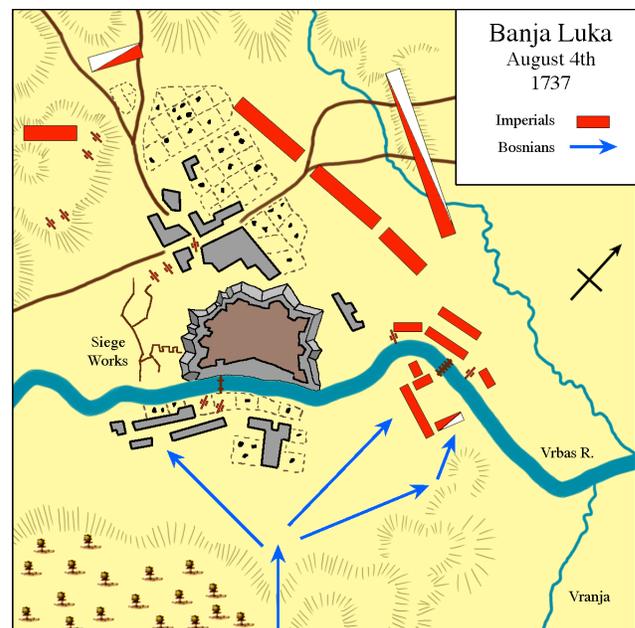
mounted on carriages. There were also 314 small cannon, 112 large mortars and 5,500 tower guns (swivel guns). The armoury held 16,880 lbs of black powder, 75,348 lbs of lead shot, and 10,836 lbs of lead ingots. The fortress had one very useful feature. There was a bridge across the Vrbas that ran straight into the citadel.

The formal garrison consisted of 1,105 men in 4 infantry companies, 2 of light infantry, 9 of cavalry, and 1 of garrison artillery. Outlying works such as the post of Gradiska, farther downstream, held 437 men. The commandant was one Mehmet Agha. His cavalry commander (with 750 horse) was Mustapha Agha. They were both local men, as were their troops. Thanks to a timely plea for help they had been reinforced.

*[The Gradiska mentioned here is not the town on the Sava, which was in Austrian hands, but a new fort at the entrance to the Vrbas defile.]*

Saxe-Hildeburghausen marched from Gradiska on the Sava down the west bank of the Vrbas, preceded by an advance guard of 8,000 men (some sources say 800) that had set out the week before (mid-July). Enraged by this force's depredations, a council of war among the garrison leaders and local notables determined on a spoiling attack. 800 (750?) cavalry rode out of the fortress and engaged the Imperials, who were already south of the town establishing a blocking position, overrunning a body of 1,000 men, and another of 2,000, and forcing the remaining 5,000 to withdraw. Several Imperial officers were killed; the Bosnians took few casualties.

Two days later, Saxe-Hildeburghausen brought up his main body. After being reinforced by another 8,000 regulars and Serbians, he had close to 20,000 men. He emplaced his siege guns on high ground to the southwest and positioned the bulk of his forces to the west, with strong picquets watching the key southern approach routes. A detachment was sent over the Vrbas to operate on the east bank, crossing by means of a pontoon bridge north of the town.



The siege of Banja Luka began on July 27th or July 29th. A little-known general named Ulysses von Browne was appointed 'Trancheé Commandant' – responsible for the siege lines. Saxe-Hildeburghausen was in a hurry to complete the siege. Word had been received that the 'Pasha of Travnik' – i.e. Ali Pasha – was enroute to Cetin and Buzin with a large band of warriors. They would have to be dealt with. The garrison did not make things

easy, launching numerous sorties, in one of which the son of one of the relieving Bosnian *bey*s was killed.

Ali Pasha had the use of the 5,000 men that had relieved Ostrovica, plus the forces he had managed to assemble at Travnik. Četin and Buzin continued to hold, so he dispatched the 5,000 to a point south of Banja Luka with orders to remain concealed. He himself proceeded up the west bank of the Vrbas.

By now the Imperials were well dug in and the fortress was under constant bombardment, though replying in kind. A sap was advanced to the walls on the southwestern side, and a letter was sent to the garrison commandant inviting surrender. With the news of the execution of the commandant of Nish fresh in everyone's minds, this offer was refused. Besides, Ali Pasha was close.

On the 3rd of August an Imperial council of war determined that the siege had advanced far enough that an assault could be made during the night of the 4th. The east bank of the Vrbas had been sealed off by a mixed force of infantry and cavalry, under the hussar general Baranyay.

Unfortunately, the Bosnian relief force was at hand. Screened by the force occupying the woods to the south of the fortress, Ali Pasha crossed the Vrbas well upstream, then turned north. On the morning of the 4th, they attacked, storming down out of the wooded hills and pinning Baranyay's men against the river. Most of Saxe-Hildeburghausen's troops, including the bulk of the guns, was still on the west bank, awaiting an attack from that direction.

Baranyay drew his men into a three-sided square, covering the pontoon bridge. The front and right side of the square were composed of battalions of infantry, but the left, inexplicably, was made up of hussars. They withstood the initial rush, then the Bosnians blew them away like chaff with a second charge. From this stemmed the tales of disaster, of thousands drowned trying to swim the Vrbas, of a precipitate flight by the Imperials back to Gradiska. The situation did not unfold quite like that.

The hussars and the infantry near them did flee, many of the men hanging onto the horses' tails as they tried to swim the Vrbas; many were indeed drowned. Browne had his hands full coping with a sortie by the garrison out of the western gates. Baranyay's main force, however, stood firm, the rear ranks of the battalions facing about, and as the Bosnian horse poured into the hollow square they received volley after volley of musketry. Saxe-Hildeburghausen sent two battalions across the pontoon bridge to reinforce Baranyay, and the Bosnians withdrew.

The situation had been stabilised; nevertheless, the Imperials had lost 922 men and 66 officers killed and wounded (some sources say 4,000, others give impossible numbers), Banja Luka still stood, an Imperial battery on the eastern bank had been overrun, and the Bosnian relief force would soon be back. If they could not cover the bridge into the citadel, they could not starve the defenders out. After a council of war, Saxe-Hildeburghausen reluctantly ordered a withdrawal.

Browne was instructed to leave artillery, with skeleton crews, to maintain a bombardment while the rest of the corps withdrew on the 5th. He then followed with a rearguard composed of grenadiers, fighting an action at the wooded defile of Glasniza on the 6th. In danger of being overcome by a horde of very angry Bosnians, after repulsing three assaults Browne and his 10 companies of grenadiers were saved by the appearance of some dismounted dragoons, and the sound of the cavalry corps band beating their kettledrums. The drum rolls echoed through the valley and made it seem that a massive relief force was on its way.

*[The technique was a favourite one with Ottoman armies for raising morale prior to an assault and would have suggested the Imperials were preparing the same.]*

Disengaging, the Imperials withdrew to the safety of Gradiska. This was to be the only attempt to wrest Bosnia from the Turk. Attacks in other areas were called off. By the end of August, Ali Pasha's militia cavalry had retaken all the land south of the Sava. The Imperials left garrisons on their side of the Sava and sent what they could to Seckendorff. The Bosnians established themselves on their side and sent what they could to the Bey of Vidin and the Grand Vizier. Saxe-Hildeburghausen, seeking status as the 'next Eugene', was disappointed, but served with distinction throughout the war as a cavalry commander. Browne was given a regiment – but so depleted that it had to be amalgamated into a single battalion!

### **Izvornik and Elsewhere**

Izvornik was a major obstacle, the primary defensive work in northeastern Bosnia. Perched high above a gorge of the Drina River, the fortress prevented any passage upstream. The fortifications had been improved to 18th Century standards, with a star-shaped sloping glacis dominated by 9 inner and outer towers. Artillery included 16 large brass cannon, 4 field guns, 2 small mortars, and 2 iron cannon, all in the towers. The walls supported 4 large mortars, 12 medium mortars, 200 small mortars, 50 hand mortars, 1,800 bronze tower (swivel) guns, 600 tower muskets, and 113 miscellaneous small guns. The magazine's contents were too numerous to list. It even had its own cannon forge.

Izvornik held 447 infantry, with a detached command of 268 at Tuzla *palanka*. The inner fortress had its own militia command of 330 men. Izvornik was a district capital and usually housed the local governor, Ebubekir Pasha, and his janissary bodyguard. Ebubekir Pasha had gone to Russia with many of the men, but Ali Pasha sent his own 140 janissaries to beef up the garrison.

Although Saxe-Hildeburghausen had cleared the approaches to Izvornik, he lacked sufficient force to besiege both Banja Luka and Izvornik at the same time; with the disaster at Banja Luka, Izvornik was not even attempted.

### **Vidin**

With Nish in Imperial hands, it was time to deal with Vidin. As mentioned above, Vidin was made the secondary target because of flooding on the Danube. The success at Nish had led to a general clearing out of Serbia, but this meant that troops that could have been used in a new siege were now tied up garrisoning various conquests.

On August 1st, Khevenhüller was dispatched from Piroth on the Sophia road north to Vidin. Here he would assemble 16,000 men, about half of which (9 regiments) were cavalry (the foot consisted of 11 battalions and 8 companies of grenadiers). He arrived in front of the fortress on August 14th. Seckendorff sent more troops, primarily Saxons, down the Danube, and ordered in forces from Transylvania, to approach via Little Wallachia.

*[Something that should be mentioned is the delay occasioned by having to decide questions of precedence between the various commanders. This cost the Imperials a few days. The question may also be raised whether Khevenhüller was sent away rather than Schmettau, the infantry commander, just because he was Seckendorff's enemy. And that may also be why Khevenhüller claimed nothing could be done with Vidin. The commander-in-chief was so short of reliable staff riders that he had to use partisans to pass messages; these Khevenhüller could claim were untrustworthy. Interestingly, Khevenhüller's second-in-command, Graf von Salm, was at Seckendorff's HQ, a modern command arrangement.]*

By the time Khevenhüller arrived at Vidin, the *beylerbeyi* of *Silistre* (Bulgaria) had matched him with 16,000 men of his own. Vidin was both the capital of the *sanjak* (district or county) of the same name, and the frontier headquarters for the *eyâlet* (province) of *Silistre*. It was a modern fortress with a regular garrison of 16 janissary *ortas* (companies), much artillery, and a full stock of

supplies. It was also the place where the provincial forces were naturally expected to muster.

With his cavalry regiments, Khevenhüller attempted to bluff surrender, without success. He did not even have the resources to isolate the place. Not until the 27th of August did Seckendorff and his staff float down to the confluence of the Timok to assess the situation. In council it was reluctantly decided not to press a siege, but only an 'observation'. The reasons advanced were a lack of supplies, the malaria, and the immanent approach of the Grand Vizier's forces from the southeast. Instead, Pirot and Mustapha Pasha Palanka on the Belgrade-Sophia Road were to be strengthened, and further reinforcements sent to Kosovo (as has already been told). The remainder of the army would move to Uzhice and Sokol in west-central Serbia, where they would endeavour to assist Saxe-Hildeburghausen.

*[Kosovo was important as 'the heartland of the Serb nation', even though the Turks had given the area to the Albanians. Holding Kosovo would enable the Imperials (it was hoped) to harvest a rich crop of Serbian recruits from all over the region, and especially from Montenegro. In the event, only about 2,000 volunteers appeared. The Habsburgs were just too aggressively Catholic.]*



*The Baba Vidin*

This move was one of the worst that Seckendorff made, and formed part of the indictment at his court-martial. Saxe-Hildeburghausen did not need help, or so he claimed. Nevertheless, Seckendorff pulled his primary mobile force back from the front facing the Grand Vizier. There may have been a number of reasons why he felt it was necessary or safe to do so. Probably, the fact that a large enemy force still remained in Bosnia – still about 20,000 men – was the main consideration. This force could not be allowed to attack him in the rear as the Grand Vizier approached. Perhaps he was irritated that a subordinate, and one who, though a friend, was laying claim to the mantle of Eugene, could not finish a simple job like clearing a mountainous province of insurgents, and sought to 'show him how it was done'.

In fact, if Bosnia was to be dealt with, now was the time, while the main enemy army was still some distance off. The Imperial fortress complex of Orsova, above Vidin on the Danube, would prevent the Ottomans from coming up the river without investing in a major siege effort of their own. Likewise, Nish was a strong fortification, and well garrisoned with 5,000 men. Or so Seckendorff thought. As will be seen, his estimate of the time Nish would hold out was grossly mistaken.

## Nish Redux

After mustering at the religious center of Baba Dag, just south of the Danube delta (a site holy to the Janissary Corps as well as to the Tatars), the Grand Vizier had based himself at the key fortress of Bender, on the lower Dneister. He rightly regarded the Russians as the primary threat. However, in late August, the Russian commander in chief, Baron Münnich, ordered his forces into winter quarters. With the Russians out of the picture, the Ottomans were free to release their reserves, which they did in a surprisingly short time.

Caribrod fell to an army of 80,000 men on September 14th, the Grand Vizier himself attending. Pirot fell on September 20th, after a four-hour fight. Once again it must be pointed out that the troop numbers are fanciful. Including the Bey of Vidin's forces, and ignoring the 20,000 odd men in Bosnia, the Ottomans probably outnumbered the Imperials considerably, but, as with the latter's forces, the figure of 80,000 represents the whole theatre. While the Ottoman Empire could call on hundreds of thousands of souls, at most about 30% could take the field at any one time, and only at the cost of great economic dislocation. Even then, many of the troops of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq would not have fought in Europe – by the time they got there, they would have had to turn around and go home. The Ottoman provincial forces operated on a feudal-like system. 80-90,000 men is quite a respectable figure, marking a major commitment; of that number, probably no more than 40-50,000 were concentrated at any one spot.

*[A contingent of Egyptians reputedly served in Moldavia, in 1738, and there were reports of 'Moors' as well. So one cannot entirely discount the participation of distant provinces and allies.]*

Seckendorff did not react to the threat. It is reported that miscommunication between his headquarters and Nish led him to believe the situation was still in his favour. The Ottomans kept their main strength concealed, even losing a skirmish to Khevenhüller on the Timok (at Radejovak) on the 25th or 28th of September. The commander-in-chief thought that the actions along his eastern front were merely intended to secure the Ottomans' positions – it was getting rather late in the year for an offensive, and the enemy usually went into winter quarters by mid-October.

*[This illustrates another feature of this war. The Habsburgs routinely assessed Ottoman intentions by how they had performed in the past. It was a mantra that the Turk was bent on world domination, with Vienna being the centre of the world; it was a mantra that the Turk went into quarters in October and took the field in April. It has been suggested that Prince Eugene would have been more flexible in his assessments, but Prince Eugene was dead. That was the problem.]*

The Grand Vizier appeared before Nish on October 11th. *Generalfeldwachtmeister* Doxat de Morez, the commandant, called a council of war. A skilled engineer, he was the man responsible for improving Belgrade's defensive works between 1723 and 1736. Doxat had 4,950 foot, but only about 2,500 were effectives; there were 2,381 invalids. 1,396 horse were attached to his command, but they had disappeared – overrun at Pirot or sent to Kosovo, perhaps. He had little food and water. And he was facing a massive Turkish army with no hope of relief. Seckendorff had ordered his forces into winter quarters, Khevenhüller had likewise complied, and the covering forces in Wallachia had been pushed back to Transylvania by the local warlord, Hospodar Constantine Mavrocordatus. Nish stood alone.

The council decided that they should surrender, but that Seckendorff's permission should be asked. The commander was written to, and since it was such a weighty matter, he applied to Vienna for instructions. On October 14th, Vienna ordered him home for consultation – actually to give him the sack and then put him on trial. His second-in-command, *Graf von Philippi*, took

over as caretaker, but received no instructions from any quarter. At a critical moment, the Army was paralysed.

Seckendorff was sure the Ottomans would be unable to complete a siege before having to retire for the winter. However, Doxat surrendered on the 16th, with the full agreement of his staff. The garrison was accorded honours of war (as had been accorded the Ottoman commandant) and marched out on the 20th.

Doxat's fate was curiously similar to that of the unfortunate Ottoman commandant. Vienna was indignant. The Emperor had suffered a mortal blow to his prestige. All his field commanders were against him. It was a plot. Doxat was court-martialled. His appeal for clemency was ignored. And he was beheaded. The only difference between him and the previous master of Nish was that the Turk did not have to undergo the farce of a five-month trial.

### Seckendorff's Fall

It may be that Seckendorff's dilatoriness something to do with rumours of his immanent replacement. Vienna had already expressed dissatisfaction, and now he was not even going to besiege an unresisting fortlet like Vidin? On August 29th, the *Hofkriegsrat* deemed the failure to take Vidin an 'affront to the Emperor's honour'. Seckendorff had only [taken] one city which offered no resistance and a few hamlets deserted by the Turks'. Ironically, on the same day, Seckendorff's council of war voted to march the Serbian central reserves over to help Saxe-Hildeburghausen. On the 6th of September, Charles agreed to sack Seckendorff, and reissued orders insisting that Vidin be taken.

This was all politics. Seckendorff was opposed by other generals who thought they could do a better job, and who pointed to his failure to obey the Emperor as proof of this. The loss of Nish in October – after he had been recalled and his enemy Philippi placed in charge – was the final straw. Haled before a court-martial (his friends having failed to persuade him to flee to Prussia), Seckendorff was accused of ineffectiveness, and of a plot to hoard army supplies in order to corner the market – this last based on camp rumour; the charge had no basis in fact. It is debatable if the first charge had any basis either. Placed under house arrest, he was mobbed by hirelings of his enemies and preached against by rabidly Catholic clergymen (he was by baptism a Protestant). Eventually he was sent to prison.

*[Why anyone would expect Seckendorff to flee to Prussia when the Crown Prince, the future Frederick the Great, hated him, is a mystery.]*

Ultimately, Seckendorff's failure stemmed not from lack of ability, or even from lack of support, but from the fact that in a war against the Turk, the only thing that could really bring peace was an action against the Sultan's army resulting in a crushing victory – and the Sultan's army did not appear until after Seckendorff had begun to close up shop for the winter. His worst decisions were the unnecessary attempt to relieve Saxe-Hildeburghausen and his misreading of the situation at the end of the season; the decision not to take Vidin first was a valid one.

### Enter the French

On October 27th, the Bey of Vidin took Craiova, capital of Little Wallachia, driving the not very numerous forces of *Feldmarshallieutenant* Franz P. von Wallis out of the region and (presumably) linking up with loyal Wallachian troops under Mavrocordatus. The stage was being set for an invasion of Transylvania, or so it appeared. However, now it really was late in the season. Nemirov had just ended without result, but the Porte was still hopeful of ending this silly war.

A new precedent was set. Instead of the Maritime Powers, who seemed to be anti-Ottoman, the Porte asked Cardinal André Hercule de Fleury (1653-1743) of France to mediate. France agreed, but it would be a while before things could be arranged.

This was good news for the Imperials. They had just sounded the Porte on peace terms, only to be told they could not include the Russians in any deal. The idea of a separate peace disturbed them. French mediation ensured the allies would be treated as a bloc. Meanwhile the war would go on.

*[France's role, given her historical anti-Habsburg bias, is surprising. But the Cardinal was always a subtle player. The French had originally thought of seizing the moment when the Habsburgs were fully occupied and opening a second front. Then they tried to put together a combination against Russia – Sweden, Poland, and the Porte. The Cardinal truly feared the Bear, as evidenced by the letter he wrote to the Emperor in 1736. Why then were they helping Charles, an Habsburg and an ally of Russia? The first reason was trade. France already had strong ties with the Levant. By aiding the Ottomans – not the Imperials – with the negotiation process, they would be improving trade relations. In 1740, as a reward for helping hammer out the Treaty of Belgrade, French trading privileges within the Ottoman Empire were extended. However, the main reason was specifically because the Emperor was an Habsburg and an ally of Russia. An Habsburg-Romanov bloc would be unstoppable. Fleury hoped to negotiate peace in such a way that the alliance would be weakened or broken – his secret intent was the opposite of what the Habsburgs hoped for.]*

War had not yet ceased for the season. On November 10th Oczakov, still in Russian hands, was besieged by 40,000 Ottomans and Tatars (roughly 50/50), but held out. Raiders skulked around the Imperial fortresses of Orsova and Mehadia. The Imperials went into quarters along the Sava in late October, but not until November 16th did Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha (the Grand Vizier) return to Istanbul, when he too would be replaced, by the hyper-aggressive Jeghen Mehmed Pasha – 'Devil' Pasha: 'rough, overbearing, a fanatical Moslem, and far more inclined to war than peace' (quoted in *Reluctant Ally*, p. 131). He was the nephew of the Sultan (that is what 'Jeghen' means). Unlike Seckendorff, however, Abdullah Pasha returned to a hero's welcome. The Sultan just liked to play musical chairs.

### Time Out

With everyone taking a breather for the winter, it was time to make new plans and explore options. In Vienna, Bartstein was counselling that the situation was grim. Peace *status quo ante bellum* should be sought without delay. There would be another year of war even in a best-case scenario. Still, the Habsburgs had demonstrated their unswerving commitment to the treaty of 1726. Maybe the Bear would listen for once.

At the Porte, Devil Pasha was throwing his weight around, insulting the elder French representative, the *Marquis* Louis Sauveur de Villeneuve, who had just arrived (possibly this was no more than a hazing ritual). The Russians objected to the French (Ostermann was not of their clique) and demanded the participation of the friendlier Maritime Powers. They hoped to chase the French off by giving them undesired partners.

Earlier, Ostermann had whined that Vienna had accepted French help in hopes of attaining a separate peace (as has been noted, this was the French objective, but not the Emperor's). The garrison of Oczakov was under siege at the time (November) and he was under a lot of pressure. Besides, Ostermann had hopes of a separate peace himself. To top it off, Russia interested herself in the Prussian desire to acquire the Imperial territories of Jülich and Berg; if the Emperor proved intractable, perhaps Prussia should look to Silesia... This would bear bitter fruit in 1741; in 1738 it was merely a ploy to bring the Habsburgs into line. They did so with an abjectness that pleased Ostermann; he dropped his insistence on the Maritime Powers, and his dalliance with Prussia. Bartstein's counter-plots against him were foiled by the Empress herself, who stood by her minister.

In January of 1738, Bartstein offered the Russians a 'new project': a move on the fortress of Khotin (*oh, not again*) and Bessarabia. This would take the pressure off the Danube Front, and the

Imperials just might be able to grab Vidin. Their own campaign was to be a repeat performance, under new management. The problem with this approach, for the Russians, was that it involved crossing neutral Poland. (*Wait a minute – when has that ever been a problem for the Russians?*) It looked like the Bear was going to dance to the old song as well, this time striking a chord against Bender (Bendery) on the Dniester. But Ostermann did offer to give up Oczakov as an aid to negotiations (the Army predicted it would fall anyway if besieged again).

Unfortunately, the Porte was now bent on war. After a single month off, they were back in action in January of 1738, raiding all along the Danube.

### Rákóczi

The winter of '37-'38 also witnessed the Rákóczi affair. The Rákóczis were Hungarian princes frequently nominated as rulers of Transylvania – against the wishes of Vienna, often enough. Josef, the son of that Prince Francis Rákóczi who had led a famous revolt at the time of the War of the Spanish Succession, was now living in exile in Istanbul after fleeing from Vienna in 1736 – Habsburg attempts to teach him loyalty having backfired. The Ottomans proposed putting him up as Prince of Hungary and Transylvania.

Jeghen Pasha hoped to do more than set up a puppet regime (it was billed as an independent kingdom that would be a buffer between the Empire and the Porte). By formulating an accord with a Christian kingdom, the Grand Vizier hoped to inspire France to deal with him and make an alliance – the only stumbling block so far being Louis XV's refusal to ally with an infidel. This aim was not achieved, and yet the French did vow to guarantee the final peace settlement on the Ottomans' behalf – another diplomatic first.

*[Some sources indicate that Jeghen Pasha was acting on the advice of Bonneval, a supporter of the Rákóczi family.]*

In January 1738 Rákóczi arrived at Vidin, where a number of Hungarian POWs were being kept. On the 25th he signed a formal treaty with the Porte, by which he was to pay an annual tribute of 40,000 *piastres* and provide a body of troops for Ottoman service (*client state pension form 10-34BN02 less Annex C which only applies to Kurds*). Rákóczi immediately began a recruiting drive among the Imperial POWs and a propaganda campaign aimed at Hungarians serving with the Imperial Army.

Unfortunately for him, the Hungarians had been shirking their commitments to the Emperor, so there were few national Hungarian units in the field (just two battalions and the regiments of hussars). Rákóczi received little support. After being outlawed by the Emperor there was more interest in the 10,000 *gulden* offered for his live body and the 6,000 offered for his head. To tell the truth, the son was but a shadow of the father, and the people knew it, or rather, the son did not know them. He did not inspire.

It had been a good try, but Rákóczi's failure meant that Transylvania was not going to become a battleground any time soon. On the plus side, the Imperials did not believe they were safe and beefed up its garrison to 30,000 men (paper strength again – more like half that, including local forces).

Finally, on February 10th, while Ottoman raiding parties were taking the unprecedented step of penetrating into the Banat in midwinter, Devil Pasha presented his peace plan to the French. The Turks were to get Azov, Oczakov and Kinburun, Temesvár, and Belgrade. Rákóczi was to receive Transylvania and Hungary. Devil Pasha was old school. The French countered with a restoration of the Peace of Passarowitz, Azov to Russia, and Oczakov and Kinburun to the Porte – i.e. *status quo ante bellum*. The deadlock that ensued was probably intended from the start. Devil Pasha wanted to collect some Austrian heads.

## 1738 – Roses From the South

### Springtime in the Balkans

The Ottomans' winter offensive caught the Imperials completely by surprise. Ali Pasha and his Bosnians had not even bothered to rest, raiding Serbia and pressing to the Morava, where they laid Uzhice and Rudnik under siege in December 1737. Uzhice fell to Bosnian arms on March 24th. Ali Pasha led his triumphant Bosnians to join the Grand Vizier and dispatched 5,000 of them to aid the Bey of Vidin. On May 8th, 1738, the forces of the Bey of Vidin invested Old Orsova, lying on the north bank of the Danube, just above the Iron Gate, and landed on Ada Kale, an island in the middle of the river upon which was built Neu Orsova. Neu Orsova was an up-to-date fortress, a major investment of Imperial time and money. It could not be allowed to fall.

*Feldmarshal Graf von Philippi*, while acting as interim commander-in-chief *cum* chief of staff, had prepared an operational appreciation that vetoed large scale offensive operations by the Imperials due to lack of forage; implicit was the fact that the Ottomans would be bending all their efforts to take Belgrade; strategic defence was the order of the day. The Ottomans were expected to appear in strength in July, as usual. Because plague had broken out in the Banat, he advocated operating along the Danube, and using the fleet to supply the Army from its magazines.

*[The plague was apparently introduced by a couple of cavalry regiments, transferred from Transylvania to the Banat, who had had contact with Moldavian noblemen fleeing the war. They probably picked it up from the Tatars; at Oczakov it was to kill an estimated 20,000 Russians. Bubonic plague was endemic to the coast of the Black Sea, from Constantinople to Azov and beyond, but particularly in the Crimea.]*

This defensive posture required the ability to shift reserves across a wide front, consequently, the Danube fleet was to be expanded to 1,200 men. Huge stockpiles of material were collected, and an unheard-of quantity of support personnel: 62 engineering officers, 20 quartermasters, and 550 artillerymen (the bulk of the artillery arm was always supplied by seconded infantrymen). An excellent Engineer, *Feldmarshallieutenant* Simon de Beaufre, was placed in charge. His job was to establish robust lines of communication.

*[De Beaufre, along with de Morez, is credited with being the architect of Belgrade's defences.]*

The Ottomans' early offensive, which mirrored the Imperials' plan, had thrown some of these preparations out, but the Imperials went forward nonetheless. There was no way the Grand Vizier's main army could arrive before high summer. In the meantime, there was the situation at Orsova to deal with.

On the 15th of May, Francis Stephen was officially appointed commander-in-chief. Seckendorff's party had blocked this appointment last year, but the former commander was now under house arrest in Vienna. Königsegge-Rothenfels, President of the *Hofkriegsrat*, was made the Grand Duke's *adlatus*. Another disciple of Eugene, Königsegge's instructions were to make the Grand Duke look good, and then seek peace. His chief asset was his diplomatic attitude; unfortunately he was so afraid of disgracing himself and the Army (and by implication the Grand Duke) that he was almost paralysed. So say his detractors.

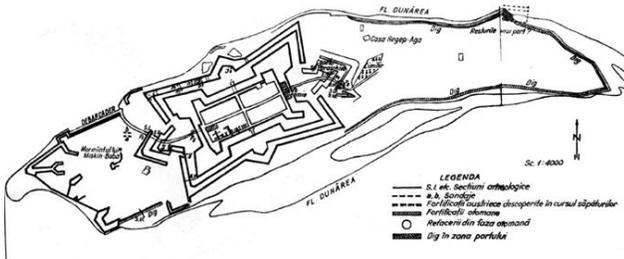
Abbott's *Austria* (p. 404) says of him:

'An exceedingly amiable man, of very courtly manners and winning address. He was scholarly in his tastes, and not at all fond of the hardships of war, with its exposure, fatigue, and butchery. Though a man of perhaps more than ordinary intellectual power, he was easily depressed by adversity, and not calculated to brave the fierce storms of disaster'.

Another source states,

'certainly knowledgeable of details, he understood very well the parts of the whole; he knew perfectly the use of garrison troops; he was quite capable of commanding in one place. But the order of march of armies, choice of positions, the grand maneuvers of attack and retreat were foreign to him. His orders, always replete with minutiae, were obscure. The principal precautions escaped him, and preparations for conducting grand strategy meant nothing to him' (quoted in *RA*, p. 136).

In mid-April of 1738, Vienna had empowered the French representative at the Porte, Villeneuve, to sign peace for them under the French proposals discussed above. Cardinal Fleury also appealed directly to the Sultan, offering for the first time ever a French guarantee of peace. With Devil Pasha busy with operational matters, the peace party began to make its influence felt. The Porte was now prepared to abandon its claim on Azov as long as the fort was razed, and they dropped the demand of Hungary (but not Transylvania) for Rákóczi. For the Imperials, the only question that remained was whether it was moral to sign a separate peace (that is, whether they could get away with it and not lose Russian backing for the Pragmatic Sanction).



*Neu Orsova or Adah Kaleh*

With Bosnia being methodically restored to order, and Serbia subdued, the Ottomans, having decided not to waste resources on Belgrade before defeating the Imperial Army, ramped up their activities against the Banat. Very little is said in English language sources about why the Ottomans chose this path, but the obvious reason is that the Danube is a better line of advance than that over the hills from Sophia. Especially, the passes may have been – probably were – closed for Jeghen Pasha's desired winter campaign. In any case, the river was a much better logistical route. It merely had to be secured.

Early in May, as noted above, the Ottomans crossed the Danube. The fact that they did so with ease indicates the presence of major engineering assets, and probably a flotilla, though this is not stated explicitly in English language sources. On May 26th they occupied Mehadia, in the hills of the eastern Banat, on the road to Temesvár. This post covered the main land approach to the two Orsovas. Alt Orsova was taken, and Neu Orsova besieged, with the bombardment commencing on the 29th of May. Batteries were set up on either bank of the Danube. (Some were no doubt shore batteries intended to keep the Imperial Fleet at bay.) The fall of this fortress would remove the last block to an advance up the Danube; supply convoys could then assist forces advancing direct from Sophia. There was a fort at Semendria, and a few other riverside positions, but they were all minor obstacles.

Königsegge, concentrating at Temesvár, had to proceed with caution. He was still gathering his forces. Secondary columns occupied the Army's other main base at Semlin, behind Belgrade, and the key Danube post of Vipolanka, just downstream from the city.

After receiving reinforcements from Belgrade on the 19th of June, the *adlatus* had 42,000 men: 22,840 infantry and 11,654 cavalry, plus 8,000 Saxons. This includes garrison forces; the primary corps consisted of 13,972 foot and 10,100 horse. All the regiments were under-strength, some at 50%, some less than that. For the summer, he would face an estimated 60,000 Ottomans, excluding the 20,000 of the Bey of Vidin who were already in the field.

[*Davies cites 52,000 men at the three locations, which suggests 5,000 men each in the smaller columns. That at Vipolanka was concerned with protecting a vital Danube convoy that was to link up with Königsegge.*]

Still, the Imperial forces were deemed sufficient to clear the Banat and relieve Orsova. Besides the corps from Temesvár, another force, primarily a supply column, was to float down the Danube from Belgrade and link up at Old Orsova. With Orsova relieved, counter-operations could be instituted against Vidin. Königsegge planned for a major engagement there in July.

### The Battle of Kornia

However, on the 4th of that month, the Imperials fought an unexpected encounter battle with the Ottomans at Kornia (Kornea, Cornea), 30 miles north of Orsova and about 15 miles north of the fortress of Mehadia. Mehadia lies at the entrance to a narrow valley running down to the Danube. To the north, the land widens out into a basin that runs for many miles, following the Temes River, until past Caransebes it widens even further into the flats of the Banat, in the centre of which is Temesvár, a fortress no less important than Belgrade (like Belgrade, it too had been a Roman fort). The ground at Kornia is rolling, mixed cultivation and woodland, intersected by streams.

Königsegge first ran into the enemy further north. These were cavalry picquets. After a running skirmish lasting for days, the Imperial advance guard discovered an Ottoman encampment at Kornia on the evening of July 3rd. During the night the main army came up and camped nearby, building hasty defensive works. (Night approach marches seem to have been an Imperial forte). Königsegge intended to give battle in the morning, but insisted his tired troops receive a hot breakfast. Battle lines would be formed in the afternoon.

The Ottoman scouts, foiled by an unexpectedly strong Imperial cavalry screen – an unusual occurrence for them – guessed wrongly that they still faced only an advance guard. An early assault was ordered, the Turks streaming out of their camp in the middle of the morning and sweeping across the battlefield into the enemy lines. Ladles in hand, the Imperials hastened to occupy their defences and put out their 'Spanish Riders', or portable *chevaux-de-frise*. The Ottoman cavalry of the right flank crested a ridge, and drove clean into the centre of the Imperial lines. Unprepared, and with ranks fleshed out with raw recruits, the infantry was nearly routed, in one case, only the smoke from an ineffective volley concealed the fact that a battalion had run away.

Saxe-Hildeburghausen rallied them, and then led the Imperial Horse in a countercharge, driving the enemy off. The Ottoman column was only a covering force for Orsova, after all. Though they suffered relatively few casualties, the enemy troops panicked in turn, abandoning their artillery, their supply train, and Mehadia. On July 11th the siege of New Orsova was raised and the entire Ottoman corps disappeared. For what happened next, Königsegge has been roundly criticised, both then and since.

[*This victory was the cue for pro-Grand Duke elements to mob Seckendorff's house.*]

Instead of following up his victory with a sound pursuit, Königsegge advanced only as far as Orsova, and then ordered a withdrawal. When they found they were not followed, the Ottomans returned, reinvested the island, and engaged the Imperials in a rearguard action near Mehadia which was beaten off, Duke Charles of Lorraine (the Grand Duke's brother)

acquitting himself well for one of the few times in his career. Mehadia was taken on the 24th of July, and New Orsova fell on August 14th.

So why did Königsege retreat? There were a number of factors. The outstanding point was that it was so ruled by a council of war, based on information that the Grand Vizier was approaching. But councils of war are only tools for commanders who want to delay, right? Not in the Imperial Army. In the Imperial Army, councils of war were a habit, made necessary because it was an *imperial* army, with many different – and touchy – elements. Even when the army was purely dynastic in composition the habit persisted.

It is more difficult to assess just who voted for what at the council of war. In one version, Königsege and Philippi opposed pursuit for lack of forage (it seems that the supply convoy coming down the Danube had not arrived – or perhaps had been driven off while the Ottomans were at Orsova), while Georg Wallis and Neipperg (interestingly, the dream team for 1739) were in favour of a chase. The Grand Duke can be presumed to have been in favour because it was his reputation that was in the balance.

*[One writer has assessed Wallis and Neipperg as Engineers with the can-do spirit, and Königsege and Philippi as Log-Wogs with the can't-do spirit.]*

On the other hand, there is the version that states that only Königsege, the Grand Duke, and their party were in favour of continuing the offensive. And this is in direct contradiction to Königsege's contemporary detractors, who say that he ordered a retreat over the protests of his entire staff. Since Königsege was later fired, he probably did oppose a pursuit, especially since such a stand would put him at odds with Francis Stephen. He may have been spared a severe fate due to his adherence to the Grand Duke. On the other hand, Francis Stephen himself was not much for aggressive military display and may have really backed his *adlatus*. He had already won one victory; why jinx it?

In back of it all was the Emperor's injunction not to risk defeat. The lesser generals were the men wanting to make their reputations, to show what their scientific knowledge of war could do. Neipperg and Wallis were both Engineers and had great faith in their ability to run rings around the Grand Vizier by using the 'interior lines' that the Danube Fleet provided. The Staff men – Königsege and Philippi – saw a logistical nightmare, and convinced themselves that Orsova, the most modern fort on the river, could hold easily against the forces they had met with so far. Indeed, it did quite well before its first relief, primarily because the Ottoman commander chose to sit back and batter it with artillery, and the commandant, Colonel Correnberg, refused to give in. Devil Pasha must have put the wind up his subordinate, because the second time it was carried by amphibious assault.

*[According to the list of signatories to the capitulation of Mehadia, the Agha of the Janissaries, Elgaki Ibrahim Agha, commanded this front in person. The Agha of the Janissaries was the third most important commander in the Ottoman Empire.]*

The Imperial Army had also suffered heavy losses, especially among the infantry, which was, as noted, already under strength and composed predominantly of recruits. Besides, whenever Turks disappeared off the radar, they were planning something nasty. Also, on the 2nd of July, Jeghen Pasha and the main Ottoman Army, 60,000 men, appeared in Serbia, on the road to Belgrade. Königsege's army was the only reserve, the only mobile force, in the entire theatre. Orsova was small potatoes next to the Gateway of the Balkans.

He could argue that he had fulfilled his instructions. The Grand Duke had been made a hero (the propaganda mills were operating at full blast after Kornia – a mighty victory by a great champion of the Catholic Church); now it was time to seek peace, which since he was President of the *Hofkriegsrat*, was his job also.

Lastly, even though annoyed at the commander-in-chief's perceived indecisiveness, Vienna opposed further action ('not so' say Königsege's literary opponents).

*[The diplomatic angle points out another difficulty. Although the Hofkriegsrat was responsible for foreign relations with the Porte, the Emperor had already bypassed the department, directly authorising the French to negotiate for him, and to sign any peace treaty that developed. It need only be confirmed that this did indeed complicate matters, not for the last time. Charles had a nasty habit of writing to other potentates without telling his own diplomats.]*

As a final argument against offensive operations, much of the Army spent the summer constructing field hospitals for plague and malaria victims, and on containment operations to ensure the plague did not spread. Things got so bad that reconnaissance patrols had to be cut, and 400 additional officers brought in from all over the Empire to fill cadre positions. In September of 1738 some 30-40 soldiers were dying every day from the plague. It did not help that, to avoid contact with the Turk, the Army was forced to march and camp in the swampy lowlands of the Banat and Syrmium. Needless to say, morale plummeted.

The Grand Duke himself, whom the Emperor hoped to award full command after relieving Königsege, turned up in Vienna in mid-August, sick as a dog. Or so one report went. It is significant that his appearance chimed with the signing of an agreement with Bavaria to provide several thousand men for the next campaign. The Grand Duke's presence in command was a sticking point with them.

It is not recorded how the Ottomans fared against the plague and the malaria. Given their superior camp discipline they probably did not suffer unduly – malaria was probably not their bane. They may have picked up the plague out of the Banat, but again, they were used to dealing with it. The fact that Temesvár was threatened but not invested may or may not be significant. The 'failure' to invest Belgrade in 1738 can be easily explained: it was not their intention. They first wanted to unblock the Iron Gate.

### **Plucky Little Russia**

In July, the Russians finally took the Perekop Isthmus and began to ravage the Crimea, sacking the Tatar capital again. With their ally in difficulties, and the situation around the Iron Gate confused, the Ottomans were willing to make 'concessions'. Rákóczi ought still to get something, but peace would be possible *uti possidetis*. Now it was the Russians who were unreasonable. Flushed with victory, on July 17th they demanded an expansion of their territory around Azov and insisted that Persia's interests be taken into account (Ostermann was actually considering an offensive through Anatolia!)

Meanwhile, Münnich and his men were crossing the steppes of Bessarabia. To deal with the problem of supply, he had assembled a massive wagon train, accompanied by herds of livestock, around which the army marched in square. They got to Bender all right, only to find 60,000 Turks and Tatars in possession; having spent most of the season just getting there, Münnich now decided to withdraw. Low on supplies, the army was forced to head north into Poland and circle back to Kiev without having accomplished anything. The muttered taunts of Imperial officers about Russian prowess became more vocal.

### **The End of the Campaign**

Königsege decided his best course now was to hold the right bank of the Danube and abandon Orsova to its fate. Crossing the river, Königsege dug in at Semendria (Smederevo) on August 19th. Soon it appeared that the Ottomans were planning to isolate him. Inferior in strength, he could not attack and instead retreated to Belgrade on August 23rd, arriving on September 6th. Here he waited for Devil Pasha's next move.

[There are two towns called Smederevo, quite close to each other. One is a village, south of Grocka (a fact which helps the confusion, as the Ottoman army marched 'from Semendria to Grocka' in 1739). But the Smederevo of this campaign is a more substantial community. It is located on the Danube, has a fair anchorage, and had its own fort, which is still extant.]

In the Ukraine, the Russians abandoned Kinburun and Oczakov, razing them to the ground. Partly, this was done to improve the chances of peace, because the Swedes were sniffing around the Porte in the hopes of discharging Charles XII's debts by buying an alliance and selling 30,000 muskets and a 78-gun ship of the line. Partly it was done to eradicate an outbreak of bubonic plague that had already cost them a reputed 20,000 dead. Their army went into winter quarters in late September.

On September 1st Emperor Charles signed an agreement with Charles Albert of Bavaria for the use of 5,600 foot and 6 squadrons of dragoons for a period of three years. A further 4,600 men from the Archbishopric of Cologne were included in the deal – the archbishop was a Wittelsbach – though given that ruler's nature, the money for recruiting bounties probably went to buy manicures for his favourite hounds. This honey of a deal was almost more trouble than it was worth. A major concession was the withdrawal of Francis Stephen from the command of the field army; the Bavarians refused to serve under their Elector's rival. There is some question why Karl Albrecht even agreed to help, but the Turk was everyone's enemy; some scholars suggest it was a way to strengthen Bavaria's claim to the Empire as an alternative Defender of Christendom.

Semendria surrendered in mid-September, and the Grand Vizier's advance guard came in sight of Belgrade on the 17th of that month. Semendria's twin, Vipolanka (Ujpalanka, on the north bank of the Danube, near the confluence with the Morava), fell on the 19th. Königsegge's council decided to avoid encirclement by sending the Horse to Semlin (Zemun, now a suburb of Belgrade), on the north bank of the Sava, while the Foot held the suburbs as long as possible.

[After taking over the city in 1718, the Habsburgs had kicked the local inhabitants out, importing a military colony of pure Germans. The original inhabitants, mostly Serbs, but also Jews and other minorities, set themselves up in a series of quarters around the city; they were still necessary as tradesmen.]

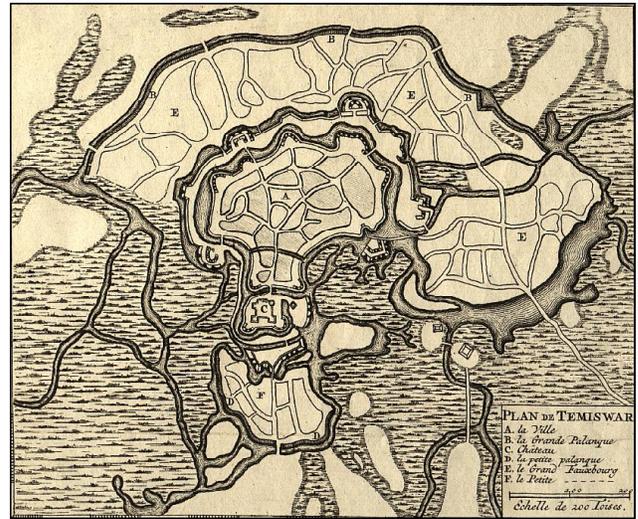
On October 1st, the Emperor Charles instructed Königsegge that, assuming the Ottomans did not lay siege to him, he was to march out with the entire army, including the Saxons and Bavarians, cross the Danube, and defeat the enemy in battle. This order made no sense. For one thing, the Bavarians were still in Bavaria. Even attacking with what he had was impracticable. The plague was still raging, the countryside was denuded of forage, and the Ottomans, though also suffering, and at the end of a long supply line, outnumbered the Imperials significantly, especially in cavalry. Even if the enemy somehow did not feel capable of crushing Königsegge's force, they had only to retreat on their supply lines – they had no need of a decisive victory on their own account, and bringing the Turk to battle when he did not want to fight took much skill and patience.

Königsegge obeyed his orders sufficiently to avoid Seckendorff's fate. Probes were launched against Panchova and Vipolanka. That was all. The Emperor complained, 'every time the army approaches the enemy, they say it is weak; when it gets stronger, then there is not enough food'. However, Königsegge was satisfied, writing to Francis Stephen: 'The campaign is ending with the final withdrawal of the Turks and the preservation of Belgrade, Temesvár, Slavonia and Transylvania. This is more than we had a right to expect.' His army went into quarters in early November. It had suffered yet another outbreak of malaria, more plague, and rampant scurvy (thanks to the reliance on aging stockpiles).

As a postscript, the Hungarian rebel, Rákóczi, died on November 10th, and with him went the last hope of an Hungarian insurrection.

It was felt that a second court-martial of an army commander would lead to command paralysis (as if *that* did not already exist). Königsegge, the former President of the *Hofkriegsrat*, was given the golden handshake and made *Obersthofmeister* (Headmaster) of the Empress. Or, as Frederick the Great put it, 'eunuch of the palace'. In keeping with the contemporary view of him as an 'old woman' this appointment must certainly be taken as an insult.

Königsegge was not of the first rank, but he was not a *dumkopf* either. He had at least preserved the army to fight another year. Elderly (he was 65) and hesitant, it was probably a case of his being given a command above his level of competence. What a general was supposed to do with orders from a ruler bearing no resemblance to reality, only his descendants in 1944 could tell.



Temesvár Fortifications

## Winter Sports

At a Privy Conference meeting on September 30th, 1738, the question of a separate peace was raised once more. If peace were not achieved this winter, there would be another round of war, for which neither the Imperial Army nor the Court had any stomach. This of course risked a major break with Russia. So far, Russia had done nothing for Vienna, nor did the European situation appear to require their aid. Indeed, a protracted conflict would increase the danger from other powers – France was casting covetous eyes on Luxembourg. Yet Bartstein, admitting the need for peace, clung tenaciously to the alliance.

If Russian aid could be obtained, something might be done. But it was suspected, and with good reason, that they were already communicating with the Porte themselves, bent on abandoning the Empire. Münnich had the same powers as the Imperial field commanders to make peace, and he was feeling depressed. Still Bartstein insisted the alliance could not be abandoned while any hope remained. It was decided to carry on, more because no one could think of an alternative than because they expected to beat the Turk.

Back from the front, in late November Jeghen Pasha met with the French for another round of talks. The Polish Confederacy (that is, the body of noblemen that served as a sort of parliament) approached the Porte asking for an offensive-defensive alliance against both the Habsburgs and the Romanovs – an interesting fact for students of the Eastern Question. It gave a fillip to the Ottomans.

Although his own campaign had been less than stellar in its execution, its overall success led the Grand Vizier to continue to make sweeping demands for Belgrade, Temesvár, Transylvania, and the razing of Azov. With Oczakov and Kinburun already smouldering rubble, he suggested that the rebuilding of fortresses be permitted. All Villeneuve could do was dispatch the offer and wait.

The allies discussed their affairs, seeing little hope in another round of campaigning – as *Graf von Starhemberg*, President of the *Hofkammer* (Court Treasury) put it, 'the condition of things is as bad as could be. The crownlands are desolate, the treasury deep in debt. One can do nothing against the Turks. If one battle is lost, all is lost. It would be a stroke of good luck to make peace by any means. In another campaign, Austria will win nothing, but might lose everything'. *Status quo* no longer looked feasible.

Agreeing to bear any burden for the sake of the treaty of 1726, Vienna now needed Russian aid, no matter what the future cost. She asked for an auxiliary corps of 20,000 men. To the surprise of everyone, St. Petersburg offered 30,000. Disbelieving, it was confirmed that at least 20,000 had been earmarked to go to Transylvania. Then word came that it could not be done. There were fears that crossing Poland would spark a revolt against the allies' candidate, Augustus of Saxony.

This appeared to be the same old bag of tricks, but in reality, the Russians were eager to help. France had recently formed a loose alliance with Sweden and was angling to bring in Prussia. This could only mean a two-front war with Sweden and the Porte. Only the Habsburgs had enough pull with Sweden and Prussia to prevent this. Russia would pay money in lieu of troops – 1,600,000 *gulden*, and would make Khotin the primary target for the next year's campaign (the Poles would not dare to challenge an entire army).

*[There was humorous byplay to these negotiations. Graf von Ostein, ambassador to St. Petersburg, had a falling out with Count Biron, Empress Anna Ivanova's lover and a big wheel at Court. Ostein commenced a tirade about all Vienna had had to put up with from Russia, insinuating the latter had done nothing throughout the whole war; Biron said at least they did not surrender fortresses every time they saw a Turkish soldier; Ostein said in the whole war the Russians had managed to kill three Tatars; Biron retorted that the Imperials had only succeeded in killing five Jews. All this had absolutely no effect on the two powers' relations. It was Ostein, after all – what could you expect? Vienna and St. Petersburg even went ahead with a marriage alliance between the Habsburgs and Romanovs. Ostein was recalled, and his replacement was a favourite of Francis Stephen, Botta d'Adorno. Botta would later flee Russia with a price on his head after the Empress Elisabeth learned he had been writing scurrilous reports about her; in 1746, thanks to his sparkling intellect and tact he obtained the dubious honour of single-handedly sparking the revolt of Genoa when installed as its governor. But the Russians felt he was a vast improvement on Ostein.]*

March 11th saw a meeting of the élite in Vienna. The mood was despondent. Forget demanding Bosnia. Restoring the Peace of Passarowitz was no longer an option. It was decided to offer the Sultan Little Wallachia and Serbia – which his forces had already overrun. The Ottomans were to have the option of returning Orsova and Mehadia, or razing them. It sounded as if the Russians would be willing to drop their obstinate demand for Azov. They had certainly warmed to the idea of French mediation. Such was St. Petersburg's fear of the Franco-Swedish combination.

The dicey part of the negotiations was that the Ottomans might demand territory by the Imperials' own rules: *uti possidetis*, which would give them a large chunk of the Banat as well. The subject of Belgrade was *verboten*. Yet Charles was already thinking it might have to be given up.

There was a bit of good news on March 23rd. Devil Pasha had been deposed. Istanbul had its own fears. Revolt over high taxation and general war weariness was brewing. The renegade

Bonneval criticised Jeghen Pasha's decision not to attack either Belgrade or Temesvár (possibly because no siege meant no opportunity for the Artillery Commandant). Kizlar Agha, a much more powerful figure than Bonneval, led a party demanding immediate peace. The Han of the Crimea was also displeased. His lands had been wasted over successive years, without compensation or real aid from his ally, and he had arrived in the capital seeking audience only to hear ugly rumours about trading the Crimea for Azov. The Sultan was persuaded. The new commander was the relatively pacific Ayvaz (Ivaz) Mehmed Pasha, formerly that same Bey of Vidin who had given the Imperials such a hard time.

In early April, just before the campaigning season opened, the Russians empowered Villeneuve to sign any peace agreement that might develop, on a preliminary basis. In May, Mehmed Pasha formally accepted French mediation. Partly because of this, he rejected back-channel offers from Vienna indicating a willingness to surrender Serbia and Wallachia in exchange for Mehadia and Orsova. Besides, the Imperials were offering territories the Ottomans already controlled.

## 1739 – Turkish Delight

This was to be the final year of war. Now that all sides wanted peace, that became obvious. Because of the hopeful state of French mediation, the Habsburgs delayed opening a campaign. Since they were on the strategic defensive, however, this did not matter very much. The mindset of the high command was one of surviving the season and signing the peace at the first opportunity. Though this was not the way that the new commander-in-chief, *Feldmarshal Graf Georg Oliver von Wallis* (1673/75-1744) talked. Technically, Wallis was *adlatus* to Francis Stephen, but the Grand Duke was of course to remain in Vienna (immediately after the war his wife, Maria Theresa, suggested it would be safer if they went to Tuscany for a while). This left Wallis total control, if he wanted it. Wallis' second-stringer was *Graf von Neipperg*, his partner of 1738. Both were of Francis' party.

A 65-year old Irishman, with a record of 40 years in Imperial service, Wallis was not a good choice for an independent command. His detractors say he combined the bad points of Seckendorff and Königsegg without their virtues or any of his own. He was stubborn, arrogant, pessimistic to a fault, and inclined to keep his own council. Pedantic and excessively strict as well, he had earned the dislike of his men for the way he had forced marched them to Nish in 1737 – not a Napoleonic or even Browne-ian march of brilliance, though it served its purpose, but a march in which the men were not permitted to stop for water, and were flogged for falling out. He was to conduct more such marches before the year of 1739 was over. Indeed, he was easily the most hated man in the army.

*[So says Schmettau in his memoirs. Schmettau was 'an infantryman's general'. In other writings, Wallis is commended for his 'brilliant marches', and the march to Nish certainly aided in its swift surrender.]*

After two years of failure, and two commanders-in-chief, Wallis was not sanguine about his own fate. He said gloomily that after the fates of his predecessors it only remained to cut off his head. Unsure of his position in every way, he became overly cautious. Worse, he developed a habit of couching his reports in such vague terms that they might cover any eventuality, forcing his superiors to guess about the situation on the ground – and it was far from clear that Wallis himself could tell them about it, even if he wanted to.

On the plus side, Wallis was under no strictures from Vienna. He had the power to formulate his own plans, and to make peace. He faced a depleted enemy, thanks to the hardships of the previous year and a minor Russian probe into Moldavia. It was possible

that the Imperials might win an important victory, one that would reverse the current political dynamic.

Unfortunately, Wallis was not the man to provide such a victory. At a war council in April, he had opposed every suggestion so strongly that it was assumed he had a secret plan for victory. In actuality, he had no plan at all. Expected to move with brilliance so soon as he arrived in theatre, his first act was to demand detailed instructions from Vienna, his second to state he would not move a company without orders. (These conditions, though surprising, were speedily complied with.)

#### **Georg Oliver Graf von Wallis und Freiherr von Carighmain (1673-1744)**

Son of a *feldzugmeister* who died at the siege of Mainz in 1689. Was made a Lieutenant in the Austrian service in 1690. In 1697 he participated in the Battle of Zenta (against the Turks), with the rank of Captain. Fought in the War of the Spanish Succession, first in the North, and then in the conquest of Naples (1707). He held a series of independent commands in Italy, and in Spain, ending the war as *Feldmarshalllieutenant*.

Served under Eugene in the Austro-Turkish War of 1716-18, fighting at Peterwardein and in the sieges of Temesvár and Belgrade. Sent to Naples at the end of the war to command three regiments. In the War of the Quadruple Alliance he served with the Imperial Army in Sicily. Wounded at Messina he was made governor of that fortress. *Feldzugmeister* in 1723. He returned to Austria in 1727, went back to Sicily during the brief conflict between Spain and England (1727-29), but was recalled to Germany in 1731 and made Governor of Mainz.

During the War of the Polish Succession he again fought in northern Italy, holding supreme command in that theatre for a time. When the war of 1737-39 broke out he began by serving as a corps commander, but in 1739 was made supreme commander with the rank of *Feldmarshal*. His failure in that campaign led to his arrest and trial for incompetence. Imprisoned at Brünn, he was pardoned by Maria Theresa and retired to his estates, where he died in 1744. Although not serving in the War of the Austrian Succession, he was sought out for advice, and was briefly considered as a replacement for the deceased *Feldmarshal von Khevenhüller*.

#### **Once More Into the Breach**

The campaign of 1739 revolved solely around the siege of Belgrade. To his first inquiry, Wallis received immediate orders: protect Belgrade until peace was signed. In accomplishing even this modest goal, he faced a number of challenges.

Thanks to the ravages of disease and desertion, Army strength was at its lowest ebb. Instead of the 108,000 promised in discussions with the Russians, Wallis had 45,000: 30,000 at Peterwardein under his personal command and 15-16,000 more under *Feldzugmeister* Reinhard Wilhelm Graf von Neipperg (1684-1774) at Temesvár. Still, these numbers compared well with previous years. The danger was that plague and malaria would deplete the army further before it could be brought into action.

Wallis was forced to leave an additional 30,000 men in Transylvania (on paper – strengths for 1739 did not vary much from 1738, when the numbers were about 6,500 foot and 5,000 horse, including local forces). These troops were commanded by *General der Kavallerie Prinz von Lobkowitz*, who, as a prince, was not about to yield them to a social inferior.

Not included in the field army total were 5-10,000 men covering the Bosnian frontier, and the 15,000-man garrison of Belgrade itself, under *Feldmarshallieutenant* von Succow; a number deemed quite sufficient. Included were the Saxons, down to 5,000 from 9,000, and the Bavarians, who had been contracted in August of the previous year: 12,000 men disposed as 5,600 foot and 6 squadrons of dragoons, making 7,400, and 4,600 troops from Cologne (who do not appear to have shown up). For reasons of Electoral precedence, the Bavarians and Saxons had to be spread around; most of the Bavarians were not even at the front by the time the campaign opened. In addition, the Empire and

Italy sent several minor contingents, of which a regiment from Modena (1,500 men) and another from Würzburg can be found in the records. Some contingents would have simply relieved Austrian units of garrison duty, and there are several of the latter regiments appearing for the first time in the theatre).



[The components of the Bavarian contingent are something of an estimate. Sources give 12,000 as the maximum figure, with 5,600 foot and 6 squadrons. But if all these were Bavarians, then surely the '6 squadrons' are actually '6 regiments'. Other sources say 7,400 Bavarians and 4,600 from Cologne. 6 squadrons approximates to 1,800 men, or 2 regiments, added to 5,600 to make 7,400 troops; those from Cologne (4,600 + 7,400 = 12,000) can be included as 'Bavarians' because the Archbishop of Cologne was a Wittelsbach. Somewhere, an original source will clarify this point. There is further confirmation of 2 regiments of dragoons (6 field squadrons) in that 2 Imperial Hussar regiments, Frangipani and Gissau (neither recorded in-theatre, and neither to be found in Theresan period Imperial Army lists), were given to Bavaria, possibly in exchange for the dragoons. The details are supposed to be in Brown, but this author was unable to find them. It is rather difficult to marry the pre-Theresan Army with the famously-known Austrian Army of the Seven Years War. Quite apart from the lack of regimental numbering until well after Maria Theresa's accession, the Army was truly Imperial in nature. Yes, there was a division between Austrian (Habsburg) and Reichsarmee contingents, and it is quite clear that the forces lent by Bavaria and Saxony were the personal armies of those particular electors, and not imperial kreis troops. What is not clear is whether certain regiments who under Maria Theresa were part of the Austrian Line, were so in earlier times. Throughout the late 1730s, even during the war, the army was undergoing a massive reform. Wolfenbüttel is a clear example. The Austrian Army of the Seven Years War period had two Wolfenbüttel regiments – Alt und Jung, of course. In the war of 1737-39, there is an Alt Wolfenbüttel regiment, and a group of Wolfenbüttel Auxiliaries amounting to another regiment, which presumable became Jung Wolfenbüttel after the war.

*These units had as inhabers the dukes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel or their relations. But were they 'Austrian State' regiments who happened to be owned by the duke (or relation) temporarily while he was in Imperial service, or were they regiments the duke had lent, or were they regiments he had contracted to raise for the war? And whatever their origin, were they then given to the 'State' perhaps because they were an unwanted expense? The question is not entirely academic. We are told Wallis was waiting for the regiments from Wolfenbüttel to arrive before beginning his campaign. If that delay cost him the campaign, then the point is an important one. But there had been two Wolfenbüttel regiments in-theatre for two years already. So what units were still to come? And if there were no more units, why was he really waiting? According to the source that claims the Wolfenbüttel units were tardy, they did not even arrive until after the war, which is patently false.]*

In Vienna, Khevenhüller had been given the task of reforming the Army and he was proceeding with gusto, aided and abetted by an up-and-coming young general named *von* Traun. Battalions were shaved off regiments, other battalions were made into cadres. This was a necessary reform, and it was completed just in time to face the Prussians in 1741, but all the same, it meant that the numbers at the front remained low. It also gave Khevenhüller tremendous influence. He was the man responsible for officers' appointments. It was a weapon of service politics, and he used it as such. Fortunately he was an intelligent general.

It was he who suggested that Wallis remain behind the Danube and Sava and use the Fleet to block the Ottomans from crossing. Thanks to severe flooding on the Sava, the spring forage had been drowned. The Ottomans would be unable to prosecute a proper siege of Belgrade. Wallis the Engineer concurred, but was prepared to undertake limited offensive operations to delay the enemy. A fortuitous defeat of the Grand Vizier's army would completely reverse the situation. To augment the defenders, a support staff of 72 engineers and a supply train of 3,500 men were added to the 1,200-man Flotilla. Plus a bridging train of another 1,200 men. Wallis would put them to good use.

On June 6th, word came that the Ottomans were assembling at Sophia. Wallis left his headquarters at Peterwardein and moved to Semlin (Zemun). Here word came that the Grand Vizier's army was at Nish, 100,000 strong. 25,000 more (supposedly) were in front of Orsova. Although this number was vastly inflated (the Ottomans may have had 100,000 men overall, including their army in Moldavia), it still exceeded the Imperial Army, perhaps by as much as 20,000 men.

Wallis determined to engage the Ottomans at Nish with his main body, while Neipperg, still at Temesvár, advanced down to the Danube, and then along the North bank of that river to pin his opposing number at Orsova – the Ottoman forces were deployed in a rough mirror image of the Imperials. At this point, Wallis had a falling out with Neipperg. The latter said he did not have enough men. Wallis said that was unimportant. Their dispute raged into July, long after the enemy had made the point moot by advancing, and coloured all subsequent operations.

On June 23rd, hearing that Neipperg was coming down from Temesvár, Wallis crossed the Sava, still some five miles wide after the floods, and marched around Belgrade to the east, following the course of the Danube. Just crossing the river was a major engineering feat. He then camped in the suburbs and awaited Neipperg's forces.

On July 6th, Saxe-Hildburghausen proposed an advance to Semendria. Word had come that the enemy was marching on that location, and the prince suggested the best way to keep them away from Belgrade would be to attack now. It was supposed to be an advance guard, far inferior in strength to the Imperial Army.

*[Davies reports that the Imperial attaché with the Russian Army told Wallis the Turks only had 8,000 men, but how could he be taken as a reliable source? Nevertheless, his word was accepted as gospel.]*

Wallis wanted to wait. This was not just cold feet. He knew, as the prince perhaps did not, that the Emperor was considering a separate peace. He may not have known that Charles had, at least temporarily, shelved that idea, because on July 7th Vienna peremptorily ordered Wallis to advance to the mouth of the Morava. Ten days later Wallis obeyed. The delay may have been a case of the field marshal wanting to see more Imperial hair being torn out, or it may have been that the order was issued in Vienna on the 7th, arrived on the 15th, was slept on, ordered on the 16th, and achieved on the 17th.

Either way, the Ottoman main force was already at Semendria when Wallis left the vicinity of Belgrade. They had a strong advance guard at Grocka, about halfway between Semendria and Belgrade. This he knew from a report from Admiral Pallavicini-Centurioni's Danube Fleet. Worse was to come. The Imperials believed the enemy's main body was still at Semendria, but this was not so.

Wallis, under direct orders to move, rejected a suggestion to wait for Neipperg. There was still bad feeling between them, and the man was only a day's march behind. He could catch up. The army marched on Grocka, supported by the Fleet.

### **Grocka (Krotzka) – July 22nd 1739**

The Battle of Grocka is not well known, but for all that it is quite dramatic, and ought to be known if only for that reason. Losing this battle laid Belgrade open to a siege.

The village of Grocka lies on the south bank of the Danube, midway between Belgrade and Semendria. (As noted above, there are two Smederevos – Semendrias – but it is the large town, a port on the Danube, that is meant here.) Semendria on the Danube had a not insignificant fort, which the Turks had just taken.

At the village of Grocka the river divides into narrow channels between an island (dredged in more recent times into two halves to make a large central channel). There is also a stream running into the Danube from the southwest. The river itself is running southeast at this point; past Grocka it turns east, and at Semendria it turns northeast. The Banat side of the river is flat, but the terrain around Grocka itself is hilly, though not severely so, and either wooded or covered in vineyards. There is a road that follows the river, possibly a road from the south (leading from the other Smederevo but not shown on period maps), and several minor roads, including one running over the hills parallel to and east of the main southern road.

The 'river road' only runs along the bank of the Danube at intervals on its way from Belgrade to Semendria. For much of the distance, even when close to the river, it runs through a series of defiles, some quite narrow. Most importantly, it runs through such a defile before approaching Grocka from the west. The defile is long, nearly a kilometre as it runs east-south-east toward the river, then nearly another kilometre as it bends southeast to run parallel with the Danube. The defile is not exceptionally narrow, but there is one ridge in the neck between the road and the river, and another to the south, which flattens out into a plateau.

The defile opens into a triangle of low ground bounded by the Danube, the stream, and the plateau south of the road. The high ground slopes gradually away east and south – toward Grocka and the stream, which upstream bends around to the west. At this point there is a wide, low valley running west out of the hills around Grocka, which forms the southern boundary of the same plateau overlooking the defile. To the southeast of the stream is a series of rolling slopes, gradually rising one upon the other, though not particularly high. The river road cuts through another defile here, very close to the bank. Grocka itself is on the northwest bank of the stream, by the bank of the Danube. It is not a significant obstacle.

To re-emphasise, the plateau as it runs down to meet the stream is a gentle slope, with several dips and folds in the ground. On the other bank of the stream the ground is a little more rugged. The plateau would be reasonable for cavalry, except that at the time it was chock full of vineyards, enclosures, and copses. It has high features suitable for artillery placement. The defile and river road is completely dominated by the northwest edge of the plateau, which forms a longish crest at the bend in the road, which is also where the defile is narrowest.

Grocka was only six hours' march from the Imperial camp. On the 21st of July, Wallis decided that if he sent the cavalry on ahead, he would just have time to clear the enemy advance guard out and establish a defensive position before the main Ottoman army arrived. Neipperg could either land above the island and reinforce him or land below the island and cut the enemy's line of retreat. Wallis would face the Grand Vizier's forces as he came out of the defile leading from Semendria and defeat them in detail. The river would protect one flank and the hills to the south the other. If the Ottomans wanted to go around them, their lines of communications would be exposed. It was not a bad plan at all. As to a landing in the presence of the enemy, these generals were proud of their technical skill in such endeavours. It might even impress the Turk.

Unfortunately, by the time the Imperials marched out, at 10pm that night, the Grand Vizier had reinforced Grocka. Some sources say his entire army was present, others that a portion was still on the march. It is possible that he had camped for the night strung out along the road from Grocka to Semendria. It is clear that by the time the battle opened the Ottomans already had several batteries of guns emplaced, and were prepared to deal with a river-borne threat. There is no mention of the detached (Orsova) corps on the north bank encountering Neipperg during the course of the affair.

*[Bonneval was at Grocka. He is sometimes, erroneously, made out to be the field commander.]*

By marching all night, the Imperials placed themselves in a position for a dawn attack. There is little indication that the usual difficulties of night marches were of issue. The route was quite easy to follow. The battle, opening early on the morning of the 22nd, is sometimes described as an encounter, because it was fought like one. In reality it was a mixed affair. Both sides spent the day rushing reinforcements up, but the Ottomans were already established when the battle began.

Their camp was laid out on the high ground southeast of the stream. They had a forward position on the ridge between the road and the Danube, in front of the village. Here were emplaced the shore batteries. The remainder of the army was drawn up for battle in front of the stream, from a point south of the road (where there was a low ridge) to where the stream bent west – about 14-1500 meters in length. There were two lines. More artillery was emplaced along this front to give interlocking fire.

*[The standard Ottoman deployment involved placing the artillery and infantry in the center of the line, along with the heavy cavalry, while clouds of light horsemen hovered on the flanks of an approaching enemy, even encircling him if possible. This plan does not appear to have been executed here. Perhaps Bonneval successfully argued that the constricted ground required a 'Western' modification, with foot skirmishers screening the main position. Perhaps the Turks were simply not ready. Not only were some groups still on the march but, the Tatars, who historically sent 20,000 men or more to fight in the European campaigns, were shattered after three years of war on their own ground. Those who credit Bonneval with great influence suggest the Ottoman manoeuvres here were his idea.]*

The nature of the approaches meant that a) the Imperial forces had to engage piecemeal, and b) they could not see where the enemy were until they were right amongst them. The Imperial Horse led the attack, rushing through the defile leading to the village in an attempt to foil any ambush that might have been laid.

*[Davies reports that the Earl of Crawford, a high-ranking Scottish volunteer, advised an advance by infantry to clear the defile but was ignored. But Davies also reports he was mortally wounded, which is not true; he suffered a severe wound that eventually killed him – many years later. Crawford, who previously served with the Russians, has left an excellent eyewitness account of their campaign in 1738.]*

There was no ambush, but they immediately found themselves tangled up in a maze of vineyards, locking horns with scattered bands of janissaries and other foot troops who fought ferociously. Suffering badly, the cavalry recoiled. Some units collided with each other, the Savoy Dragoons being especially disorganised. The Pálffy Cuirassiers, an extreme case, lost over half their men. Bottled up in the defile, the cavalry dismounted and continued the fight on foot. Pinned down with them was *Feldmarshal* Wallis himself.

The Grand Vizier began advancing his men in small parties along the high ground on either side of the defile, where they poured a murderous fire into the ranks of the dismounted horsemen. At this point, Saxe-Hildeburghausen led 18 battalions of grenadiers, including some Bavarians, into the fray. (They had been left behind in the mad dash.)

Initially, the grenadiers fared no better than the horsemen, but gradually, they began to deploy to either side of the road, fighting their way up the slopes and forming into line on the crests.

Bolstered by the constant arrival of fresh line regiments, the grenadiers spread out across the length of the front and the fight became general. Three brigades held the high ground north of the road. A hasty redoubt was formed at the south end of the line, where the plateau sloped away to the east-west valley and there was a good field of fire. Artillery was brought up, emplaced at either end of the line, and began to respond to the enemy batteries while the cavalry extricated itself.

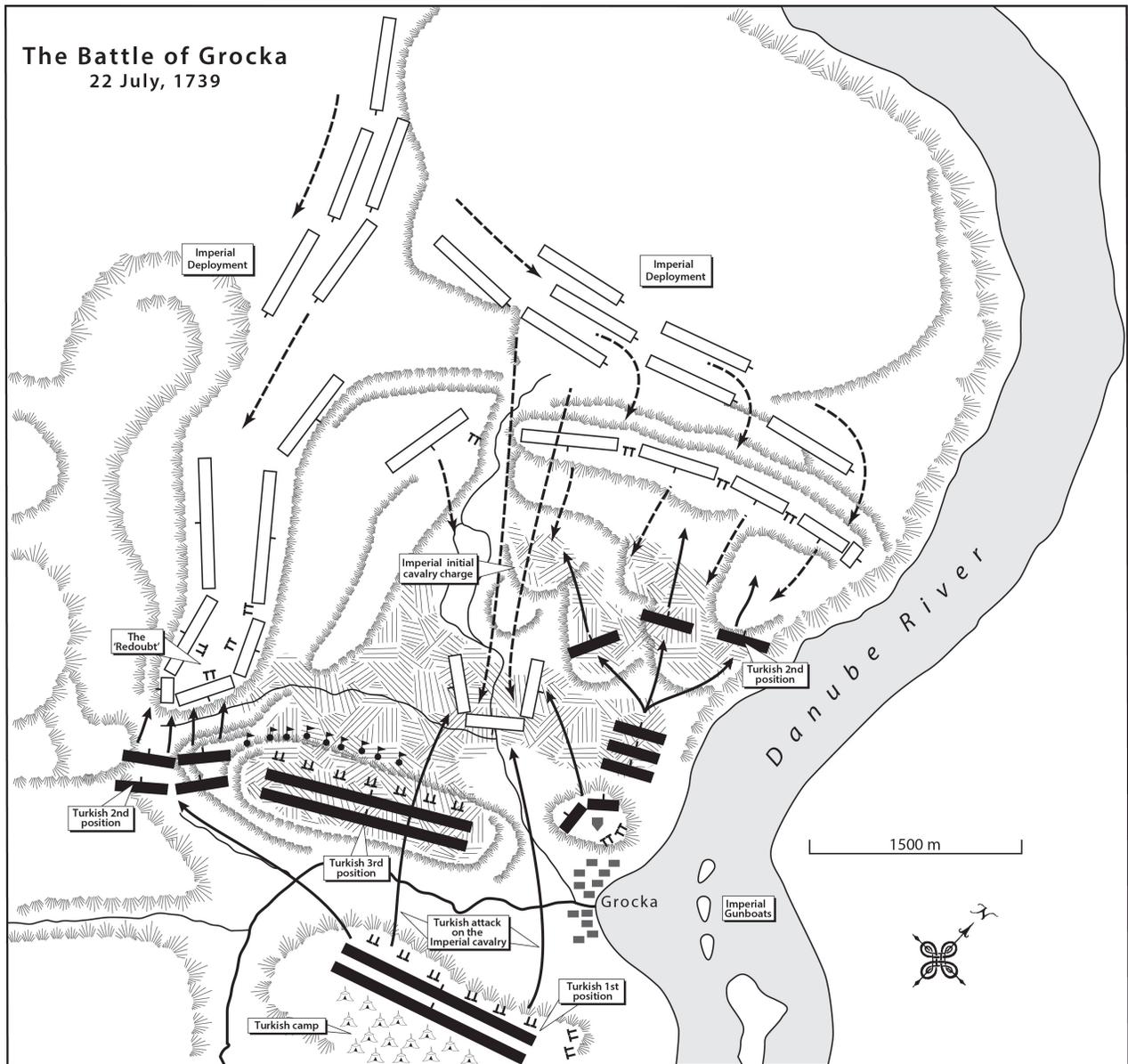
On the river, the Fleet bombarded the Ottoman shore batteries, reputedly firing 500 broadsides in a five-hour duel. (Most riverboats carried only 1.5 or 3-pounder guns, and not very many of them, but there were at least five or six vessels of great size in the Fleet.)

The battle lasted 15 gruelling hours; the carnage was horrendous. A year later a traveller reported, 'today one cannot go ten steps without stepping on human corpses piled on top of one another, all only half decomposed, many still in uniforms. Lying about are maimed bodies, hats, saddles, cartridge belts, boots, cleaning utensils, drumcases, and other cavalry equipment. Everything is embedded in underbrush. In the surrounding countryside, peasants use skulls as scarecrows; many wear hats, and one even wears a wig' (quoted in *RA*, p. 160).

Imperial losses vary with the sources, but the most accurate estimate is 2,222 dead and 2,942 wounded, including 10 general officers (one of them a prince of Waldeck) and the Army *Feldsuperior* (senior Catholic chaplain). The Ottomans lost at least 8,000 men. The Fleet also suffered losses, a few vessels taken and a few more grounded. They were forced to retreat upstream by warping their anchors – slow work, and under fire, too. There is no mention of an enemy flotilla, though one put in an appearance later in the campaign.

The Imperials claimed victory because they held the field at nightfall. The Ottomans claimed victory because Wallis was forced to withdraw under cover of darkness – he had been unable to disengage earlier. The Imperials abandoned their wounded, which is not a thing one did on a Turkish battlefield without good reason. It is as much to say they lost 5,000 dead.

As night fell, and Wallis' council were debating retreat, Neipperg popped up, having successfully landed 15,000 fresh reinforcements. (Where, is not made clear, but if the Ottomans had retired to their camp, he could have landed right at Grocka.)



Saxe-Hildburghausen counselled a renewed effort, and Neipperg was all for it, but the commander-in-chief vetoed the suggestion. If this had been done, the Imperials might truly have been able to claim victory; the Ottoman army was badly knocked about. But Wallis had been unmanned by the encounter.

*[Hard to blame him. He had led the cavalry charge and spent much of the day pinned down under Turkish fire.]*

Leaving Grocka early on the 23rd, the Imperials reached their lines outside Belgrade on the 24th, so exhausted that they bivouacked on the ground without setting up tents. Wallis was reputedly so strung out that he gave in to a public temper tantrum when one regiment was seen to be marching without its regulation 'Spanish riders'.

*[The map above is by Paul Dangel, copied from a contemporary plan now in the Hessisches Staatsarchiv. It shows the initial Imperial cavalry charge and the Turkish counterattack that surrounded the horsemen, plus the deployment by the Imperial foot and their tussle with the Turkish infantry for control of the high ground. At this point in the battle there are still many hours of fighting ahead as the cavalry is yet to be extricated and the Turks driven back on their camp. This author disagrees with the location of the defile used by the cavalry, as satellite imagery seems to point clearly to the low ground beside the river and the texts suggest a charge down the main road in that vicinity – the slopes elsewhere being*

*covered in vineyards, as they still are today. The Imperial infantry, too, would thus have approached from that angle. Regardless of the route taken onto the battlefield, however, the positioning of the forces appears correct.]*

### The Siege of Belgrade

The Ottomans did not waste much time, and the Imperials very quickly had to put their defences in order. This used up so much manpower that another attack was ruled out. Miles upon miles of duckboard and corduroy road were constructed amongst the swamps of the Duchy of Syrmium. With the addition of the superior Imperial river flotilla, there was no way that the Ottomans could blockade the city, nor establish a full siege. All they could do was make repeated assaults on the defences in the hopes of wearing down the garrison. This, despite their reputation for siegecraft, they were not in a position to attempt.

Wallis' next actions are debatable. The sources (yet again) vary. Some say the army was pulled back to Syrmium, where it indulged in a pointless round of marches and countermarches. There are usually two reasons why this is done (three or four if one accepts chronic indecision or a desire to ruin the army – and those have been pinned to Wallis' lapel also). Either Wallis had to move to acquire forage, or that he was trying to foil Ottoman

attempts to cross the Sava. But there was no forage; the army was drawing stocks from Belgrade, for which reason he had developed those miles of pontoon bridges and corduroy roads. Plus, the Sava was still five miles wide – how were the Ottomans supposed to cross that? If they had got across, they would be putting themselves in a swampy triangle between the fortresses of Belgrade, Sabatz, and Peterwardein. There is a reason the Roman Emperors made Sirmium the headquarters of the Pannonian Front.

*[Roman Sirmium was near the town of Mitrovitz. The land between the Sava, Danube and Drava bear traces of defensive works forming a triangle with the Sava confluence as its apex, and there are more Roman encampments north of the Drava. The Roman road to Constantinople went by way of Belgrade, Nish, Sophia, and Adrianople (Edirne). The road to Italy went up the Sava to Lubjana. There was also a road to Vienna, capital of Noricum.]*

A better-attested and logical train of events is that Wallis had to cross to the north bank of the *Danube*, not the Sava, on the 26th of July. The immediate 'crossing of the Sava' probably derives from confusion with Königssegge's actions in '38, and from Wallis' later presence in Sirmium. A lesson that, where possible, sources should be cross-referenced.

The reason for the crossing of the Danube was the approach on the north bank of an Ottoman corps under Tuz Mehmed Pasha, intent on severing the Imperial lines of communication with Temesvár, the major fortification of the Banat. Water communication via the Tisza and a network of canals led right into the fortress, but if the Turks cut the river, communications would have to be up the Danube, round by the Maros, and then overland. The enemy would have interior lines against any relief effort – it was believed that Temesvár would be placed under siege eventually, since the Ottomans had demanded its surrender during the peace talks.

Wallis defeated Tuz Mehmed at Panchova on the Danube, on July 30th. So it appears the Army was not entirely burnt out. According to the Ottomans, their force was 25,000 strong; the Imperial sources usually say 16,000. The commanding pasha's superiors were sufficiently annoyed with the reverse to remove his head from its customary place, so this reverse must have borne heavily on the Ottomans' future plans (on the other hand the men were probably those whom the Grand Vizier, formerly the Bey of Vidin, had been commanding for two years; such mishandling of 'his' men may have annoyed him).

When examined, Wallis' 'pointless' marches devolve into a 30-mile march up the Tisza, and a crossing at (probably) Farkadin, followed by a 30-mile return march to Borsha, which was a fort on the north bank of the Danube a little above Belgrade. Here the Army ferried across to Sirmium. The moves were 'pointless' because Wallis did not explain, or ask advice, he simply ordered it done. This was in keeping with his personality, but frustrating for his subordinates. Later, as will be noted, Wallis moved away from Belgrade for a time, and then returned. These last moves have a clear explanation – yet to be given – but why did he conduct a 60-mile round trip?

This simplest answer is that the Ottomans were close to Belgrade (they arrived four days after Grocka) and it would be too risky to cross the Danube below the Tisza. On the other hand, it was not possible to bridge the confluence of the Tisza; he had to go upstream to cross. This is assumed, but very likely. His state of mind provides an additional twist. He could have pursued the beaten enemy corps, but he did not. Pursuit would perhaps have (given the serious view the Ottomans took of the affair) given him control of the Banat as far as Orsova. But such grand moves were outside the line of his thoughts. Belgrade had to be protected at all costs. Perhaps too, the Danube was too low for the Fleet to have covered his flank down to Orsova – they had already lost some vessels to shoals at Grocka.

Also, he defeated the Ottoman corps, but that probably means they ran away with few losses. They were most likely a cavalry corps, though some infantry may have been ferried up the Danube to garrison various forts as they were taken. From the Imperial perspective, under normal circumstances they would have licked their wounds and returned for more. Since Wallis could no longer cross back into Belgrade directly, he would have to put the Tisza between him and the Turk.

Finally, it should be pointed out that, as already mentioned, a large construction work was in progress all this time. Wallis did not have his entire army with him, but only a portion, and probably less than half; perhaps they were mostly mounted as well. Of course it was a brutal forced march. That was his speciality, and he was in a hurry to get back.

There is a question as to why he should have come all the way back down the Tisza. Borsha was a secure ferrying point, but getting there involved a trek through the swampy neck of land between the Tisza and the Danube. Why not cross the Danube higher up? This question remains unresolved, though again it probably has a simple solution.

*[16-20,000 men for the corps based on Vidin is a realistic number. Vidin had a peacetime garrison of 16 Janissary companies. At a maximum of 200 men per company, that make 3,200, at a minimum of 40, it makes 640. Assuming the upper limit, with the addition of volunteers for the garrison, one may estimate 4,000 foot. 12,000 sipahis and light horsemen from Bulgaria is not unbelievable, and there may have been Wallachians as well. Bosnia sent 5,000 sipahis as a reinforcement in 1738, which brings the Bey's total to perhaps 20,000. Since the Beylerbeyi of Bosnia was with the Grand Vizier, those forces may have returned to his command. This would leave approximately 12,000 horsemen available for operations in the Banat; some of the janissaries may have been used as marines and garrisons for bases up and down the river. It is possible there may have been as few as 8,000 on the Banat side and that the remainder were with the Grand Vizier. That would depend on how depleted the latter's forces really were.]*

It was August 11th before the Army arrived back at Semlin, behind Belgrade on the other side of the Sava. The men were worn out, and the officers at boiling point. In the interval, the Ottomans had invested the city. Now, under a hot August sun, the troops sweltered in a swamp, under canvas that had to be drawn tight to keep out the 'bad air' – mal-aria. And the Plague still... plagued them.



*Belgrade*

### **The Best Deal in Town**

Vienna had become fixated on peace. There was a whisper of the unthinkable phrase: Belgrade might be surrendered. The fear was that if the Ottomans conquered Belgrade they would not stop the war. Therefore, if it could not be held, it should be given to them. The new border would run along the Sava and Danube. On

August 5th, the French representative, Villeneuve, was told of this decision. He was also told that the Emperor was thinking of signing a separate peace if he got no help from the Russians. Bartstein thought he might also give Azov away as a concession without Russian permission.

Complications arose when a representative from the Grand Vizier appeared in Wallis' camp, offering peace, but only upon the surrender of Belgrade. Wallis, still in command only because his superiors felt that removing him would break what remained of the Army's morale, wrote to Vienna for instructions. This step, though not at all unusual, was in conflict with the diplomatic activities of Villeneuve. Both men were accredited to make peace on whatever terms they could get, but they did not coordinate their efforts.

It all hinged on whether Belgrade could hold out. Wallis was pessimistic. On August 12th he wrote to Vienna saying that the Imperials should 'buy peace by sacrificing the fortress of Belgrade instead of prolonging such a fatal war'. He was backed up by a (probably) independent letter received on the 15th from the commandant, *Feldmarshallieutenant* von Succow (a friend of Bartstein's), that stated the city could not be held for long – even though Succow had recently received 5 more battalions. That same day, a probe into Wallachia from Transylvania was authorised as a distraction, but it was too little, too late.

Highly dissatisfied with Wallis' performance on the battlefield and his negative attitude, Vienna took his diplomatic powers away so that he would not make peace prematurely. But rather than letting Villeneuve finish the job, they gave the powers to another man – Neipperg (on the 31st of July). Wallis was extremely annoyed, not only at the loss of prestige, but because the Emperor was going to do the very thing he had suggested, just with someone else at the helm.

Curiously, Wallis himself had recommended Neipperg for the negotiations, though as his own delegate. The latter was an exceptionally experienced officer (a former tutor to Francis Stephen) and had served on the peace commission of 1718. This fact, and Neipperg's background, puts paid to the sources who claim he was ignorant of Turkish diplomatic methods.

Wallis' recommendation, coupled with the bad blood between the generals, raises the possibility that the commander-in-chief, who continued to negotiate secretly with the Grand Vizier, through a Colonel Gross (last heard of at Ostrovica in Bosnia), wanted to confound Neipperg and Vienna. He had established a rapport with the Turk, and they were also accustomed to the presence of Villeneuve, but any new player would be viewed as an interloper and treated accordingly. Abbott's *Austria* (p. 408) records the Grand Vizier's words to Neipperg thus:

'Infidel dog! Thou provest thyself a spy, with all thy powers. Since thou hast brought no letter from the Vizier Wallis, and hast concealed his offer to surrender Belgrade, thou shalt be sent to Constantinople to receive the punishment thou deservest.'

The effect on Neipperg's mission was certainly as described, but as a deliberate act by Wallis, it is unlikely.

Even though he probably did not deliberately set his brother officer up, Wallis was taking matters into his own hands. Vienna told him a couple of times to desist, but he ignored them. He also deliberately retreated further up the Danube, allowing the Ottomans the opportunity of an unhindered siege. Spite is claimed as the reason, though it may have been the more subtle one of 'getting things over with'.

Neipperg's instructions, handed to him on the 10th of August, were as follows. If Belgrade appeared secure, offer only what Villeneuve had already offered on Bartstein's behalf – everything

south of the Danube, plus New Orsova, in exchange for retaining Temesvár and Belgrade. If Belgrade was on the point of falling, it should be given before it was taken.

The first thing Neipperg had to do, therefore, was to stop in Belgrade and make a report on the defences. His opinion on this occasion is yet another subject of controversy. Some scholars say it was unfavourable, others that it was favourable. In this case, the view that he was pessimistic seems to fit the facts, particularly those facts contained in his report to Vienna. Those who say he was favourable are probably confusing him with the new commandant, Schmettau.

In his report of August 16th, Neipperg indicated that there were only 10,000 foot and 9,000 horse in the mobile army, and that the garrison consisted of only another 8-9,000. Morale was low. 'We could hardly think of continuing the war this year, to say nothing of next year', he reported.

His letter crossed one containing further instructions from the Emperor: he was to ask for Orsova to be razed and to offer the razing of Belgrade's modern works in exchange. If this was rejected, he was to offer Belgrade itself, but to ask for Mehadia and Orsova in exchange. Awarded his credentials in the same letter, on the 17th he left for the Grand Vizier's camp. He did not talk to Wallis. (The Grand Duke, Francis Stephen, had told him not to, as the *feldmarshal's* 'ideas... methods... had become unsound').

Despite flowery phrases about holding to the last man, Neipperg discerned from this letter that peace was more important to Vienna than the city. The key issue was, as stated above, that Belgrade should be given, not taken. All very well, but Neipperg soon found that he was being undermined. Apart from Villeneuve and the Russian representative, who had his own agenda, Wallis' man was still negotiating.

The common report is that once in the Grand Vizier's camp (arrived August 18th), Neipperg was seized as a hostage and forced to sign a capitulation, or, that after being seized he escaped to Villeneuve's tent and remained incarcerated there, out of touch with events. This idea stems from inadequate knowledge of the way the Turks conducted business.

First, possibly unknown to Neipperg, they had already supplied an Ottoman hostage to Wallis. Would they perhaps have seen Neipperg in the same light? As to bullying, that was common practice, as Neipperg, the Turkish expert, should have known. He, in fact, did some bullying of his own, threatening to leave the camp at one point – so much for being imprisoned (though some sources state he was not permitted to leave after making this request). Nevertheless it was a ticklish situation, and it is generally agreed he was forced to quarter with Villeneuve for safety, though that may have been because the Ottoman rank and file were notoriously unruly where foreigners were concerned.

The real problem, discounting an Emperor who could no longer think clearly, was Wallis. Although he was not supposed to negotiate, he was forewarned that the city might be surrendered. Rather than sit tight and wait on Neipperg and Villeneuve, he made an offer of the city himself through Colonel Gross – at least, so some sources indicate.

He also had instructions to isolate the theatre so that word of the negotiations could not leak out. Wallis took this to mean nothing should get in, either, if it might mean the talks would be influenced. He excepted his own negotiator. This meant that letters to Neipperg were suppressed. Wallis could claim that Neipperg himself had requested no communications.

But if all three envoys, legal or otherwise, were making roughly the same offer, where was the difficulty? Well, to the Grand Vizier, it spelt out the situation clearly enough: one of panic and

indecision. He took a hard line and refused to budge, even though in reality he lacked the means to take the city!

Villeneuve had opened negotiations on the 9th of August. Neipperg then arrived with the offer of razing the outer works. At this point the Grand Vizier declined because he thought it was a stall for time while the Imperials worked up a counterblow. Villeneuve then offered the city, if the Ottomans would agree to raze the outer works themselves. This was a possibility.

Meanwhile, Succow, Belgrade's commandant, was relieved of command (August 22nd). This event again has two versions. In one, he was replaced by General Schmettau on the orders of the Grand Duke, in opposition to the Court, as the latter was the Grand Duke's favourite. In the other, more likely version, Schmettau was dispatched by the Grand Duke as an inspector, with direct orders for Wallis to pull himself together and move his army back in support of Belgrade. Wallis complied, but to pay Schmettau back, he made him commandant of a city he expected to fall, coincidentally removing Bartstein's friend Succow as a poke at the Court (the official reason was illness, which was true enough).

Either way, Schmettau arrived in the city on August 25th. Unlike Succow, Schmettau, now commanding 14,000 men, 11,390 of them effectives, believed the city could not only hold, but that the Ottomans could be driven off. Early rains, cold, and the patent ineffectiveness of the Turkish artillery made this more likely. The news from the East was also good, with a Russian offensive in Moldavia and a victory there at Stavucani, which led to the fall of the key fortress of Khotin.

So far, the Ottomans had merely taken the fort of Borchia on the north bank of the Danube; the only part of the Belgrade defences they had yet gained. Schmettau was able to retake the fort on the 29th of August, but Wallis refused to cross the Danube to aid him – 'what was the point?' Vienna had less information and perked up at the news of Schmettau's efforts. It gave the appearance of the Imperials going over to a general offensive (according to Schmettau's memoirs, anyway). And then on the heels of this good news came the shocking message that Neipperg had handed Belgrade over to the Turk.

Upon hearing of Schmettau's actions, the Emperor had dispatched a message to Neipperg, telling him on no account to give up Belgrade, but this message was suppressed by Wallis and never reached him. There would have been no point in passing it on, anyway: Wallis already knew the fortress had been yielded. In truth, Vienna had no idea where Neipperg was. On the 3rd of September, the Emperor sent another message recalling him, not out of dissatisfaction, but because his instructions were no longer valid. Much too late.

The preliminary peace agreement was signed on September 1st, probably in the Grand Vizier's tent (a point of precedence indicating who was in control of events – alternatively it would have been on neutral ground in Villeneuve's tent). The Ottomans would receive Little Wallachia, and Serbia including Belgrade with its old fortifications intact. The Imperials would obtain Mehadia and the land around Orsova but not the fortress itself. The border would be the Sava and the Danube. Transylvania would retain its 1718 status as a kingdom under Imperial suzerainty. It was to be a separate peace, but provision was made for Russia to sign as well.

The agreement was not ratified, as it was assumed that the Emperor would have to give final approval. However, as a guarantee, Neipperg was to order the demolition of the outer works six days later, and 500 janissaries were to occupy one of the gates. This was a sore point with Vienna, who, having given fully authorisation to Neipperg and Villeneuve, now whined that she had not been consulted.

This peace agreement is one of the most contentious of the period. The news did not reach Vienna until the 7th. Initially, people thought they had been sold out by the French: 'the Marquis de Villeneuve has sacrificed to the Turks and to his master the welfare of Christianity, the interests of the Empire, and the honor of the Emperor' (quoted in *RA*, p. 168). The worst part of the whole thing was that the Russians had just won a great victory at Khotin, and were on the march to Lassy, which they entered on September 14th.

The Emperor flew off the handle when he heard the news, declaring his generals to be traitors, publicly stating this was none of his will, and generally blaming everyone but himself for the 'debacle'. The threads are difficult to disentangle. Either Neipperg and company exercised very poor judgement, or they were deliberately made the scapegoats to prevent a massive loss of confidence in the Court and in the Emperor – the regime was severely shaken as it was.

The weight of evidence is on the latter choice. Neipperg and Wallis were accused of painting a false picture, particularly over the question of Belgrade's survivability. The contrast with Schmettau's report and actions was glaring. Also, the Emperor had directly ordered Wallis not to surrender, and had dispatched a similar order to Neipperg. But as this last did not arrive until after the fighting ceased; it may have been a face-saving device.

Wallis' crimes were cited as incompetence at Grocka – not waiting for Neipperg, ordering an unnecessary retreat, and attacking without adequate preparation. After, he permitted the enemy occupation of Belgrade without orders. Neipperg's crime had 'no precedent in all of history'. He had negotiated the surrender of Belgrade against the Emperor's <belated> orders.

Examined from a purely technical point of view, Belgrade could have held. The Ottomans had not considered a full siege train necessary for the campaign, and with the Imperials on the far bank of the Sava, a proper investment was not possible. The Grand Vizier trumpeted that he had 150,000 men with him, and 25,000 more in the Banat, all slaving to have a go at the city, but this is highly unlikely.

Time delays – there was a 7-10 day cycle between Belgrade and Vienna – were so much a part of life that it is unthinkable that the Emperor, though ordering resistance based on a fresh report, would not accept the facts once they were known, disappointed though he might have been.

It does seem that Neipperg was unduly influenced by Wallis' pessimism as the campaign progressed, and had basically given up hope, believing that the army could no longer sustain an offensive, and that Belgrade would fall in a few weeks at most. At the Grand Vizier's camp, he discovered Colonel Gross and learned of Wallis' secret communications, the worst effect of which was that the Ottomans had become fixated on receiving Belgrade and would not listen to other offers. This is what Neipperg said in his own defence. Gross insisted he had made no offer to yield Belgrade, and that when bullied, he had warned that Belgrade would put up a staunch defence.

There are persistent rumours that Neipperg's actions were not dictated so much by the Emperor, but by Francis Stephen. This is what Neipperg's descendants claimed. The idea is that the Grand Duke and his bride took charge of events and instructed Neipperg to surrender the city in a private letter. His ultimate fate is suggestive in this regard.

Whatever the full truth of the matter, Charles accepted the peace agreement without asking for any alterations. He could not. To do so would have been a grave insult to the French, who had offered their guarantees to the Sultan, and the Empire was in no position to make waves.

On the 31st of August, Villeneuve received a note from Vienna stating that Neipperg's mandate would not be revoked no matter what happened; the note also urged haste. On the 5th of September the Emperor's Court Conference in Vienna expressed the opinion that the surrender of Belgrade was better than its capture. On the 7th the Emperor learned of the preliminary peace and said it would have to do.

But on September 13th, another Court Conference decided that 'this outrage and disgrace must fall upon somebody' and that it was necessary to '...appease the clergy and the ordinary folks as well as some foreign courts, whose confidence had to be preserved'. Vienna, reputedly, was in an uproar. For 'foreign courts', read Russia. It was a separate peace, after all, and Charles could not risk losing Russian support of the Pragmatic Sanction. The peace had to have been 'forced on him by events'. That was the gist of his circular to the courts of Europe.

The peace between the Empire and the Porte was ratified on September 18th 1739. It was valid for 27 'moon years'. This was unprecedented; the Ottomans did not sign peace treaties with the Infidel, they made 'temporary armistices'. Nor had they ever before employed the French as mediators.

Initially, the Russians were inclined to buck. Their own representative at Belgrade 'had been coerced'. Even the Emperor's abject apology, blaming his generals and the French, was insufficient. However, Sweden was gearing up for war: 6,000 men had recently been infiltrated into Finland. Ostermann understood the current conflict must end. He had already decided to hand Khotin and Moldavia back. He agreed to the peace on October 3rd and Empress Anna ratified it in December. Azov was to be razed and a no-mans-land created, the naval base at Taganrog abandoned. Fortresses could be constructed north of the Don (this would lead to the founding of Rostov on the Don), and (for the Ottomans) south of the Kuban River. Russia gained trading privileges in exchange for keeping all her ships out of the Black Sea.

## Conclusion

The war that the Habsburgs had begun reluctantly had ended dismally. Could they have fought on for the rest of the season? Perhaps. The season was advanced, the Russians had taken Iassy on the 14th of September, and the Ottomans were bluffing: their army was on the point of retreat. But the psychological war had been won by the Porte. Habitual fear of the Turk led to a defensive mindset. Crippled finances, exhausted troops, the outbreak of plague, and a massive ongoing army reform that needed to be completed in safety led, by 1739, to a desire for peace at any price.

## Fates

Wallis and Neipperg were tried by court-martial on November 19th and were imprisoned. Yet they were pardoned by Maria Theresa. It paid to be supporters of the winning faction. In 1741, Neipperg commanded the force opposing Frederick the Great in Silesia. He failed at Mollwitz, too, but only by a narrow margin.

Wallis' disgrace did not prevent his kinsman from being made President of the *Hofkriegsrat*. Wallis buried himself on his Moravian estates, but was considered as a replacement for Khevenhüller on the latter's death in 1744; Traun got the job instead.

Seckendorff was still under arrest, charged with deliberate irresponsibility and conspiracy to withhold supplies for his own pocket. Released under the same blanket pardon, he left Imperial service for Bavaria (being of that party) and fought against Austria in the next war.

Francis Stephen was eventually elected King of the Romans and became Emperor in 1745, but immediately after the war, he and his wife removed themselves to Tuscany where they were spared the daily outbursts against him.

## Lessons Learned?

Post-war, there was a great deal of soul-searching. Bartstein wrote in his memoirs that the outcome was a punishment for an unjust war. Schmettau wrote memoirs that painted a picture of a Court riven by a Catholic-Protestant split (he defected to Prussia in 1741 and may have coloured things to appeal to a Protestant audience). He was hostile to the Emperor, who had betrayed his friend Seckendorff, and to Neipperg, from whom he learned firsthand that his charge was to be surrendered, and that the latter was responsible.

Later, Maria Theresa claimed the military system itself was at fault; she wanted to justify her own sweeping program of reform, particularly with regard to taxation. At the time, taxes were collected based on yearly appeals to the *Erblände* without reference to a budget – or at least to a budget that made any sense. 'The general calamities became worse because each minister dared not demand additional sacrifices from the crownland in his trust and contented himself with criticizing others at every opportunity' (quoted in *EQ*, p.87).

The military machine itself was not excessively flawed. It had just come out of a major war without an opportunity to refit, and it was about to go into another one in an even worse state, from which it would emerge finely tempered. Also, there was enough money, barely. The fact that the high command was trying to overhaul the army while in the midst of war caused much grief. A bigger problem, one that can be seen in the machinations behind the army reform, is the systemic failure at the general officer level.

Prince Eugene had forged a mighty weapon, but one that responded to his touch alone. Even in his last years, when senility was overcoming him, the officer corps could look to him as a figurehead and act in the manner they knew he would approve of. Eugene was repeatedly accused of risking all on a single throw, but he remained lucky. After he was gone, there was a tendency to ape his manner – boldness and decisive action were the watchword, yet his disciples still needed training wheels.

There is a common thread among the commanders. Nearly all were, or preened themselves on being, intellectual, scientific men. This was traditional in the Imperial Army, and not a bad thing in itself. They were all skilled technicians, capable of planning and performing any kind of operation, but they lacked the larger vision, and they lacked the 'leader's spirit'.

There is a parallel in the British Army of the Crimean period, subservient to The Duke (of Wellington) for so long – he was Commander-in-Chief for many years after Waterloo – that it had difficulty functioning when he was gone. One thinks also of the split between the 'Indian' and 'African' cliques during the Boer War. The Imperial Army had many leaders of talent, but it had no single head. Instead, as still occurred in the Seven Years War, Court cabals and royal advisors sought compromise solutions, imposing them on the commanders in the field.

This is not a complete answer to the command crisis of 1737-39. The same men did well enough in the War of the Austrian Succession. And in that war the strategic situation was most unfavourable, whereas in the *Türkenkrieg* there lay great opportunities if they could only be mastered. The constant cycling of commanders was a big part of the problem – five commanders-in-chief in three years. What made it worse was that, thanks to the partisanship of the lesser figures, the Staff also underwent rapid turnover.

# An Overview of the Ottoman and Habsburg Military Systems

## The Ottoman Empire

The following notes are intended as a (very) brief explanation of how the Ottoman State saw itself and functioned, focusing almost entirely on the Military.

### Nature of the State

The ethos of the Ottoman regime was cyclical, and ran as follows:

- 1) There could be no Rule [i.e. Rule of Law, but with the Sultan being the embodiment of the Law as the Shadow of Allah Upon Earth] and no State (the body of which the Sultan was the head) without a military establishment;
- 2) There could be no Military without Wealth;
- 3) Wealth came from the Subject [class];
- 4) The Subject could only prosper through Justice;
- 5) There could be no Justice without Rule and State.

The State was therefore a military regime. It collected and disbursed taxes, saw to the common defence, administered the empire, promoted economic development, and was responsible for religious affairs.

*[There is no separation of church and state in Islam. One view is that of military historian Hans Delbrück: Islam is 'a political-military national organisation based on the power of religion' (History of the Art of War, Volume 3. p. 204). This does not mean Islam is not a Faith – indeed all religions have a political element, and political movements, like Communism, have a religious aspect – but that the Muslim Faith is bound up with every aspect of the State, is the driving force behind the State, and is not separate from it. Christianity, in contrast, began in opposition to the State, is intended to be in opposition to the State-as-a-Manifestation-of-the-Power-of-Darkness, and periodically has to disentangle itself from the State's attempts to co-opt it for its own ends].*

The Ottoman Empire originated with the Osmanlis, a Turkish-led warrior confederation centred in the Anatolian lands beside the Bosphorus. The Turks had come into Anatolia as a 'wave of barbarians', sometimes plundering, but also enjoying service under the Byzantine Emperors, eventually being settled in depopulated areas as a cheap militia defence. As the imperial administration broke down, Turkish war bands, and those of other nationalities, gained various degrees of autonomy. They also began to migrate toward the Aegean. The Osmanlis were one of the weaker, later confederations, but had formed key alliances with some of the local Byzantine nobility who were fed up with the central administration. Avoiding subjugation by their neighbours, over time they managed to bring more and more of the people of Anatolia under their banner, until they were strong enough to achieve hegemony. As a military regime, constant expansion became a necessary condition of life.

By the time the Ottomans reached their zenith, in the 15th-17th Centuries, the people of the empire were broadly divided into a Ruling Class (*Askerleri*) and a Subject Class (*Raya*). These were in turn divided, as may be expected, into various gradations. The ruling class consisted of the Military and the Government, and was primarily a military aristocracy. The ruling class did not pay taxes (in fact, one of their primary jobs was to collect taxes), and only they could bear arms. The subject class included everyone who was not of the ruling class, from Bulgarian serf to Greek merchant, to Turkish shepherd. They did pay taxes, but were not liable for military service, except in very particular cases.

One of the premier differences that the Ottoman system had from other aristocratic-absolutist systems of the day was that almost anyone could join the ruling class, or leave it. To be one of the

Natural service rivalry was overlain with a power struggle between the supporters of Francis Stephen and those of the Bavarian Elector, Charles Albert. Seckendorff and Saxe-Hildeburghausen both favoured the latter; Saxe-Hildeburghausen also fancied himself as the next Eugene, and he was a prince. Grand Duke Francis was a rival. Seckendorff's stint of house arrest saw a 'spontaneous' riot outside his quarters by supporters of the Grand Duke. That was when everyone was saying the Army needed fresh blood, in the person of the Emperor's son-in-law. But it is interesting that the arrival of the Bavarian contingent in the Habsburg *Erblande* was the occasion of much rejoicing on the part of the populace, as would be the case when Charles Albert invaded Upper Austria in 1741.

What all this means, of course, is that the generals felt that picking a winner in the looming succession crisis was more important than beating the Turk. The Ottomans were not going to overrun Central Europe; it would be enough to hold them off. Unfortunately, this attitude compounded with the rivalry over professional primacy, and with the confused state of the army. Having 20% of the field army composed of troops belonging to a rival House (Bavaria) was exceedingly dangerous politically.

*[The German States encouraged Habsburg aggression against outside forces like the Ottomans, so that they would be forced to ask the Empire for help; the members of the Empire could then ask for concessions.]*

Though still formidable, the Army had been run down since its high water mark of 1718. Although this was partly Eugene's fault, he did attempt a number of reforms, but they were implemented piecemeal and did not go to the root of the problem. That would have meant changing his baby out of all recognition. What reforms were instituted were thwarted by the Estates, who lobbied successfully to have their war taxes reduced, and through a poorly thought out cost-cutting by the *Hofkriegsrat* in 1732; veterans were discharged in large numbers and replaced by raw recruits because the veterans were on a higher pay scale.

Ultimately, though, defeat stemmed from some hard political facts. The Emperor wanted to keep his Russian alliance, and to do that he had to go to war. But he could not guarantee the performance of his ally, nor did he have the power to work his own will on the enemy. Victory and defeat were out of his hands. Worse still, while he preferred to risk his army as little as possible, his Imperial heir needed to risk it as much as possible.

For the Ottomans, unrest from high taxation, the spread of the plague, the flight of refugees (in all directions), famine in the big cities, and the growth of robber bands and private armies formed from demobilised soldiers meant that they were in no position to take advantage of the Empire's weakness during the next war. The struggle had left them weaker than ever, though they put on a bold face. What was worse, Nadr Shah was back, with the wealth of India at his command.

By May 20th, 1740, the outer works of Belgrade, the Imperial jewel of the Balkans, were completely razed and the Turks took formal control. By June 8th, the last Imperial troops left the city; with them went everything of German culture that could be removed. The Army, down to 36-37,000 effectives in the theatre, was still dealing with the effects of the plague. Five months later, Emperor Charles VI was dead.

The borders established by this war were to last for another 140 years. In a final irony, Habsburg-Ottoman relations improved markedly after the war. The Imperials sent a highly skilled representative to the Porte, who succeeded in making powerful friends; the French sent an incompetent who only served to remind the Ottomans just how little the French had managed to squeeze out of the Russians.

ruling class, to be an Ottoman, one had to accept and practice the religion and philosophy of Islam, be loyal to the Sultan and his State, and fashion one's life in the 'Ottoman Way'. This involved knowledge of Persian, Arabic, and Ottoman Turkish (which is different from other forms of Turkish), and knowing how to behave as 'an Ottoman' in every social situation.

If one of your descendants decided not to follow those rules, he was no longer an Ottoman. To put it another way, the Ottomans were not 'the Turks', they were the ruling class of a Muslim empire; when you joined the ruling class, whatever you had been before, you were now an Ottoman. Of course, the empire had been founded by Turkish warriors, therefore a great many Turks were in the ruling class – but many were not, and were simply Turkish subjects of the Ottomans. The Sultans had a Turkish bloodline, but many of the highest positions, right up to Grand Vizier, were held by men who were not Turkish – Bosnian, Albanian, Greek, Syrian, Cypriot, Venetian, French, even Scottish. The Europeans had Muslim names, naturally, because one of the prerequisites for becoming a member of Ottoman society was conversion to Islam. Thus *Humbaraci* Ahmed Pasha was the renegade Frenchman, *le Comte de Bonneval*.

While the ruling class had to be Muslim, the subject class did not. The subject peoples, so long as they paid their taxes and obeyed the Sultan's laws, could do as they pleased. Many communities, towns, and districts had their own local rulers, their own local laws and customs; Christians and Jews were tolerated (and Jews enjoyed periods of favour) as People of the Book (*Ehl-i Kitab*) and could openly attend churches and synagogues – although periodically, fundamentalist Sunni revivals unleashed pogroms and riots, and wars with the West brought on bouts of xenophobia. In general, the Ottoman State considered it had a responsibility to protect all subjects' rights – in return for their taxes.

As the empire incorporated more and more non-Turkish people, its ruling class was expanded to include the Muslim urban élites of the Middle East and Africa, and the Byzantine nobility of Europe; in a certain sense, the Ottomans took control of what had been the Byzantine Empire, including its Administration. Only Constantinople held out for a long time, retaining what was left of *Byzantine culture*.

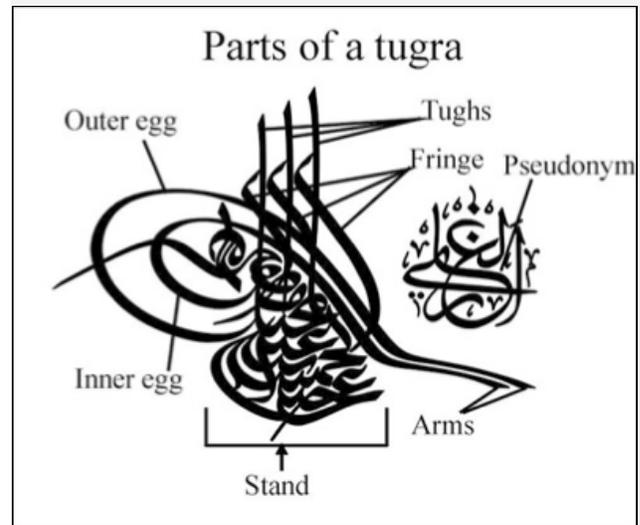
This gradual class expansion was found to be inadequate, especially for filling the ranks of the Army and Civil Service. Some gains were made by adults converting to Islam; notably foreign specialists, but it was not enough. Thus was conceived the famous *Devshirme*, or conscription and forced conversion of Christian youth – though as a matter of fact, a great many Christians begged or bribed the recruiting officials to take their children, even if they were technically exempt (and Muslims did so as well), since this was the only way that they could ensure them a better life. The *Devshirme* was the Sultan's traditional 'twentieth portion of booty', which included prisoners of war, now expanded to include those who were already subject peoples.

Officially, only Christian boys were eligible for the *Devshirme*, except for the Bosniaks, who, despite a wholesale conversion to Islam insisted on being subject to the levy; in consequence, there were many Bosnians in the Administration, which worked to their benefit. (Other, Muslim levies, were sometimes called up, but these conferred no social benefits.) Though officially recruits were to be permanently separated from their families, in practice, this was often circumvented. The *Devshirme* was only applied in Rumelia (i.e. the European portion of the empire), and primarily in rural districts – townsmen and artisans were exempt.

Most famously, these children were used to make up the *Yeniceri Ocaghi* (Janissary Corps), but they also went into the civil administration (much of which was admittedly in janissary hands). Being the Sultan's 'booty' and with no other career path, the janissaries were loyal only to him, unlike the original Turkish

clans and the provincial 'feudal' levies, who might turn out to have a greater loyalty to their own personal lord or governor.

### The Tughra



The Tughra was the Sultan's personal signature. Functioning like a Japanese *mon*, it was highly stylised and required a skilled artist. The Sultan's name, in Arabic, was woven into the basic design; if his name did not lend itself to the various symbols, spurious components would be used to mesh the whole. The Stand included the main text, the Eggs represented the Ottoman's rule over the Mediterranean and Black Seas, the Tughs represented their rule over three continents. Some Sultans used a pseudonym, which was portrayed where shown in the diagram. Apart from its use as a seal, the Tughra was borne in gold upon a large red battle flag. (The Tughra pictured is similar to that of Mahmud II's but does not appear to be that of any Sultan). Mahmud I's (1730-54) *Tughra* says (after its six component phrases are separated): *Mahmud han bin Mustafa el-muzaffer daima (shekli tamamlayan isharetler)*. Mahmud, Sovereign, son of Mustafa, the Ever Victorious. The portion in brackets is a formulaic adjunctive used to mesh the design.

### The Government

The Sultan's government can be divided into four elements: the institutions of the Palace, the Scribes, the Military, and the Men of Religion (including culture). The Palace, comprising the *Harem*, various state-run schools, and the *Divan* or High Council, included the rulers of the State and the central Administration; since the empire was militarist, these officials included the highest-ranking military men. The Scribes were the bureaucrats – finance, foreign affairs, and so forth, but this institution also included the *Divan*, composed of the Grand Vizier, the Viziers, the Grand Admiral, the Agha (commander) of the Janissaries, and the more prominent Provincial Governors (*Beylerbeyi*).

All these offices were originally based at the Sultan's Palace, but by the middle of the 17th Century, a series of able Grand Viziers had succeeded in acquiring enough prestige to establish their own Court outside the Palace (officially comprising just their staff, but constantly in need of expansion – to help them fulfil their duties to the Sultan, of course). The Sultans, depending on their various personalities, began to assume more or less the role of figurehead, with the real power concentrated in the hands of the Grand Viziers. The complex that housed their offices was known as the *Bab-i Âli* – the Sublime Porte.

Some mention should be made of Ottoman finances, to provide a contrast with those of the Habsburgs; both regimes' taxes were required primarily to pay the Army, secondarily the Administration, and also to keep the aristocracy happy with gifts. In the early days, the State Treasury consisted of the Sultan's '20th' plus revenue from his own estates. Most salaries were paid in the form of *timars* – basically large fiefs, but more along the

lines of the Byzantine *pronoia*, which had a stronger monetary basis than a Western feudal holding, and was a direct gift of the Sultan, not of a local lord. As in the West, there was thus little need for complex financial institutions; again as in the West, the creation of a standing army – the janissaries – meant that regular cash payments were required, leading to more bureaucracy.

First, the State Treasury was separated from the Sultan's own. Then it was divided into Anatolian and Rumelian (Asian and European) branches, with the Anatolian subordinate to the Rumelian. The Chief Treasurer (*Bash Defterdar*) became sufficiently powerful to have the authority to issue orders in his own name – authority otherwise limited to the grand viziers and chief justices. The department, which had offices all over the empire, also took over much of the imperial record-keeping, from revenue to army salaries. It controlled the granting of monopolies and regulated the customs duties.

Taxes were divided into those required by *Sharia* (Islamic Law) and those imposed by the sovereign to cover situations not enshrined in *Sharia*. The former included a variety of basic taxes; Muslims were mulcted as well as non-Muslims, but under different forms. Examples include a religious tithe on agricultural produce, a non-Muslim head tax, and a municipal tax.

Non-*Sharia* taxes were imposed by decree, and ranged from pre-Ottoman 'customary taxes' to extraordinary tolls levied for a particular war. One of the most important was a tax on households that was used to support soldiers and officials travelling through a region. In Anatolia there were cultivation and pasturage fees. Fees were also charged for the simplest of activities that involved a government official – marriage ceremonies, recovering stray goats, using the public market scales. Such tolls were determined by local officials, from the collection of which a portion would be remitted to the central government – in a word, the practice of *baksheesh*. (Although Westerners find it annoying, 'bribing' officials to get things done does ease the burden on the central treasury).

It is important to note again that the Ottomans considered one of the primary reasons for their class' existence to be the collection of taxes. All taxes were the property of the Sultan, although he could alienate some to individuals permanently or temporarily, or use the money to form endowments.

### The Provinces

The Ottoman empire was of a federal nature, with miniature copies of the Administration scattered throughout. Provincial governments were organised purely for the purpose of tax collecting and defence. The basic building block was the *sançak* (or *sanjak*) – the 'banner' (county) of the local administrator known as a *bey*. The beys were responsible for all civil and military affairs within their *sançak*. Rule was by council, in the manner of the Palace; a local council would have the lesser nobility, religious figures, judges, merchants, and other notables. They would present their views and needs to the *bey* in the form of letters, petitions, and deputations, and it was his job to see that justice was done, security maintained, taxes collected, and the Sultan's will obeyed.

Above the *beys* were the *beylerbeyi* (*bey of beys*), one for Rumelia and one for Anatolia (and, latterly, additional ones in key frontier zones). These men were the provincial governors. The *beylerbeyi* of Anatolia was inferior to that of Rumelia, for two reasons. First, the Asian provinces were where the Sultan sent his sons to gain military experience, and second, because the *beylerbey* of Rumelia was usually the Grand Vizier or some other prominent person. The *beylerbeyi* of the border districts became known as *vali*, and their provinces were termed *vilayets* (*eyâlets*). The *sançak* was divided into districts (*kazas*), towns, and villages.

Often, the Ottomans were located in the towns, and the subject peoples in the countryside.

A governor held the rank of 'two horsetails' as did the viziers in the central administration. The Grand Vizier held three horsetails, and the Sultan four.

Since he was responsible for both civil and military affairs, a governor was given assistants from the central government. At first, these men were under his control, but to limit the chances of revolt, they were eventually given much autonomy.

Two forms of provincial administration developed. In the older form, most of the province was divided among *timars* that sent their revenues directly to the Sultan. In these provinces, the capital was deemed the governor's *sançak*, and its revenue used to fund the provincial government. The *timar* holders, or *timarli*, were responsible for keeping order on their own property, under supervision of the governor.

The second, new form of province was the 'tax farm province'. In these, the governor held the entire province as his tax farm, from which he would remit a set amount of taxes each year, keeping any excess as profit – in addition to his salary. It was the money remitted that was sent back out to pay for the administration of the province, not the money withheld (although a good governor would meet emergencies out of his own purse).

All the Rumelian and Anatolian 'heartland' provinces were of the older form, and thus had strong local militaries composed of *timarli* and their armed retainers. Wallachia, Moldavia, and the Crimea were not provinces, but autonomous Principalities and Client States.

The tax farm system decisively weakened the administration of the empire, as can be imagined – it did the same to the Romans – but the process took a long time. In the 1730s it simply meant that the provincial forces' pay was sometimes in arrears, so that they were ill equipped, or had to supplement their income by taking extra jobs (including banditry and protection rackets). Local notables were sometimes more concerned with jockeying for power than internal security or border defence.

### The Army

A caveat must be entered here. The Ottomans had a nasty habit of retaining archaic terms for their institutions, including the varieties of army and navy units. This means that the same name can be held by two different kinds of unit in different periods. A classic example are the *sekbans* (*segbans*, *seghmen*), who started out as the Sultan's huntsmen (the name means 'dog handlers'), graduated to a *gendarmes*-style bodyguard, then morphed into border levies.

The men tasked with the defence (and expansion) of the Ottoman Empire were termed the *Ehl-i-Seyf* – the Men of the Sword. Just like other armed forces of this time, there were two main branches, Army and Navy. The Army was divided into various provincial forces or *Eyâlet Askerleri*, and the Slaves of the Porte, or *Kapikulu Askerleri*. This last was the true standing army, under the direct control of the Sultan and responsible only to him. Its original composition was, like similar institutions in the West, mercenary, with the addition of prisoners of war. It was made more reliable with the institution of the *Devshirme*.

The structure of the high command began with the Sultan, descending to the Grand Vizier as supreme field commander, then to the *Kaimakan* or *Bölük Pasha*, his Chief of Staff (*Bölük Pasha* because he was also '3-ic' to the Janissary Corps). Under these men were the *beylerbeyis* or provincial commanders, and under them the *beys* or district commanders (the last often called 'counts'). The Agha of the Janissaries had a special relationship, in that he took orders from the Sultan but served under the Grand

Vizier as an executive officer. The second in command of the Janissaries ran things in the capital.

The *Kapikulu* was divided into the *Yeniceri Ocaghi* (Janissaries), the *Topçu Ocaghi* (Artillery) and the *Kapikulu Sipahi* (Cavalry), plus a small number of guard units. In its heyday, the Janissary *Ocaghi* was the elite formation, disciplined in comparison with the feudal levies that made up the bulk of the army, competent with pike, sword, bow, and musket, and fanatically inspired by the attached *Bektashi* mystic order. Ironically, although the regime was Sunni, much of the Army was Shia – and the *Bektashi* incorporated Sufi, Christian, and pagan practices.

All sources agree that information on the state of the Ottoman Army during this war is sadly lacking. Brian Davies (*Empire and Military Revolution*, pp.186-187), accessing a variety of modern and period sources, notes that contemporaries were of the opinion that the Army was on its last legs, having fought the Persians for a number of years previously (they made peace in 1736), but doubts things were as black as painted, especially given the outcome of the war. Davies tentatively suggests a paper strength of 220,000, with about 109-115,000 effectives, of whom half were *Kapikulu* and the rest provincials.

Against this is information from Russian Intelligence that in 1736 the Turks were deploying 150,000 men on their eastern front against the Persians, and another 110,000 on the Danube against an expected Habsburg attack. These numbers doubtless include their Tatar allies, who, by treaty, contributed 12,000 men for European campaigns and 40,000 for Asian campaigns. The Wallachians and Moldavians were also required to provide 4,000 horsemen each.

### Imperial Guard

The units of the Ottoman 'imperial guard' did not belong to a separate establishment, but are grouped here for convenience. First, there were the *Solaks*, the Sultan's personal guard: 4 companies of 100 men each (janissary *ortas* #60-63). The *Pekys* was a corps of ADCs & couriers – 100 in all – serving the Sultan directly.

The *Bostancis*, or 'palace gardeners', were officially the *Seraglio* guard, used as gendarmes and for 'special assignments' – a core of 2-3,000 foot. By the 1740s they *may* have numbered as many as 12-16,000 men. The Grand Vizier was often chosen from their ranks and such men made it their business to strengthen a formation loyal to themselves. They became a counterweight to the Janissaries, but were liquidated by the latter after Sultan Selim III attempted to convert them into the *Nizams* (European-style 'new infantry') during the period of the French Revolution. It is unclear how many, if any, would serve in field, but probably a few subunits served as escorts and guards. The *Khassehis* were an elite element (10%) of the *Bostancis* assigned as the Sultan's bodyguards (or perhaps watchdogs).

Finally, there was the *Müteferrikas*, an imperial guard horse regiment recruited from the sons of the nobility or other distinguished men – 500 strong. Like many such units, their membership included the young nobility of allied and client states – in this capacity they served as hostages.

### *Kapikulu Süvari Ocaghi*

The most potent part of the *Kapikulu* was the cavalry, known as the *Kapikulu Süvarileri*. Confusion sometimes arises because the men were known colloquially as *Sipahi* (horsemen), a term properly applied to the provincial feudal levies. Other names were the *Alti Bölük Halki*, or just the *Bölük Halki* (Men of the Six Regiments, or the Regiment Men).

The *Kapikulu Süvari Ocaghi* had six regiments: the Right and Left Salaried Men (*Uluferciyan boluglu*), who were originally the

cavalry of the *Beylerbeyi* of Rumelia, the Right and Left Foreigners (*Gureba boluglu*), originally organised from Muslim mercenaries or Ghazi fanatics, the *Silahtar boluglu* (Weapon Bearers), and the *Sipahi Oghlan* (*Sipahi* Children). The last two regiments were the elite, and in their heyday had about 6,000 men apiece.

As a rule, the first four regiments (known as the 'Four Regiments', or *Bölükât-i Erba'a*) fought to the left and right of the Sultan, while the last two were stationed at his right hand. They also had a number of prestigious jobs, such as guarding the Sultan, acting as advanced scouts for the army, guarding the Sultan's horses, and acting as standard bearers. These men were all extremely well paid, and enjoyed high status.

Like the janissaries, in peacetime the force was dispersed around the empire, under command of a lieutenant (*kethüda yeri*) who was responsible to the agha of his own corps. Unlike the janissaries, the cavalry eschewed firearms entirely, and were content with bows, scimitars, lances, and axes (i.e. they were more Medieval warriors than cavalymen). Starting with relatively modest numbers, the corps ballooned to some 22,000 by the 18th Century, and witnessed a drop in quality as a result (as did the janissaries). At the time of the war, there were perhaps 10-12,000. By the 18th Century, they had dispensed with body armour, though it is speculated that they still used shields.

### The Janissaries (*Yeniceris*)

The *Yeniceri Ocaghi* (Corps) was not a combat formation, but an administrative one. Its subunits performed a variety of roles, but most of them were infantry jobs. The Corps is one of those formations that underwent changes in its organisation; fortunately the terminology did not change. Unfortunately, there are a number of theories about its development. It began in the 13th Century as companies of archers, similar to the *compagnies d'ordonnance* of France – professional soldiers hired by the sovereign. The janissaries, however, were under much stricter discipline and had a stronger religious element; religion was the glue that held them together.

It is generally agreed that by the 18th Century there were 196 companies, or *ortas* (sometimes *odas*). Strength estimates vary depending on how strong the companies are supposed to have been. They were not of equal strength. Bonneval's putative reform of the 1730s would have standardised them at 400 men each – i.e. amalgamated them into battalions, which is one reason the Corps opposed him (too many senior men would have lost their places).

There were four basic types of *orta*, appearing as the Corps was gradually expanded. The only question is the order in which they were formed. One theory is that there were originally 101 *ortas*. These were the Assembly, or *cema'at* janissaries, sometimes called the *jagas*. Only 40-60 men each, they eventually found themselves being parcelled out to the provinces as reliable cadres. Once they developed local ties, however, they became the instruments of the local élites. Therefore, new *ortas* were raised, the *Bölüks*. 'Bölük' means 'the Regiment'. There were 61 *bölük ortas*. Generally, their strength was higher – say 200 men on average.

At some point in time, there were also the *sekban ortas* – the dog-handlers – in their second incarnation as elite troops. There were 34 of these, no more than 60 men each. Supposedly they acted as mounted infantry and had a role as army provos. It appears, however, that by the 18th Century this force had disappeared or returned to its original gamekeeper role, with the name *sekban* being applied to a body of 10,000 or so militia. Filling the 'shock troop' slot, at least for the war of 1736-39, were the *Serdengestis*, or Janissaries of No Quarter, a group of about 6,000 mounted Janissaries, probably volunteers recruited from other units. The Ottomans often made up assault battalions from

criminals and men wishing to redeem themselves. The *Azabs*, sometimes serving as navvies, also fulfilled this role.

The *Aghas*, or unit commanders, likewise had their own *agha bölük* guard units, who also served as scouts, messengers, and city police.

There were also 34 training *ortas*, the *acemi oghlan*, 14 based in Constantinople and 17 across the water in Anatolia. These were the oldest janissary formations, to which recruits were assigned.

Now, there is another version of the development of the Corps. This is, that apart from the ancient training units, the original formation was The Regiment – the *böliüks* – which makes sense given that the elite Palace units were part of it. The *sekbans* were raised as a complementary body by Sultan Mohammed II, the man who took Constantinople. The Assembly was formed later; however, it – the *cemaats* – were still of lower quality.

Regardless of who came first, the basic concept remained the same. Each *orta* was a company in the fullest sense of the word: a body of comrades sharing the same quarters and rations, fighting together, and even acting as a single economic unit with regard to both salaried pay and 'second incomes'. 'Company' is the correct term for them – com-*pan*-ions or 'breadmen'.

The ration-element even extended to their rank structure. Each was commanded by a *Çorbacı*, or 'soup ladler'. The other ranks had similar culinary titles. The term *orta* referred to the central stove or communal cooking pot; the alternative of *oda* was the name for the room they slept in.

Because they were supposed to be ready for war at any time, janissaries were forbidden to marry and had to remain in barracks when not in training. (These restrictions were often ignored in the last centuries). In time of peace, bodies of janissaries were posted to key locations throughout the empire, serving nine-month tours of duty; in the capital, they served as both police and fire department, as well as guards for the Imperial Council.

By the 18th Century, the bow had been discarded in favour of the musket, and yet the 'personal warrior' cult led the janissaries to disdain firearms in favour of the sword. Nonetheless, their most effective use remained defensive, as a block around which the cavalry could rally; they were also very effective in the assault role.

Not all janissary *ortas* had a military role. Some functioned as civil departments; also, cross-transferring of personnel was common. The *Bektashi* order of dervishes, the janissaries' peculiar priesthood, held honorary status as the 99th *orta*. It must also be noted that many janissaries were pensioners. Although there were supposed to be no family ties, in practice, many sons did 'join their father's regiment', and provision was made for this. Sometimes, the old man would retire and his son take his place, holding the family's position; being a janissary guaranteed food, shelter, and an income.

The strength of the Janissary Corps varied over the centuries. It had about 50,000 men in the first half of the 18th Century, rising to over 113,000 in the middle of the century. But only 35-40,000 were military personnel, and only a percentage were available for field duty, since, as noted, the Corps included civilians, pensioners, and minors who had 'inherited' their father's position. Sample data is available for the year 1660. In that year, the Corps rolls listed 32,794 men. There was a war going on in Moldavia that summer, for which only 18,013 janissaries were registered as present – and that was for pay purposes. Who knows how many names were added to the list as a favour, or as padding. In the 17th Century, 27% were based in the provinces and 73% in Istanbul.

The *cemaat ortas* served in the provinces. A partial list of *cemaat ortas* shows the following distribution:

14 at Khotin  
16 at Widdin  
20 at Bagdad  
3-4 in Bosnia  
3 in Greece

Extrapolation suggests 10-12 *ortas* each on the North coast of the Black Sea, in Anatolia, in the Middle East, and in Africa.

Of course, the janissaries are famed for their mutinous nature. This situation developed over time, arising principally through the Administration's inability to pay them. The traditional method of going on strike was to overturn their cooking pots during the Saturday feast.

### ***Topçu Ocaghi***

Despite its reputation for the extensive use of artillery, the Ottoman Army took a long time to adopt the weapon. The feudal cavalry hosts were utterly opposed to such devices. However, the janissaries embraced the concept. The Artillery, about 5,000 men (including noncombatants) in the 18th Century, was an honorary janissary formation.

Initially, the arm specialised in massive ordnance for reducing fortifications – ironically designed by foreigners in most cases. Over time, smaller field pieces were developed that could support the army as a whole, rather than having to operate as an immobile 'grand battery' that might wind up facing the wrong way. General European trends were followed, but there was usually a time lag in developing a new technology or methodology.

One device that may have been borrowed from the Hussites, or perhaps the other way round, was the use of carts carrying a gun barrel slung under them. The carts could be chained into a lager and the guns mounted to fire outward. These were called *Taburs*.

Cannon were manufactured and transported by the *Cebeci* (Armourer) *Ocaghi*, an elite body who worked closely with the janissaries, even being trained as infantrymen. The *Topçu Ocaghi* or Cannon Corps were the actual gunners. To this force was added a Wagon Corps – the *Top Arabacı* – who also included a flotilla of small boats. For greater mobility, barrels, carriages, and caissons were moved separately; guns were often cast on site, but by the 18th Century this method proved cumbersome in comparison to the mobility of the new artillery developed by the West.

Associated with these corps were the Miners (*Laghimci*) and the Mortarmen (*Humbaracı*). The latter were responsible for all explosive devices, from large mortars down to hand grenades. The miners were divided into a salaried branch, supporting the janissaries, and various provincial units supported by their own *timars*. The difference was that the latter were controlled by local fortress commanders, even though they were technically part of the standing army; those associated with the janissaries were the field component. The mortarmen were also divided into fortress and field elements, plus a manufacturing division.

It was in the realm of sapping and mining, and the construction of fieldworks, that the Ottomans continued to excel, after their siege artillery had fallen to second place. Their methods have been described as those of the Great War, rather than of the 'geometric' precision of the Age of Vauban. The *Türkenkrieg* of 1737-39 did not witness much earth-moving on a grand scale, but tremendous effort was expended in the Siege of Bagdad against the forces of Nadr Shah, and of course the Siege of Vienna in 1683 was a frightening testament to their efficiency.

## Eyâlet Askerleris (Provincial Armies)

The Provincial Army was, on paper, far larger than the *Kapikulu*. The bulk of the effective part of it was the *Topraklı Suvarlı*, a feudal-style cavalry based on the *timar* or 'fief' (as noted earlier, this was more like the Byzantine *pronoia* that it replaced than a Western fief). This body was divided into two grades, the *Timarli Sipahiler* or heavy horse, and the *Cebeli Sipahiler*, or light horse.

The tax revenue of the *timar* constituted the *timar*-holder's salary, and in return, he and his retainers (*cebelis*) were required to appear in the field armed, equipped, and supplied, whenever asked. There were three kinds of *timar*, scaled to revenue. The smallest were awarded to distinguished cavalrymen. The next highest were given to outstanding warriors and to members of the ruling class. The largest were the preserve of the Sultan and his family, but were also awarded to Grand Viziers and the like.

The base revenue of a *timar* was set at the amount required for the holder to maintain his horses, and provide arms and supplies for himself and his retainers, as well as sustain his household while he was on campaign. Thus the smallest *timar* holders were only required to equip themselves, while the largest were required to support bodies of retainers equalling small armies in size. Rumelian *timars* were generally about twice as lucrative as Anatolian *timars*. Bonuses were awarded for bravery and special services, but could place the holder in a higher 'tax bracket', requiring additional service or the support of more retainers.

As in the Western feudal system, substitutes could be sent, and in later years this was often converted to a cash payment for exemption from service (the State always preferring money to pay regulars over the presence of an irresponsible feudal host). *Timars* could revert to the Sultan, but if the holder had a son, the basic *timar* would go to him; a portion was also reserved as pension for those too old to fight. Curiously, younger sons also received *timar* portions, but unlike the eldest son, were not allowed to send a substitute into the field (the eldest being required to attend to the harvest and so forth).

The *sipahi* lived on his *timar*, collecting and living on the tax revenue (usually in kind); arrangements for such things as the *corvée* were based on pre-Ottoman practice in the district. The peasants had better tenure than the *timar* holder, and could not be removed from their land so long as they paid their taxes. Vacant plots could be awarded to other peasants, or rented to sharecroppers. The *timar* holder was entitled to pursue stray peasants and compel their return, but they were not, as under the Romanovs, for example, his personal property – if the missing peasant had become an artisan, he could be forced to pay a special tax instead, for 'disrupting cultivation'. The *sipahi* was also responsible for law and order on his holding, and used his retainers in this capacity. Fines were split 50/50 between himself and the local *bey*.

The *sançak beys* were responsible for the levy, calling up 90% of the *sipahis*, and leaving one in ten to continue running the estates in the district. Every 1,000 *sipahis* had an *alay bey* (regimental commander) set over them. These men were only appointed when the army was on campaign, and were compensated with moderately sized fiefs. Normally, the *sipahis* broke off campaigning in winter and returned to their estates, but if operations were prolonged, a small number would be chosen from among their fellows and sent back to collect the money and supplies needed for the next season.

In the 16th Century there were some 37,500 *timar* holders, 28,000 of whom were *sipahis*. Together with their retainers they fielded 70-80,000 men (the *Kapikulu* amounted to no more than 28,000 at that time). Additionally, about 9,500 *timar* holders acted as fortress troops, mostly in Europe. The *sipahis* of Europe absorbed 46% of the potential tax revenue, those of Anatolia 56%. By the

17th Century, there were 40,000 or so *timar holders*, supporting 106,000 mounted men. However, it must be stressed that only a portion of these could take the field in any given campaign without severe economic dislocation. On average, 70,000 is a reasonable figure, broken down as follows: 30,000 for Rumelia (Europe) plus 3,000 for Bosnia, 17,000 for western Anatolia, and 23,000 for the East. The European *timars* were larger, and supported more retainers, hence the higher total troop strength. Even these numbers would only be called up for a grand campaign such as those of Sultan Suleiman; numbers recorded for various campaigns range from 15,000 to 50,000.

It should also be noted that very large numbers did turn out for ceremonial purposes at the start of a campaign. There were two reasons for this: propaganda and security. Announcing that one had assembled an army of 150,000 men was great propaganda. As important was ensuring that the rear areas remained quiet. *Timar* holders were required to prove their willingness to serve by showing up. In addition, the formal muster at the start of a campaign was an excellent time to negotiate for tax exemptions and property adjustments; client forces could likewise discuss their treaty obligations. After demonstrating their loyalty (and perhaps taking an oath to that effect), some formations would be selected to continue the campaign, while the rest went home. Those that did not campaign would at least ensure the security of the homeland and mobilise resources to support the field army.

After the *Topraklı Suvarlı*, came the *Serhadkulu Suvari*, or Border Horse. Its composition varied with the region, but could be broken down into the following components: the *Akinci*, variously described as shock (throwaway) cavalry or as elite raiding forces, the *gönüllü*, or volunteers, and the *besli*, or scouts. The *akinci* were organised in frontier districts, under border princes known as *uc beys*. (The system was copied by the Habsburgs – the *Grenz*). But by the 18th Century the *akinci* had long been defunct. Raiders in this period were usually *yörüks* or Crimean Tatars. Last, there were the *delis*, colloquially 'the Madmen', though the term originally meant 'guide', Most *delis* were Croats, Serbs, and Bosnians, who had converted to Islam. They functioned as hussars.

The Provincial Foot were known as the *Yerlikulu Pryade*. Like the border cavalry, the corps included a wide variety of unit types, some of whom came and went over the centuries. The *azabs* were originally volunteers who served as they pleased. They were downgraded to a labour pool in the 16th Century, and reinstated as frontier militia – under compulsory service (separate from the *Devshirme* and applied to Muslims) – and split into a fortress and a naval component. The true local militia were known as *gönüllü*, or volunteers, both foot and horse, recruited (and paid) locally. Recruits in Christian districts converted to Islam to be eligible for service. Companies of musketeers were known as *tüfekçi*, and functioned as (often lethal) marksmen. Some sources indicate they were a special corps, uniformed in short red coats and red caps; still, they were most likely recruited locally. A fortress would also have a company of artillery, or perhaps one of fortress guns and one of field guns.

In addition to the feudal host, there were a number of special bodies. The most valuable were the fortress guards, the *derbents*, the *icareli*, or hired fortress gunners, and 'permanent' raiding forces. Fortress garrisons were mixed forces, usually a core of janissaries, supported by Turkoman *azab* archers (originally marines; the term means 'the Bachelors'), and attached bodies of militia.

The *derbentçi* were a special class, drawn from frontier peoples who were neither ruling nor subject class, but somewhere in between. They could be Christian or Muslim, and enjoyed certain tax exemptions. A *derbent* is a guardhouse, typically the sort of structure used to protect a defile or to act as a customs post, and

the *derbents* were the men who staffed them. The reason for the existence of a *derbent* depended on local conditions. It might be situated at a ford, or a road junction, or in a village. It might have been a caravanserai converted to a fort in times of banditry. Like most fortifications, their presence stimulated the economy as well as affording protection to the civilian population. The first *derbents* were garrisoned by ex-Byzantine Christian soldiers, who served in exchange for retaining their fiefs. Such men were called *martolos*. They were common in Greece. Auxiliaries were also hired in exchange for tax exemptions.

Elements of the *Raya* class living on the frontiers, who technically could not bear arms but did so anyway in unsettled times, were regularised as *Sekban bölüks* (yet another example of the use of traditional names that only confuses) of 50-100 men and employed as mounted infantry. Although officially contract militia, in time they replaced the janissaries in prowess and efficiency, especially when fighting as guerillas. Another name for them is *Bashi Bölüks (bashi bazouks)*, after their commanders' rank, though this term is also applied to units of 'hotheads' who were used to lead assaults.

Another significant element of the *derbent* system was made up of Turkoman nomads, organised into 'battalions' of 25-30 men. These were required to send up to five of their number into the field, with the rest remaining at home but supporting their contingent with a portion of their income. They were known as the *müsellem* (the Exempted) because they farmed land but were excused from taxation. In Rumelia they were known as *yörük* (nomad), and in Bulgaria, *voynuk*. Overall their numbers were small (around 2,000 or so), and many had special duties, such as caring for the horses of state officials, or acting as falconers.

Pay for the *derbentçi* usually came through assignment to a *timar*, or simply tax exemption, but they also levied tolls. Service was hereditary. Sometimes the local *derbent* was the responsibility of the adjacent village.

### Bosnia

The forces of Bosnia are well documented and may serve as an example. The province fielded 20,939 men, starting on a peacetime establishment of 15 cavalry and 16 infantry companies. Many were from émigré *timarli* families who had fled Hungary after the 1716-18 war.

Before the start of the 1737-39 war, these were divided amongst the various fortifications and major towns. Hekimoghlu Ali Pasha was the governor – an ex-Grand Vizier sent as a local man to galvanise the defence. He called a muster at the capital, Travnik, in June of 1737, assembling the rear garrisons and militia, but leaving the forward garrisons in place. This allowed him to delay the enemy advance and march on threatened areas from a central position. The Bosnian OOB was as follows:

- 7,000 *Sipahis* – Ali Pasha tried to hold onto these, but most were sent to Russia and destroyed in a magazine explosion at Bender, though some may have returned to serve under the Grand Vizier.
- 503 men at Yeni Pazar – companies: 5 infantry, 2 cavalry, 1 garrison artillery, 1 field artillery, 1 volunteer (this last amounted to 20% of the whole).
- 240 men at Maglay (all foot).
- 1105 men at Banja Luka – including 800 cavalry (in 9 companies), 2 companies of light troops, – 4 infantry companies under Mehmet Agha (infantry & overall) & Mustapha Agha (cavalry)
- 421 at Cetin – companies: 4 infantry, 11 cavalry, 4 light infantry, 4 garrison artillery, 1 field artillery

- 213 at Buzim – companies: 1 infantry, 1 cavalry, 1 light infantry, 2 garrison artillery, 1 field artillery
- 2300 Militia as local reserve for the Cetin and Butim *palankas* (forts), 1 day's march to south.
- 220 light infantry at Ostrovice.
- 1200 militia in support of Ostrovice.
- 330 regulars & 447 militia at Zvornik.
- 268 men at Tuzla.
- 5,000+ men at Akhisar, Gölhisar, Novi, Bihke. These were sent to Osman Bey after the '37 campaign.

The men at Zvornik and Tuzla were technically under the district commander, Ebubekir Pasha (who had ridden off to the Russian Front the year before). To them should be added his personal bodyguard and some janissaries, who appear to have been left behind.

### Silistria and Rumelia

Information on the other two European provinces is lacking, but presumably they had a similar strength and composition to Bosnia. Rumelia had as speciality troops the Greek *Martolos*, who lived as bandits and did not campaign, and large numbers of *Levents*, or marines. Albania provided its famous *Arnaut* marksmen, many of whom were mounted. Silistria provided *Deli* and *Derbents* – frontier guards like the Bosnians. Based on an estimate of some 30-33,000 *Sipahi* in Europe, each province probably had about 10-12,000 horsemen, and perhaps half that number of garrison/militia infantry, possibly excluding *cemaat* Janissaries. The Bey of Viden employed 20,000 men in the 1738 Orsova campaign, of which 5,000 were a loan of Bosnian mounted troops. When defending against General Wallis' attempt to take the fortress in 1737, the Bey built up his strength to some 16,000, mostly horse, and in 1739 used a similar number to raid the Banat. So it would appear that out of the 20,000+ under the Bey's command, perhaps up to 16,000 were mounted. Less the 5,000 Bosnians, this yields 13,000 horsemen and 4,000 foot. Militia and other static forces are not mentioned but can be inferred.

Serbia, apart from the regular garrison of Nish, did not provide much manpower – even in the half remaining to the Ottomans, the countryside favoured the Imperials, and in any case the region had been depopulated.

### Vassal Troops

Vassals were the third element in the Ottoman Army. These forces were provided by client states, such as the Crimean Tatars, and the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. Apart from the Tatars, their importance declined rapidly after the 16th Century, partly because many of the lands were incorporated into the Ottoman State at that time and their forces made a part of the Provincial Armies.

Wallachia and Moldavia traditionally provided *müsellem* and *voyniks* – tax-exempt farmers, now mainly used as a labour pool. A high estimate of 70,000 vassal cavalry (*Hospdarates*), mainly Vlach, were available, of which a maximum of 1/3 would take the field at any one time.

The Tatars supplied 20,000 men for the Danube theatre, though for earlier times their numbers have been put as high as 100,000 (and commonly 40-50,000). Surprisingly, many were infantry, including a 2,000-man bodyguard for the Han. This last was composed of 10 companies of 200 musketeers, but the bulk of the Tatars, mounted or not, were bowmen, even into the 18th Century. Supplementing the cavalry were two-wheeled carts for carrying infantry, supplies, or (usually) booty. (Their enemies, the

Cossacks, used four-wheel carts that could be formed into wagon-lagers).

The Tatars, under direct attack from Russia, proved most helpful in the 1730s even though many men had to remain at home, whereas the Principalities were felt to be unreliable enough to have had their dynasties replaced by men loyal to the Sultan. This strategy was of mixed benefit. In 1737, sufficient loyal Wallachians seemed to have been present to chase off small Imperial columns marching out of Transylvania, but the fact that the Imperials were initially unopposed suggests an emergency levy was required. The Moldavians went over to the Russians in 1739.

### The Army on Campaign

Because of the economic and political structure of the Ottoman state, and the abysmal condition of the roads in winter, campaigning was usually conducted strictly between April and September. Unlike Western armies on campaign, most of the soldiers were routinely demobilised, not placed in winter quarters in proximity to the enemy. Only the indigenous garrison formations would remain at their posts.

Planning for next season's campaign usually commenced right after the troops returned home. Information was collected from a vast network of spies, and experienced generals and local officials were consulted. Because it was next to impossible for a host summoned to appear in April to be ready to march before July, the actual campaigning window was limited to August and September – not enough time for a deep penetration into Hungary. Only under a dynamic leader would an event like the siege of Vienna occur; during the *Türkenkrieg* of 1737-39, the Habsburg forces suffered operational surprise when the Ottoman main army appeared in June, and when raiding parties were sent into the Banat over the winter months, but this was due to the presence of an exceptionally aggressive set of Ottoman field commanders.

Routes of campaigns were predictable (there were only so many river valleys that could provide fodder for a predominantly mounted army): for the Balkans, a march through Adrianople to Sophia, Nish, and up the Morava to Belgrade. Belgrade was the key, because from here, moves could be made up the Sava into Bosnia and against Morlakhia, up the Drava against Croatia, Dalmatia, and Carniola, and up the Tisza into Hungary. Troops and supplies could also be brought around by sea to Dubrovnik. Bases on the lower Danube (Ruschuk, Silistria, Ismail, Braila, and Babadag, supported forces campaigning in Moldavia and Wallachia. The Danube could be used in the other direction as well, once the Iron Gate above Vidin was secured. In the Ukraine were a series of coastal and river bases: Ochakov, Kinburun, Akkerman, Kilia, and Azov.

Preparations for a campaign involved the amassing of huge stockpiles. Farmers living along the lines of advance were required to provide supplies, and were encouraged to grow staples that could support the Army. Pack animals and oxen to pull the artillery were bred specially for service in the Army, and herds of cattle and sheep were driven along on campaign.

The opening of a campaign was attended with much ceremony. First, two of the Sultan's horsetails (or one of the Grand Vizier's) were set up in the Palace courtyard as a warning. These were then sent on a day ahead of the army, to alert the inhabitants along the line of march. The first day's camp was always a western suburb of Constantinople (the Davut Pasha) when campaigning in Europe, or Üsküdar if heading east. When marching out, the army was joined by representatives of the various craft guilds who would be supporting it. These were followed by the janissaries, the lesser corps, members of the aristocracy, and finally the Sultan or Grand Vizier and his advisors. Before leaving, farewell ceremonies were performed. In the early days, custom decreed

that most of the ruling class in Constantinople accompany the sovereign or his representative, along with their entire households. Substitutes were left behind to handle affairs. But by the 18th Century, this practice had been reversed, and the substitutes were sent on campaign.

A typical march began in the early hours of the morning and lasted until midday, when camp would be made. Pioneers went ahead to fix the roads and bridges, and to mark the line of advance across country. Strict discipline was supposed to be maintained, though by the 18th Century, a certain laxness had developed. The Advance Guard was composed of the *akincis* or similar irregulars, the *delis* (scouts), the *yörüks* (pioneers) and a picked force of cavalry – the *çarhacibashi*. The main body comprised the janissaries, followed by the rest of the regular corps, behind which came the Sultan or Grand Vizier, his staff, and the Court elements. The feudal cavalry hosts provided the flank and rearguards.

Camps were laid out with the Court at the centre, surrounded by the janissaries and other units of the Palace. The feudal hosts and various client state contingents camped outside this ring, along with their own commanders. Camp discipline included regular shaving and washing, a prohibition on drinking, and an order to maintain quiet.

In battle, the centre of the Ottoman formation was composed of the janissaries and palace troops surrounding the Sultan, often entrenched, with the artillery formed into a grand battery or deployed as in a fortress. Outside this central strongpoint, the cavalry wheeled and manoeuvred, seeking to envelop the enemy as he tried to attack the centre.

### Naval Forces

A brief word should be given about the Ottoman Navy, although in a Balkan campaign its only role was to protect shipping destined for ports on the Adriatic; river craft came under Army control. Because the Ottomans were primarily a land power, the Navy was always a poor relation. Developed along Genoese and Venetian lines, it became a force to be reckoned with, though by the 18th Century it had passed its prime.

The head of the navy was the *derya bey* (Bey of the Sea), known also as the *kaptan pasha*. It took a while for this position to achieve the status of *beylerbeyi* (Barbarossa, or Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha, was the first) which brought the incumbent greater income and the right to sit in the *Divan*. The vassals of the position's holdings included the large Genoese population of Galata. By the 18th Century, the Grand Admiral had achieved three-horsetail rank, though the forces under his command no longer justified this exalted title.

The Grand Admiral oversaw both the fighting and logistic elements of the Navy, but the two branches were kept quite separate.

The *Tersane-i Âmire*, established first at Imit and then at Istanbul, was the Imperial Naval Arsenal and also the chief dockyard, controlling the activities of subordinate dockyards throughout the empire. (In its heyday it was matched only by the Venetian yards.) Several districts were responsible solely for supplying the yards. Egypt was a supplier of key materials such as sailcloth and gunpowder, though the Istanbul foundries made the cannon and much of the powder. The Fleet proper was responsible for policing the areas around the Istanbul docks, and for the security of various islands.

Individual ships were commanded by *kaptans* (later *reis*, with the term *kaptan* reserved for flotilla commanders) who received *timars* from the Grand Admiral's *sançaks* as salaries, from which they were expected to pay for their crews, stores, and repairs. Not

until late in the empire's history were gradations of admiral introduced.

Crews were known as *levents*, and included Greeks, Turks, Dalmations, and Albanians. *Azap* archers (of similar stock) were used as marines. Service was either salaried, or in lieu of taxes. Oarsmen (most Turkish ships were galleys until quite late in the empire's history) were not considered crew – they were the motor. They were comprised of prisoners of war and criminals. In the 18th Century, sailing ships became common and crews increased in size; they were known as *kalyoncular* (galleon men).

Like the army, the fleet only 'campaigned' in summer, its departure being the occasion for ceremonies involving the Sultan or Grand Vizier; in winter it was dry docked, since the men had to go home and collect the taxes needed for operations next year. Salaried men remained in barracks, and did so outside of naval jurisdiction, leading to the use of the term '*levent*' in a new sense.

On the following page will be found a table of 33 naval vessels. Detailed information on Ottoman naval vessels is scanty. The names and hull lengths match a list comprised in 1730; the crew sizes match a list comprised in 1738. Although not absolutely certain, it makes sense to retain the order when merging the two lists. Ottoman ships were not classed by guns or decks, but by crew and dimensions, and, if propelled by sail, were deemed 'galleons' – although descriptive clauses (omitted on the table) distinguish the few ships with three decks.

An assumption has been made that all ships, other than those described as 'caravels', are of two decks, while the latter are single-deckers – perhaps what the Russian sources describe as 'frigates'. As sailing vessels, the multi-deck ships would be classed as *kalyons* (galleons): three-masters.

The Turks borrowed many class names from European sources, spelling by ear, it seems. Thus:

*göke* = cog, though this was an oared vessel  
*barça* = barge – a two- or three-masted ship of shallow draft  
*aghribar* = a single-masted trading vessel  
*burtun* and *karavelle* = warship with sails, but smaller than a *kalyon*  
*firkateyn* = frigate  
*kapak* = two-decker  
*korvet* = corvette, of three masts  
*brik* = brig  
*shalope* or *çalope* = sloop  
*sheftiye* or *shitye* = two-master  
*uskuna* = schooner  
*kotra* or *kotr* = a light sloop  
*pink* = pink  
*gulet* = galliot or half-galley  
*atesh gemisi* or *bomba gemisi* = fireship or bomb vessel

Oared vessels were called *çektiri* or *çekdirme*. These also used sails, as did most such vessels, for travelling when enemy action was not anticipated. There are a host of names describing various hybrids.

*[At the time of writing there are rumours of a comprehensive work on the Ottoman Navy, which should serve to clarify matters.]*

When comparing crew sizes with ships of a later period and with Western navies, those of 1000 and up match the complement of a First Rate or large Second Rate, those of 750-900 match the complement of a Second Rate, 500+ could be considered Third Rates, while the 400s range covers Fourth Rates, 300s Fifth Rates, and 200s Sixth Rates. But when considering 'weight of broadside', there is no comparison. In the Black Sea battles of the war, the Turks did achieve naval dominance, but it was not easy, despite facing only limited numbers of small Russian ships.

*[Some of the descriptive words used in conduction with the ship names include:*

*çifte* = double.

*kıçlı* = bottom. When combined with *çifte* this seems to suggest a double-hulled ship – not a transport catamaran, like those the Russians used, but perhaps with a reinforced hull. But the term is used in other cases where it seems to be merely part of the name.

*başlı* = headed. Perhaps 'leader' or 'foremost', or simple in the style of 'Turk's head' (though the Ottomans would say 'giaour's head).]

## Ships of the Ottoman Navy c1730s

	Name	English Name	Crew	Decks	Length
1	Çifte Arslan kıçlı	Double Lion	1500	3	46.6m
2	Çifte Kaplan kıçlı	Double Tiger	1300	3	45.1m
3	Çifte Ceyrân kıçlı	Double-?	1100	3?	43.6m
4	Yıldızlı Hurma	Golden Palm	1000	3?	43.6m
5	Melek-i Bahrî	Angel-?	800	3	42m
6	Şeşpâ-yı Bahrî		800	3	42m
7	Ejder başlı		800	2?	42m
8	Şadırvan kıçlı	Fountain	800	2?	41.7m
9	Beyaz At başlı	White Horse	800	2?	41.7m
10	Büyük Gül başlı	Large Rose	800	2?	41.7m
11	Sungur kıçlı		750	2?	41.7m
12	Esper kıçlı		750	2?	40.5m
13	İfrit başlı	'Getting Angry'	750	2?	40.5m
14	Küçük Gül başlı	Small Rose	750	2?	40.5m
15	Yılan başlı	Snake	750	2?	39m
16	Yıldızlı Şahin kıçlı	Gold-plated-?	650	2?	38.6m
17	Zülfikar kıçlı		650	2?	38.6m
18	Akçaşârlı		650	2?	38.6m
19	Servi bağçeli		650	2?	37.1m
20	Yıldızlı Nar kıçlı	Golden Pomegranate	500	2?	36m
21	Yıldız bağçeli		450	2?	34.9m
22	Kırmızı kuşaklı	Red Sash	450	2?	34.1m
23	Sarı kuşaklı	Yellow Sash	450	2?	34.1m
24	Yeşil kuşaklı	Green Sash	450	2?	33.4m
25	Ay bağçeli		450	2?	33.4m
26	Mâî Arslan başlı	?-Lion	450	2?	33m
27	karavele-i cedid-i evvel	Speedy?	450	1?	33m
28	karavele-i cedid-i sâni		400	1?	33m
29	Güneş kıçlı (caravel?)	Sun	400	1?	33m
30	Şahin kıçlı (caravel)	Hawk	400	1?	31.5m
31	Kuş Bağçeli (caravel)	Bird	350	1?	31.5m
32	Çifte Balaban kıçlı (caravel)	Double-?	300	1?	29.2m
33	Mâî kıçlı (caravel)		250	1?	29.2m

## Historical Sketches of Some Frontier Regions

### Bosnia & Herzegovina

Under the Sultanate, Bosnia and Herzegovina were a single province, or *eyâlet* (vilayet), ruled by a *beylerbeyi* at Travnik – though the regional capital was at Bosna Serai (Sarajevo). Bosnia had been a part of the Medieval Serbian empire of the central Balkans. Before the Ottoman conquest, it was ruled by a fractious nobility that disregarded the authority of the central monarchy. After the Ottoman conquest, it was ruled by a fractious nobility that disregarded the authority of the central monarchy. The land is mountainous, and in the days of the *Türkenkrieg* was completely undeveloped, with malarial lowlands and forested highlands, home to fierce tribal peoples who spent their time fighting each other and preying on their neighbours – like most Highlanders.

The Bosnian nobility embraced Islam to retain their power (previously, they had pursued the heretical Paulician teachings). Although many of the common people did likewise, a surprising number did not, but were permitted to retain their old beliefs (not all of them Christian). Nevertheless, Bosnia was considered a solidly Muslim province. Although zealous for their religion, the Bosnian lords did not love the Turks. (This is why Travnik was the seat of government – the local nobility refused to permit the governor to spend more than one night at the real capital). In peace, they spent their time feuding, and making the governor's life difficult. But under attack from the Christian North, they would put aside their differences. Fortunately, at the time of the 1737-39 war, the governor was one of their own – Hekimoghlu Ali Pasha, while the Grand Vizier was an ex-Governor.

### Wallachia

Wallachia was founded as a principality in the 14th Century under Prince Basarab I, who rebelled against the King of Hungary. In 1415 Wallachia placed itself under Ottoman suzerainty for protection. The Hungarian name for the region is descriptive: *Havasalföld* 'snowy lowlands', or *Havaselve* 'land beyond the snowy mountains'. 'Wallachia' for the land and 'Vlach' for the people are names given by the Germans. The inhabitants called themselves Romanians, descendants of the Roman military colony of Dacia. The Vlachs were a nomadic people of Slavic origin wandering among them, like the gypsies – who were also present in large numbers.

Wallachia was divided into Muntenia, or Greater Wallachia, and Oltania, or Little Wallachia, which was a *banat* (ruled by a Banus or military commissioner). The Olt River was the dividing line. The capital was originally at Câmpulung, then Curtea de Argesh, then Târgovishte. Bucharest became the capital toward the end of the 16th Century.

Oltania was also the original Roman possession – the Emperor Trajan built a famous bridge over the Danube whose ruins still stand (it collapsed in Roman times). Wallachia, being a wide, fertile basin through which wandering tribes naturally channelled themselves, witnessed repeated inroads of Goths, Sarmatians, Huns, and Slavs. Under Byzantine rule for a while, it was eventually taken over by the Bulgars, who ruled it until the 10th Century. Migrating Pechenegs and Cumans then took control, though no large political entity was formed. They were removed by the Mongols, who may have ruled for a space; the land then became disputed ground between the Bulgars and the Magyars of Hungary.

During the political turmoil of the 12th and 13th Centuries, the local leadership, the *voivodes*, or princely families, began to consolidate their power. Eventually, the aforementioned Basarab was acknowledged as overlord. The third generation, Vladislav I, disputed Transylvania with the Hungarians, and fought off the first Ottoman inroads. However, faced with Hungarians to the

North and Poles to the East, under Mircea the Elder, Wallachia became subjected to the Sultanate in 1415. This did not end the struggle; the *voivodes* desired autonomy, but their underlings, the *boyars*, faced with increasing oppression, actually favoured the Turks and instituted a number of rebellions. This was the time of Vlad III Dracula, who ruthlessly suppressed his own *boyars* while at the same time dealing blows to the Ottoman army of Murad II – Vlad was not ruler of Transylvania, he was a Wallachian.

The turbulent times also saw the occupation of Wallachia by Hungarians and Moldavians, and the rise of a virtually separate dynasty in Oltania – the Craioveti. In the early part of the 16th Century, they replaced the House of Basarab.

Shortly after, the Ottomans tried to establish Wallachia as a province, but the *boyars* rallied together under one of several princely houses; the Ottomans were forced to remove their military presence, but in exchange, Prince Radu had to confirm Sultan Sulieman as suzerain; the Turks also increased the amount of tribute they had been collecting. The next hundred years saw outward stability, but the *boyars'* authority was greatly increased at the expense of any central administration. They generally elected their rulers. At this time, the Ottomans began drawing heavily on Wallachian troops; ironically, local defences were suffered to virtually disappear.

The turn of the 17th Century saw a strong Wallachian prince, Michael the Brave, defeating the Turks in battle and extending his sway over neighbouring regions, but this was a brief flare-up. Ottoman economic domination led to the moving of the capital to Bucharest (a rapidly growing trade centre), the institution of serfdom by Michael (to raise war taxes), and the gradual suppression of the *boyars* (though they retained enough influence to make themselves irksome). Repeated rebellions led to the imposition of foreign rulers – Greeks and Levantines. In the middle of the 17th Century, the Wallachian and Transylvanian princes tried to ally against the Ottomans, but were defeated in battle by Mehmed IV (1658-59). More rebellions followed, but this time they were internal affairs, as coalitions of *boyars* supported one prince or another.

The turn of the 18th Century was another critical time. A strong prince, Constantin Brâncoveanu, noted for his cultural achievements, tried to negotiate an anti-Ottoman coalition between Wallachia, Austria, and Russia. He was destroyed by Sultan Ahmed III, who then went on to defeat the Russian Army of Peter the Great on the Pruth (1711). The man who denounced Constantin set himself up as ruler, but after calling upon the Habsburgs for aid, was himself destroyed in 1716. This led to the end of the *boyars'* elective system of government and rulers were now appointed from the Phanariot Greek families of Istanbul.

Ironically, the very first Phanariot ruler, Nicholas Mavrocordatos, who was also ruler of Moldavia, was deposed by a *boyar* rebellion and arrested by Habsburg soldiers. This was during the 1716-18 war, which ended with Oltania being ceded to the Habsburgs. The *boyars* of Oltania soon tired of their new masters, but it was not until 1739 that Oltania was returned to Ottoman suzerainty. By the 1740s, the *banat* was being integrated with the rest of the country. Wallachia did not separate itself from Ottoman influence until the 19th Century, when it joined with Transylvania and Moldavia to form modern Romania.

### Silistria

Bulgaria has had a civilised presence for over 6600 years. The Bulgarians, a Slavic people, have established a number of powerful kingdoms over the centuries. Arriving in the 7th Century, they took over the old Roman province of Moesia from the Byzantines, who Christianised them. Sometimes enemies of the Empire, sometimes allies – they saved Constantinople from the Arabs in 718 – they were the major player in the region during

the 9th and 10th Centuries, conquering most of the Balkans. However, constant war against the Croats weakened them; an attack by the Rus of Kiev was followed by a Byzantine assault that resulted in the incorporation of Bulgaria into the Empire on favourable terms (at least for the élites – there were several popular uprisings). Unlike their neighbours, however, the Bulgars, under Byzantine rule, beat off inroad by the Pechenegs and Hungarians.

At the turn of the 13th Century, a successful rebellion led to the establishment of the Second Bulgarian Empire, which survived for two centuries. Weakened by constant external pressure, the empire eventually fragmented at the end of the 14th Century, just as the Ottomans were expanding their power. Unlike many regions under Ottoman rule, the Bulgarians suffered terribly, systematically losing much of their culture and population. As late as the 19th Century the land was severely depopulated.

The Ottoman province of Silistria (pronounced *Sil-istria*) was split off from the province of Rumelia (European Turkey) as the latter expanded. It is surmised that the district was made into a province to satisfy its first overlord, the Han of the Crimean Tatars. Originally comprising Bulgaria north of the Balkan Mountains, it was expanded to include Adrianople (Edirne), Filibe (Philippopolis – Plovdiv) and Vidin, with their surrounding territories.

### **The Dobruja**

The Dobruja is the strip of land running between the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria and the Danube River, where it bends north on its final leg to the sea. This bend demonstrates the nature of the country – hilly, except for the Danube delta itself. The southern portion is steppe land, running into the wooded slopes of the Balkan Mountains. The name comes from a 14th Century Ottoman ruler, Dobrotitsa.

This land has been inhabited since prehistoric times. In Classical times, it was the site of a number of Greek colonies along the coast, while Getae Scythians wandered the hinterland. Under the Romans, the region now called Bulgaria became the province of Moesia, but the Dobruja proper remained a friendly client kingdom, Odryssia, while the Greek city states became a prefecture; this is where the Romans based their Danube Fleet. Later, when Moesia was divided, the Dobruja was incorporated into the eastern half (Moesia Inferior). A focus for invading tribes, the Dobruja was retained under Roman and later Byzantine control, even after its colonisation by the Slavs. It was the Bulgarians who wrested it from Imperial control in the 7th Century. In the 10th Century it was occupied by the Kievan Rus, then reconquered by the Byzantines. More invaders came and were settled here – Cumans and Pechenegs – and in the 12th Century it was settled by a band of Seljuk Turks. In the next century the Golden Horde established its power over the region before the Bulgarians took it back.

In the 14th Century, a Tatar prince established himself in the Dobruja as a 'protector of the mouths of the Danube', but the southern portions were under allied Turkish rule. Now came a period of turmoil, as Bulgars, Wallachians, Tatars, Turks, Byzantines, Genoese traders, and Latin Crusaders fought over the pickings of this rich region. The Genoese established numerous trading towns, generally on the sites of the earlier Greek communities, but Ottoman rule over the whole was firmly established in the 1420 campaign of Sultan Mehmed I.

At the time of the 1737-39 war, the Dobruja was a *sanjak* of the *evâlet* of Silistre (itself originally a *sanjak* of Rumeli). The region was settled by Turks, Arabs, and Tatars. The Genoese maintained their trading communities, and large numbers of Romanians still dwelt under Turkish rule.

### **Serbia**

The Serbs, like the Bulgarians, are a nation with a long and rich history. They arrived in the Balkans in the 7th Century and were invited to settle in the Byzantine Empire. By 812 AD they had achieved their first state under the Vlastimirovics, and by 865 had converted to Christianity. Their first, 11th Century kingdom, was based on the Montenegrin duchy of Dukja. The House of Nemanjic took this early state to the status of a kingdom, and then of an empire.

The Serbs under Emperor Dushan Nemanjic witnessed a flowering of law (Dushan's Code), religion, culture and military prominence. His dynasty flourished from 1166 AD to 1371. But over-expansion led to fragmentation. By the 14th Century, four separate kingdoms had developed: Dioclea, Rascia, Syrmia, and Bosnia. In 1389 AD the Battle of Kosovo was fought against the Turks. The heartland of the Serbian nation, Kosovo, was lost forever, resettled by Albanian mercenaries.

A Despotate consisting of the northern territories (capital at Smederevo) fell in 1459 AD, and Bosnia & Herzegovina followed in 1482. Belgrade held out under Hungarian rule and defeated a Turkish siege in 1456, but was lost in 1521. This opened the way for the Ottomans to conquer Hungary, including Emperor Jovan Nenad's transitory refugee state in the Vojvodina (the Banat of Temesvár).

Under Ottoman rule there was a fusion of Islamic, Orthodox Christian, Arab, Slavic, and Byzantine culture; nevertheless, the Serbs retained their cultural independence, and their religion – though the Bosnians chose to convert to Islam. Even the Serbian militia of the Ottoman Army remained Orthodox.

The Ottomans dwelt in the towns, and the Serbs in the countryside. Periodic rebellions instigated by the Habsburgs led to further diasporas; in particular after the Ottomans failed to take Vienna in 1683. The 1737-39 war also caused a mass exodus. Despite heeding the Emperor's call to rise up, the Serbs did not much like the Habsburgs; their brand of Catholicism was too pushy. Nevertheless, the bulk of the forces along the military Border were either Serbian or Croat.

The Vojvodina fell under Habsburg rule in 1718, and three successive attempts were made by the Habsburgs to 'liberate' the rest of Serbia, but this was not accomplished until the 19th Century.

### **Montenegro**

Montenegro is Italian for 'Black Mountain' – Crna Gora in the native Serbian language. The name describes its geography, a natural mountain fortress. Originally settled by Illyrian tribesmen, and then under Roman rule, Montenegro found itself on the dividing line between the East and West Roman Empires.

The Slavs came in the 7th Century. In the 11th their dukedom of Dukja was recognised by Pope Gregory VII as an independent state, under its first King, Michael. Never conquered, the kingdom paid tribute first to the Byzantines, and then to the Bulgarians, until in the 14th Century it became the base of the Serbian empire; under which it became the Principality of Zeta.

The Ottomans made inroads but were unable to fully subject the country. Instead, they masked it off, sending raiding parties in at great risk in reprisal for bandit forays against the lowlands. In 1516 the Prince of Montenegro abdicated in favour of the Archbishop, Vavil. From then on Montenegro was a theocratic state ruled by a single clan who provided the bishops. This situation lasted until 1852, when one of the bishops married and instituted a secular state.

## Venetian Dalmatia

Originally the home of an Illyrian tribe called the Dalmatians, the region was settled by the Slavs during their migrations, with the northern half run by the Croats, and the southern half by the Serbs. The old Romance population maintained itself in the towns. Venice and Byzantium vied for control of the islands and city states. Thanks to the calamity of the Black Death, however, the surviving population was forced to turn to Venice for support.

The *Serenissima* established her control in 1420, ruling with only one interruption until 1797. Only Ragusa (Dubrovnik) held out as an independent Republic. With the rise of the Ottomans, the region became unsettled; the Venetians and their local people held the towns, while the Turks ravaged the hinterland and propped up Ragusa as a puppet state.

With the defeat of the Ottomans in 1718, the region became quiescent and developed a certain prosperity. Thanks to a treaty of perpetual peace between Venice and the Porte, this situation remained unchanged until Napoleon dissolved the Republic of Venice in 1797.

### Morlaks, Uskoks, and Miridites

The Morlaks were of the Roman Catholic faith, voluntary subjects of the Venetians. They were the original Romanised Illyrian inhabitants, relegated under the Slavs to be shepherd folk. Retreating from the advancing Turks, they fortified themselves in the hills of Dalmatia. Under Venetian rule they became skilled seamen.

The Uskoks originated as a particular band of refugees who took over the fortress of Clissa, near Spalato (Split). Here they pursued an undying vendetta against the Turk by land and sea. Clissa was soon lost to them, so they migrated to Zengg. Pirates, they attracted desperate men from all over Europe, not excepting English men of rank. They survived for a long time as useful tools of the Habsburgs. However, in 1625 a general outcry forced the dynasty to dispose of them. Most were resettled at Carlstadt, where they were integrated into the Military Border, but some went to Montenegro to continue the fight against the Turk.

The Miridites were a clan of Catholic Albanians – 20,000 of them – living around Lake Scutari, who sometimes allied with the Montenegrins.

## The Habsburg State & the Imperial Army

Although 'Austrian' is (and was) often used colloquially to describe the domains of the Habsburgs, it is incorrect to speak of an Austrian Empire before the age of Napoleon. But calling those domains the 'Habsburg Empire' is also dangerous, since it risks confusion with the Holy Roman Empire, or [First] *Reich*, ruled concurrently by the dynasty. The best term is probably the 'Habsburg Monarchy', but 'Imperial(s)' can also be used, especially when dealing with matters in which the Holy Roman Empire was concerned.

*[Habsburg rule over both the Reich and another, strictly dynastic empire, was not entirely coincidental, since the prestige of the former enabled the formation of the latter and was seen as absolutely necessary for the continued grandeur of the House. The dynastic empire became the Austrian Empire after Napoleon dissolved the Reich and started calling himself Emperor. To counter this, the Habsburgs styled themselves Emperors of Austria; before this they were merely Arch-Dukes of Austria, Kings of Bohemia, and Kings of Hungary (plus rulers of a host of lesser states).]*

The Habsburgs were a Swiss-Swabian family (the name comes from Habichtsburg, or Hawk Castle, located in what is now Switzerland but what was then Swabia). They first appear in the 11th Century. After only a few generations, they had spread their influence eastward and owned most of the region now known as

Austria; at the same time, they became off-and-on Emperors of the *Reich*. By 1500 the family was powerful enough to marry into both the Burgundian and Spanish dynasties, so that under Emperor Charles V, the Habsburgs controlled Germany, the Czech (Bohemian) and Hungarian Crowns, the Low Countries, much of Italy, the Iberian Peninsula, and both the Spanish and Portuguese overseas empires. Such a vast conglomerate had little chance of holding together – Charles V found the effort so great that he abdicated, after dividing it between his two sons. By the 17th Century, the Spanish and Austrian Houses were quite distinct, with separate, sometimes antagonistic policies – though their enemies persisted in seeing a unified bloc. Reunification remained a dream of the dynasty, but only a dream.

Emperor Charles VI was 'of middling stature and in good plight of body. He is of a swarthy, hale complexion, has a brisk eye and thick lips, for which his family in general has been remarkable' (quoted in *RA*, p. 8). His twin passions were the hunt, and music; he even wrote and performed an opera. Charles was also responsible for the Baroque flowering of Vienna's art and architecture. Seen as honest and well-intentioned, he is generally felt to have been indecisive and slow to grasp problems. Minutiae delighted him.

Charles, like his contemporaries, saw himself as a mercantilist prince, establishing new industries and trading concerns, new roads and canals, in accordance with the fashion of his day – state run businesses intended to make the Crown self-sufficient. But his efforts were fragmentary, and during his frequent wars he was forced to levy taxes the old way.

Foreign and military affairs did not interest the Emperor as much, and by the 1730s, he was relying on the Secretary of the Privy Council, Johann Cristoph Bartstein, to keep him abreast of events. Bartstein could rely on him to pass whatever measures were suggested, usually without reading the fine print. Bartstein's role was not unduly pernicious. He had a capacity for work, and a certain flair for foreign affairs (at least in his own mind), though his machinations tended to be unduly complex and his outlook conservative. One Prussian visitor to Vienna called him 'a pedantic schoolmaster'. Maria Theresa later lamented employing him, on the advice of her father, but he was utterly devoted to her House and at the time she had needed all the help she could get. For good or ill, he left a deep impression on 18th Century Austria.

## Geographical Composition

### The Hereditary Lands

The Imperial or Austrian branch of the Habsburgs was rooted in a region known as the Hereditary Lands, or *Erblande*. Following Germanic practice, the *Erblande* were initially divided among the heirs of Ferdinand (Charles V's son and heir of the 'Austrian' half of the House). Though reunited late in the 17th Century, this temporary sundering had the unfortunate effect of strengthening regional identities and adding a plethora of administrative devices to an already complex network of governance, which answers the question of why the Habsburgs had difficulty achieving centralised control of even their family lands – the various bureaucracies were not assimilated into one, they were just grafted together, producing an effect like the frontispiece to Hobbes' 'Leviathan'.

By the late 17th Century, the *Erblande* consisted of the following regions: Upper and Lower Austria (with the Enns River as the dividing line), Inner Austria (Styria, Carniola, Carinthia, and various lands by the Adriatic, such as parts of Istria, and Trieste), Tyrol and the *Vorlande* (the latter being the scattered collection of original holdings stretching across Swabia to Switzerland), the lands of the Crown of St. Wenceslas (a.k.a Bohemia, Silesia, and Moravia), and the lands of the Crown of St. Stephen (a.k.a Hungary including Croatia, Slavonia, and Transylvania).

The *Erblande* was a federal polity. All the provinces were considered to be subject to the House of Habsburg, but each relationship was slightly different. Only some were ruled directly by the Emperor as his personal property. Others had governors, and still others were ruled by the landholding class, who regarded the Habsburgs as their suzerains, either in their capacity as Emperors, or as feudal dynastic lords. These last, as always, proved the most ungovernable. Finally, there were vast Church holdings, such as Passau and Salzburg, essentially under Habsburg rule but subject to their own laws and the dual authority of the Pope.

Each region had, apart from the Emperor's domain lands, their own local governments – Bohemia and Hungary were kingdoms in their own right – their own methods of taxation, and their own jealously guarded privileges. This meant that careful negotiation was required whenever extraordinary funds and levies had to be generated; extreme care to be taken in lands such as Bohemia and Hungary, where anti-Habsburg sentiment was strong.

The economy of these territories was agricultural; in most cases a modified form of serfdom. Silesia, a duchy of Bohemia, was the most industrialised, and provided no less than a quarter of the state's revenue – which is why Prussia went to war for it. Upper Austria had extensive salt mines (coveted by Bavaria), and there were a variety of mines in Bohemia, the Tyrol, and Inner Austria. External trade was minimal, though. Following the pattern established in other lands, a state-monopoly Ostende Company was formed for trade with the Levant and (the great hope) the Far East. Some trade was done with the Turks, and Western Europe used the Habsburg lands as a source of raw material. Per Mercantilist doctrine, much of Industry was a state monopoly. Internally, trade was hampered by an excessive use of customs barriers and tolls, which were also state monopolies, though sometimes of the local government, not the federal.

The governance of the *Erblande* had a single overriding object: to support the Imperial Army. (By 'Imperial' is meant the Army of the Habsburgs, as distinct from the *Reichsarmee* of the Holy Roman Empire.) Local issues were for the most part left in local hands, allowing the common people and minor notables to get on with their lives, in exchange for which they were to pay a variety of cash- kind- and service- taxes.

As in other countries, such as England, the Habsburgs had found it necessary to begin calling conventions of the lay and clerical nobility, known as Diets, in order to raise funds for a military that could no longer be supported out of their own domains. Originally called only as needed, these became annual affairs. But unlike England, where a Parliament developed to tackle all issues of governance, in the *Erblande*, the main issue became and remained the voting of the yearly Budget. Since the men who ran the local Administrations also comprised the Estates of the Diet, they fiercely resisted any enlargement of the State's authority. Since each region had its own Diet, a central 'government by Diet' remained a far off dream. The concept of an Estates General had been discussed, but not implemented. Instead, the dynast had to bargain separately with Estates whose regional demands (in exchange for approving the Budget) were either incompatible or overwhelming.

Compounding the difficulty was a religious issue: the Habsburgs were Catholics (and usually bigoted Catholics), and the nobility comprising the Estates were mainly Protestant. In the 17th Century, many of the Estates had rebelled *enmasse*, forcing a harsh crackdown – and making the Counterreformation one of the perceived pillars of unity in the Habsburg Monarchy.

## Hungary

The Kingdom of Hungary (Crown of St. Stephen) did not quite fit the mould. Although part of the *Erblande*, its crown was, like the *Reich's*, an elective one. It was also outside the *Reich*, and not concerned in any way with it, except that the King happened to be a Habsburg. Moreover, thanks to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire that occurred in the centuries before 1683, it had become divided into three.

At first there was Habsburg Hungary, administered from Pressburg (Bratislava) and comprising a thin border zone running in an arc from the Adriatic to the Carpathians. In the south were Croatia and Slavonia, in the north, 'Royal' Hungary. When the Habsburgs first began to expand eastward from Austria, the Turks ruled the middle portion of Hungary (capital Budapest), including the Banat of Temesvár and the Maros-Arad region to the north of the latter. When the Turks were driven out, many of the nobility who preferred Ottoman rule became refugees (and many of those that remained wished they had also – the Habsburg brand of Catholicism was hard to stomach).

The third region was *Siebenburg* (Transylvania), which under the Turks had been an independent protectorate and the keeper of the spirit of 'Old Hungary'. Even after 'liberation' it remained for a time a pawn of the Ottomans against the Habsburgs. In Transylvania, though the serfs were Orthodox, the nobility and urban inhabitants were often Protestant; religious toleration made the province a refuge for 'malcontents'.

Until the Hungarian Diet accepted the Habsburgs as kings late in the 17th Century (subject to a special ceremony of recognition), Hungary was not even part of the *Erblande*, but a lawless frontier land, depopulated and raided by both Turk and German. Once the Habsburgs gained control, they treated Hungary as their personal fief and ruthlessly imposed their brand of law and order. Still, the unruliness of the Hungarian Diet, the irredentist dreams of Transylvania, and the threatening presence of an indigenous princely house in exile at Constantinople, meant that the dynasty had to be careful.

The solution was to send German settlers (plus Romanians and other ethnic groups) to repopulate the former Turkish districts, and to place much of the region under military control. This killed two birds with one stone: it reduced the effectiveness of the local nobility (unless they were willing to join the Establishment) and it created a strong defence line against Turkish aggression. For some time, the Habsburgs treated the kingdom as their personal fief, and subjected to it various experiments in absolute rule. This did not improve their popularity, and the Rákóczi Rising of 1703-11 was still widely remembered.

Because of that revolt, and because Hungarian support was badly needed at the time of Maria Theresa's accession, the Hungarians regained and maintained some measure of independence – hence the Dual Monarchy of the 19th Century.

By time-honoured custom, the region most under threat was required to foot the largest share of the bill. But in 1736 this region was Hungary, still simmering with revolt; the Habsburgs did not dare insist on fair payment, and so the Hungarians contributed little to their own defence in the *Türkenkrieg*, though they did not revolt after all. For Hungarians, however, military service in the Habsburg Army was regarded as a last resort, almost a form of punishment.

Transylvania appeared to retain even more independence, with its own Court Chancellery, and a Gubernium of Estate-nominated citizens. In reality, power was vested in the Commanding General at Hermannstadt. As an example of the Habsburg yoke, the former Ottoman tribute was still collected as tax, but at four times the old rate.

## The Banat

The Banat of Temesvár was considered part of Hungary in general terms. It had been acquired from the Ottomans in 1718, and consisted of what is now the Vojvodina, or Serbia north of the Danube, as far north as the Maros River, and bounded by the Tisza on the west and the hill country north of the Iron Gate on the east. The term Banat indicates it was governed by a Banus, or commissioner. Laid waste by war and disease, this region was a perfect laboratory for dynasty's experiments. The old Magyar nobility had long since disappeared, so the Emperor became sole landlord.

On the advice of Prince Eugene, the Emperor had declared the region a *neoaquistica*, implying legally that it was to be directly subject to the Crown; local interests would have no say. The region was administered by the *Commisso neoaquistica*, a joint committee of the Aulic War Council (*Hofkriegsrat*), and Court Chamber (*Hofkammer*). This committee also administered the other territories acquired in 1718; local administration was run by *Feldmarshal Graf* Claude Florimund Mercy, headquartered at the fortress of Temesvár. As time went on and Emperor Charles lost interest, the Hungarian nobility was given some say in the project.

Massive resettlement by German and other nationalities – even Italians and Spaniards – was required. Protestants were not allowed (unlike Transylvania). The colonists dominated the towns, leaving the original inhabitants to the countryside (just as the Turks did). By the 1730s, Catholicism outweighed Orthodoxy. This was intentional; the Banat was to be a Catholic bulwark. Integrated into the Military Border, the Banat was studded with fortresses, and provided a fair number of troops, given the low population.

No expense was spared in promoting the latest economic theories, and the State fostered agriculture, industry, and trade, to such an extent that the Banat shortly became one of the most lucrative provinces. Except that it cost almost as much to maintain. The *Hofkammer* and the *Hofkriegsrat* also disagreed vehemently and would not implement each others' ideas. Floods, Turkish inroads, and the plague of 1738 virtually destroyed all that had been accomplished.

## Serbia

Habsburg Serbia in the 1730s consisted of the northern half of Serbia south of the Danube, placing Nish within easy reach. Included was a narrow strip of Bosnia running along the south bank of the Sava. As a 1718 conquest, Serbia was run much like the Banat, under the *Commisso neoaquistica*. Local command was vested in *Feldmarshal* Karl Alexander von Württemberg (1684-1737).

Under Ottoman rule, the Turks had dominated the few towns. Before the 'liberated' Serbs could establish themselves as urban dwellers, a wave of German immigrants forced them back into the countryside. Most of the colonists were settled at Belgrade, capital of Habsburg Serbia. This was to be a model colony, and all non-Germans and non-Catholics were removed to the suburbs. A law was passed making Belgrade a German City. They even reopened the Catholic see (Belgrade and Temesvár's defences were largely paid for by the Papacy). The fortress itself, already extremely strong, was overhauled and strengthened by extensive outworks.

Nevertheless, Serbia did not develop as well as the Banat. The Serbs resented the Catholic Church's overbearing attempts to convert them and remained alienated (though they were willing to provide 4,500 mounted militia to fight the common enemy), the land was poor, and the entire region only had about 20,000 inhabitants, including the Serbian militia and the German colony of Belgrade.

## Austrian (Little) Wallachia

Wallachia and Moldavia were very old semi-independent Principalities, and Ottoman protectorates. Wallachia was split into two distinct regions, Little and Greater Wallachia. In 1718, the Habsburgs acquired Little Wallachia, or as it was sometimes known, Wallachia above the Olt, that tributary of the Danube being the boundary.

Under the Ottomans, the original princely families had lost power at the turn of the century when they threatened to join with the Russians, and were replaced by *Phanariot* Greeks – merchant families from Constantinople utterly loyal to the Sultan. However, the lower echelons of the aristocracy remained – the *boyars*.

When Little Wallachia (capital, Krajova or Craiova) was transferred to Habsburg rule, the *boyars* hope to retain their local autonomy, but they were disappointed. The Emperor had plans for Wallachia. The province was to be another one of his cameral estates, like the Banat, administered by the *Commisso neoaquistica*. Originally, the Emperor allowed a native Banus and his council some autonomy, under the ultimate authority of the Commanding General of Transylvania, but the locals proved intractable and soon found themselves without any power at all; a military government was imposed here too.

Austrian Wallachia was yet another depopulated border zone – many people had been taken by the Ottomans when they left the country, some perhaps willingly. The usual solutions were tried, but local hostility prevented the importation of many colonists. The locals drew strength from the fact that their region had been long established as purely Orthodox (the Ottomans did not force the populations of the Protectorates to convert to Islam).

## Other Lands

Apart from the *Erblande*, the Imperial Habsburgs from time to time acquired other lands, usually through marriage (a maxim of their House advocated this method over naked aggression – 'marriage for you, *felix* Austria'). In the 1730s they owned the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium and Luxembourg), plus much of Italy – though the states in that part of the world tended to be passed around like currency, and the Habsburgs lost some of them during the War of the Polish Succession.

Though outside the *Reich*, and ruled by governors or by family members, the general administrative practices of the House remained the same – local notables handled local affairs while the dynasty's proconsuls concerned themselves with the Mobius loop of Defence and Budget. These regions were important mainly for reasons of prestige; from a strictly strategic point of view they were a liability.

## Administration and the Army

### Finances

It is notorious that the Habsburg Monarchy was always short of cash, even though the only governmental bodies that required substantial funding were the Court, the Bureaucracy, and the Military. Of these, the latter took the lion's share – up to 75%-80% of state revenue in some years; Court and Administration never required more than 10%-15%.

There were two revenue streams, *Cameral* and *Contributionale*. *Cameral* sources paid for the Administration and covered Household expenses (including donatives, gifts, and pensions). The *Contributionale* was supposed to pay for the military (i.e. the Army, as the Habsburg Navy was miniscule), but the *Cameral* often had to be redirected to meet shortfalls.

*Cameral* money came from the dynastic domain lands, tolls, monopolies, mining, and through indirect taxation. Its collection was the responsibility of the Court Chamber (*Hofkammer*).

Provinces that were not directly controlled by the sovereign had their own Court Chambers that collected their own *Camerale* income, a portion of which would be given to the central administration, usually after hard bargaining.

In the early days, the *Camerale* had paid for the Habsburgs' armed retinue as well, just as household revenue still did for the troops of smaller states. But it proved insufficient once the dynasty assumed suzerainty over the Empire. Funding of large, permanent or semi-permanent contingents for long wars, and even more importantly, funding for the Military Border in the Balkans, required extraordinary sources of income. Thus the *Contributionale*.

The *Contributionale* originated in the *Kontribution*, a military tax paid to prevent quartered troops from simply pillaging the region they were billeted in – a problem that arose in the Thirty Years War when soldiers had to be retained under arms for long periods. The *Kontribution* soon became permanent, with regiments tied to particular regions based on their wealth, and receiving the funds directly, either in cash or kind. The tax could also be paid through services, such as providing billets or repairing roads that the army was to march along.

The *Contributionale* also included extraordinary levies (such as the Turkish Tax) and the like, but it was basically a yearly tax paid by the landowners and clergy – even foreigners who owned land in the Habsburg realms were not exempt. Much of the time, the burden was passed on to the peasants. In Bohemia, the landowners paid no tax, the peasants assumed the entire burden; in Austria, the burden was shared. Towns were usually exempt from this tax (a big reason peasants fled to the towns) but were taxed in other ways, such as the payment of customs dues. Hungary's taxes remained artificially low, because the Emperor had promised they would be; for the war of 1737-39, the Hungarian lands contributed the least in their own defence!

Still there was not enough money. Poor record-keeping by the landholding classes, and an inability to enforce punishment for infractions, meant that no one really knew how much money was available. Worse still, the *Hofkammer* was only one part of the official Deputation to the Estates; its administrative rivals the *Hofkriegsrat* and the Chancellery also participated, and the Chancellery frequently did its best to reduce contributions, instead of enlarging them. On the plus side, it was possible to obtain funds from outside sources directly, in the form of loans from interested powers like England, and from the Church, who still own much of the land that was officially 'Austrian'.

As mentioned above, the *Camerale* was dipped into, but this always brought on a bout of interdepartmental wrangling. Banks contributed large sums, though not as a tax – the firm of Fuggers is a readily familiar name. The Jews, ironically for a regime that was virulently anti-Semitic, are computed to have lent some 78 million florins over the generation prior to 1739; during the War of the Spanish Succession, the untimely death of a single Jew paralysed the Army finances (he was the 'Court Jew', and his own debts had gone unpaid because the Habsburgs never redeemed their loans). Ultimately the dynasty had recourse to foreign loans – from the Maritime Powers, of course, but also from the Pope.

The Budget was thus little more than a wishful projection, yet the only one on which any plans could be formed at all. As an example of the sums required, the cost of the war of 1716-18 amounted to 60 million *florins*; that of 1737-39, 146 million. And these sums were only a portion of the total expenditures; they do not include the cost of the War of the Spanish Succession, just finishing at the time of the former war, or the War of the Polish Succession, just finishing at the start of the latter.

During the war of 1737-39, all methods of tax gathering were resorted to. Initially, when everyone believed the war would be

short, tremendous sums were raised through the Turkish Tax and ecclesiastical donations – directly from Papal coffers, too – but it was still reported that the troops were poorly equipped, clothed, and fed, and having to billet in open, unhealthy country. There were accusations of corruption against the 'army managers' – the colonel-proprietors – but at least part of the blame should be laid at the door of the Administration and its inability to form a Budget based on real information.

### Foreign Affairs

As in most 18th Century 'Absolutist' states, foreign policy was derived through consensus. At its simplest the Court, from whom the monarch obtained his view of the world, would be divided into a war faction and a peace faction. There were few bureaucratic 'experts', usually despised in any case, with the advice expected from such being provided instead by those of the aristocracy with knowledge of the desired subject. Often, favourites, confessors, and mistresses played a key role in forming the monarch's opinion.

Under the Habsburg Monarchy, the role of 'prime minister' was taken by the High Steward, who headed the various councils. First of these was the Privy Council (*Geheimer Rat*), but by the 18th Century this had grown so large that it became useless as an 'inner circle'. That role was now assumed by the Privy Conference (*Geheimer Konferenz*), a permanently established working committee of the *Geheimer Rat*, which focused specifically on foreign matters. The *Geheimer Konferenz* was a deliberative body, without a bureaucracy of its own.

In the 1730s, the prime members of the Privy Conference were Prince Eugene as President of the *Hofkriegsrat* (until his death in 1736), replaced by *Graf* Lothar Joseph von Königsegg-Rothenfels; the Court Chancellor, *Graf* Louis von Sinzendorf; the President of the *Hofkammer*, *Graf* Gundaker Thomas von Starhemberg; and the Land Marshal of Lower Austria, *Graf* Aloysius Thomas von Harrach. Bartstein, as Secretary, acquired an immense influence despite his relatively low birth and coarse manners, since he alone had the ear of the Emperor - he was one of the despised 'experts'.

Two other bodies competed with the *Geheimer Konferenz*: the Imperial Court Chancellery (*Reichshofkanzlei*), and the Austrian Court Chancellery (*Österreichische Hofkanzlei*). The first was the highest executive body in the Holy Roman Empire, run from Vienna by the Imperial Arch-Chancellor (by tradition the Archbishop of Mainz – a Wittelsbach). The second was its Austrian (i.e. purely Habsburg) equivalent, divided into administrative and judicial branches.

The *Reichshofkanzlei* was supposed to be an Imperial body, but in practice it became a tool of the dynasty. The daily running of affairs was conducted by the Vice-Chancellor, nominated by the Arch-Chancellor, but approved by the Emperor. Because everything was based on personal rule, it seemed natural that a body that served one man as Emperor should also serve him as dynast. And in the early days, most issues requiring resolution lay between the Estates and the Empire.

In fact, the *Österreichische Hofkanzlei* was originally a department of the *Reichshofkanzlei*. Aggressively expanding its role, by the 18th Century it had taken responsibility for conducting the Empire's foreign affairs. While the *Reichshofkanzlei* lost influence, becoming a body concerned with internal Imperial affairs – mostly ritual – the *Österreichische Hofkanzlei* developed both a domestic-judicial department and a foreign affairs department. The Austrian Court Chancellor had a seat at the Privy Council, and input into the Privy Conference – something it took a long time for the Imperial Vice-Chancellor to achieve.

Thus the Empire had only one diplomatic service – the Austrian one. This ensured Habsburg dynastic interests came first, and added the social dignity of being Imperial representatives to its diplomats. (Between the death of an emperor and the elevation of his successor, Habsburg ambassadors were only representatives of the Kings of Hungary and Bohemia). The diplomatic service was not professional, except perhaps at the junior level. Most diplomats were aristocratic amateurs, often military men, sometimes with special knowledge of the country they were sent to, or with special interests; often, such service was seen as an onerous duty. Also, besides the official department, the Emperors relied on direct correspondence with foreign rulers; Charles VI used his personal Confessor, the Church being a convenient backdoor to power in Catholic countries.

There was one major exception in the realm of diplomacy. Until the 1750s, relations with the Ottomans were not conducted through the *Österreichische Hofkanzlei* but through the Aulic War Council (*Hofkriegsrat*).

### The Role of the Holy Roman Empire

The *Reich* is too confusing to describe adequately in a few paragraphs. Nevertheless, an attempt should be made. As noted previously, the Empire was a political entity independent of the Habsburg Monarchy, except that the same man ruled both. As regards the Habsburg Monarchy, this man was an Absolute dynast, as regards the Empire, he was an elected king, elevated to the purple as 'first among equals' – a war leader in a confederation of Germanic states. It was a symbiotic relationship. The *Reich* needed a strong helmsman; the Habsburgs needed the lustre of an imperial role.

In the accretion of dynastic lands, the Habsburgs were doing nothing unique; what was unique was their hold over the Holy Roman Empire. The problem for the Habsburgs was that this position did not translate into a tool for unification. The normal pattern for a European monarchy emerging from the Middle Ages was of a family achieving hereditary title to the kingship of a region, and then gradually dominating their rivals until they remained as unquestioned rulers of the whole. France is the premier example.

In the early Middle Ages the Kings of France held a position even worse than the Emperors of Germany, having effective control over little more than their own domains – and even with these they were forced to bargain for power. But the kingship was hereditary, and over the centuries the dynasty's power waxed, rival nobles were crushed or drawn into the ruling family's orbit, and either way their lands were placed under the authority of the Crown. An independent bureaucracy and military was set up outside of the old feudal structure, composed of men who owed everything to the King. Then the old nobility were drawn in as well. By the 18th Century, France was the most powerful – because the most centralised – state in Europe. Her military budget was ten times that of the Habsburg Emperor's.

The Holy Roman Emperors were unable to achieve such unification from the simple fact that the Germans could not be bribed into giving away their right to elect their King. Instead, the Emperors were forced to concede wealth and lands and rights merely to ensure their election.

Ironically, the desired title was not King of the Germans, but King of the Romans (hence the later term *Kaiser* or Caesar). This title had been awarded to the first emperors by the popes in recognition of assistance rendered against their own Roman vassals, and became the key to achieving papal coronation as Emperor (also a gift of the popes, signifying the Germans as Defenders of the Papacy), though by the 18th Century, the last step of a journey to Rome had been dispensed with, making election as King of the Romans sufficient to be acclaimed

Emperor automatically – and thus placing even greater power in the hands of the Electors who did the voting.

The Habsburgs had been Emperors almost continuously since the 15th Century, mainly because they had the most wealth to spread around. The critical event was the division of Charles V's holdings amongst his heirs. Ferdinand I received the dynasty's Hereditary Lands, and, as he was already King of the Romans, earned an automatic promotion to Emperor after Charles abdicated. Electing the King of the Romans during the life of the Emperor became common practice, greatly increasing the chances of the next Emperor being a Habsburg as well. No other House had the power to compete in this way; they could merely obstruct and bargain for scraps.

Given its disunity, the Empire did not confer much power, but it did give the reigning House tremendous prestige and authority in European affairs (emperors being just naturally better than kings). Only as the last dregs of real power ebbed away in the late 17th Century did the Imperial Habsburgs begin to focus more on their 'Austrian' base.

By the 18th Century, the Habsburgs had succeeded in divorcing most of their own lands from the Imperial Administration, while turning much of the latter into an Habsburg Administration. Even so, the dynasty still lacked supreme authority within the Empire. They were required, on their accession, to agree to a set of traditional Electoral Capitulations, pledging to observe the customs and laws of the *Reich*.

For a pertinent example, when making war in a case that involved the *Reich*, the Emperor had to go to the Imperial Diet for permission, and it was the Diet that declared war. The Emperor, however, as 'commander in the field', had the right to make peace, only submitting his decision for approval to the Diet. (In the same way, the Emperor's own field commanders could make peace but not start a war.)

The states that comprised the *Reich* were not always submissive, either. Many had Protestant rulers. Some were in bed with the French, or the Russians, or the Swedes, able to use their ally as a counterweight to Habsburg ambition. Some had outside sources of power that gave them a great deal of independence, like King George of England, Elector of Hanover.

Over the centuries, legal grants made to obtain short-term co-operation included the right for some states to maintain their own armies independent of those troops needed to fill their *Reichsarmee* quotas, and even to contract alliances with foreign powers – so long as the Habsburgs were not the target.

### The Structure of the Empire

The Emperor was chosen by the vote of nine Electoral Seats. Theoretically, each seat belonged to a high official in the Imperial Court (Steward, Chamberlain, Cupbearer, etc.) who was also a prince in his own right (thus the Archbishop of Mainz was Arch-Chancellor). Again, strictly speaking it was not the Emperor who was elected, but the King of the Romans, who would then be promoted by application to the Pope – but by the 18th Century this last device had been discarded.

In practice, the Habsburgs held two of the seats in one person – King of Bohemia and Grand Duke of Austria – while the rival Wittelsbach family held three among three (Bavaria, Cologne, Mainz). Both Bohemia and Austria, being part of the *Erblande*, were not subject to a lot of the Imperial legislation and thus had greater freedom of decision; Bohemia was not even a member of one of the administrative Circles (*Kreissen*) into which the Empire was divided.

In theory, any of the Electors of the Empire were eligible to become King of the Romans, but the ecclesiastics (Mainz, Trier,

Cologne) were discounted, leaving Saxony, Hanover (Brunswick), Brandenburg, and Bavaria. Of these, Bavaria had the strongest counterclaim. She also had French backing. Also, the office of King of the Romans had to belong to a male, competent, and of age. It helped to be proven in battle, or at least to belong to a dynasty with a strong military tradition.

For better or worse, as a general case the Wittelsbachs and the other Electors lacked the monetary and military resources to effect a change, except when the Habsburgs were going through a period of extreme weakness. But if the Imperial Throne did go to a... Bavarian, say, then presto... Munich would be the brightest star in the firmament. Or perhaps the Hohenzollerns? Hmm... Berlin. In winter? No, Potsdam in winter. *Mozart in strict-tempo time?* Shudder... You see why Germany preferred a Habsburg Emperor.

Under the rank of the *Kurfürsten*, or Prince-Electors, were the Estates (*Reichsstände*). These came in various flavours, but were, as noted above, grouped into *Kreissen* for administrative purposes. The influence of each Circle varied depending on its composition. Those in the North were dominated by one or two powerful states, such as Brandenburg or Brunswick, while those in the South were, except for Bavaria's, composed of many small states. Within each Circle, the Estates were segregated and ranked into princes, prelates, counts, knights, free cities, and so on. Each group had a vote in the Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*), but the grouping was not done evenly. An individual prince would have one vote, and so would an entire 'college' of minor nobles.

*[It should also be noted that northern and central Italy, though outside the Reich, were considered part of its structure, and were in the care of an imperial plenipotentiary. The Dukes of Savoy, for example, considered themselves imperial subjects, guardians of the Maritime Alps – at least when it suited them to do so. Certainly the Habsburgs regarded Piedmont-Sardinia as a client state. The Burgundian Kreis, containing domains outside the empire, and with a predominantly French population, was similarly intended as a buffer zone.]*

The members of the *Reichstag* formed a number of councils, the most important of which was the Council of Electors. The Diet, which was originally summoned by the Emperor to wherever his residence happened to be, was settled at Regensburg in the 17th Century, transforming from a temporary convocation into a permanent congress of envoys from the various states. The Emperor was represented by a delegated prince, but was also entitled to a representative 'from the King of Bohemia' and another 'from the Grand Duke of Austria', giving him enormous influence.

The real power in the bureaucracy of the *Reich* was the *Reichshofrat*, or Imperial Aulic Council, located in Vienna. This was the supreme administrative, judicial, and constitutional body, and became the Habsburgs' main instrument in moulding the Empire the way they liked. Primarily it was a court of justice, directly subordinate to the Emperor. Its power derived from its use to settle grievances within the *Reich*.

There was a rival body, the Imperial Chamber Court or Imperial Cameral Tribunal (*Reichskammergericht*). This, in contrast, was an instrument of the Estates against the Emperor, but it had been settled at Wetzlar, far to the West, not at Vienna; it was also dreadfully backlogged. The Emperor was therefore able to use the power of the judiciary in the more effective Aulic Council to expand his own influence.

Comparatively few of those composing the Court and Administration of the *Reich* were Austrian. Aristocrats from the *Erblände* were naturally in the Emperor's service, because they had already had an 'interest' with the dynasty – centuries worth of accumulated family connections. But, a fair percentage were men of ability enticed into Imperial-Habsburg service from within and outside the Empire's borders. For much of the German aristocracy

and their 'tails', Vienna was the place to be only because the Emperor lived there.

Torn apart by Bourbon-Habsburg rivalry, the Holy Roman Empire never became a centralised state, but it gave stability to Central Europe, and a focus for those middling princes not powerful enough to strike out on their own. For these, the Habsburgs held out the inducements of employment; for the great ones, they offered concessions such as international recognition and the electoral dignity. And Europe as a whole – even France – was content to let the Empire be, lest something worse take its place.

## The Military Machine

Until the reforms of Maria Theresa, the Military was run in a decentralised manner, with the Regiment as the focal point. Regiments were assigned to provinces and obtained their funds, recruits, and supplies locally (except that substitution, if practised, allowed recruiting elsewhere). However, funding and the buying and selling of regiments was monitored by the State.

The Colonel-Proprietor, having paid the Emperor a sum for the privilege of raising a regiment, treated it just like any other investment and could run it more or less as he liked. He ruled like a feudal lord, having the power of life and death over his human 'property', the right to nominate officers for promotion, the right to permit officers to marry, and, until 1737, the right to drill the regiment as he desired. He was also entitled to a share of a dead officer's estate if the man died intestate.

In the case of an established regiment, whenever there was a vacancy the Colonel-Proprietor was appointed by the Emperor, according to strict seniority. This meant that *regimental* seniority was not based on the age of a unit, or its status, but on the seniority of its commander. Due consideration was given to merit, as well as seniority, but seniority was the key factor to promotion. This was actually a good thing, as aristocratic younger-son amateurs were restricted in their entry rank. Many of the lesser officers were commoners.

As in most regimental systems, the Colonel-Proprietor did not 'fight' his own regiment; he was always a General Officer. Actual command devolved onto the Lieutenant Colonel, with a Second Colonel given all the mundane chores.

## The Officer Corps

The highest rank was that of *Generalleutnant*, appointed deputy of the Sovereign. He was not supposed to be a member of the dynasty, but an outsider, like Montecuccoli or Eugene of Savoy, displaying *personal* loyalty to the Emperor. When no officer of sufficient standing appeared to fill the power vacuum left by Eugene's death, members of the dynasty stepped in: first Francis Stephen of Lorraine, and then his brother Charles. Neither proved successful, though Charles had everyone fooled for some years. However, after the 1740s, the practice was kept up, and in the Grand Duke Charles of the Napoleonic era the dynasty finally found a worthy *Generalleutnant*.

In descending order, the General Officer ranks were *Feldmarshal*, *General der Kavallerie*, *Feldzugmeister*, *Feldmarshallieutenant*, and *Generalfeldwachmeister*. The rank of *Feldzugmeister* is often used promiscuously, but it should be applied to Generals of Infantry. It can also be used for Generals of Engineers, but usually engineer generals were simply generals of some other sort with expertise in that field.

Most generals came from outside the *Erblände*, since the men of rank within it preferred Court service. Even in the highest administrative body, over half the members were, during early 18th Century, neither Austrian nor Bohemian. In fact, the officer corps had a decidedly cosmopolitan flavour. Poles and French

were not well represented, but Italians were, *Reich* Germans, of course – often seconded from other armies – and Irish.

The Habsburgs encouraged the importation of officers. It ensured a larger talent pool, but most importantly, it ensured loyalty to the dynasty rather to the province of origin. Ironically, the men were attracted by the offer of land and titles within the Habsburg realms.

### The High Command

At the very top was the Aulic War Council (*Hofkriegsrat*), responsible for implementing the will of the Emperor and giving him council, for field and fortress commands, for formations, for legal matters pertaining to the army, for officer postings, and, uniquely, for diplomacy with the Sublime Porte. There were no midlevel administrative bodies between the *Hofkriegsrat* and the regiments. Organisations like brigades, divisions, and corps – even armies – were *ad hoc*, field formations only. The *Hofkriegsrat* had eight members, not all of whom were military, though the names are those of aristocratic military families.

One part of the *Hofkriegsrat* was the *Generalkriegskommissariat* (General War Commissariat), responsible for inspecting fortresses, mustering recruits, quartering and supplies, and the Budget. This body was not universally respected, since its oft-civilian inspectors routinely annoyed honest hardworking regimental officers. The office was made independent of the *Hofkriegsrat* in 1746.

Also independent of the *Hofkriegsrat* was the Court Chamber's (*Hofkammer's*) own supply department, the *Obristproviandamt*. This department sent detachments into the field with the army, and was essentially responsible for its 'train'. Since these detachments were always insufficient, they wound up hiring civilian contractors. As an example, the train for 'Hungary' (that is, the primary theatre for 1737-39) consisted of 1,000 men, 900 horses, and 1,300 oxen, and included artisans and bakers.

The last administrative body of any note was the *Obrist Schiff- und Brückenmeister-Amt*. This department was responsible for the pontoon train and water transport. It also had a civil role in the transport of salt, collection of river tolls, and conduct of Court boating excursions. The unhappy personnel of this department were simultaneously subordinate to the *Hofkriegsrat*, the *Hofkammer*, and the *Generalkriegskommissariat*.

As to the Army field command, the General Headquarters was known as the *Generalstab*, but this term was a very loose one, quite different from what we understand as a general staff. It comprised the command elements of the headquarters as well as the Staff. Further distinctions were made between the *Große Generalstab* and the *Kleine Generalstab*. The Great General Staff included every general serving with the army; the Small General Staff covered the auxiliary services such as quartermaster-general, adjutant-general, and the 'Corps of Engineers'. At the highest level, supply was handled by the *Kriegsfaktoren*, who advanced credit and purchased or requisitioned the necessary stores from the civilian economy.

In the field, the *Generalleutnant* could count on the advice of his *Kriegsrat*, or council of war. This was an advisory body consisting of the leading generals. At all levels of command, but especially the highest, decision by committee was encouraged; a general who ignored the advice of his peers was considered an idiot, or on an ego trip. The drawbacks to this method are obvious, and are often cited as a cause of the poor operational performance of the Habsburg Army, but it was deemed necessary due to the large number of auxiliary contingents present, since protocol – and service contracts – demanded that auxiliary commanders have an equal say, particularly since some auxiliary commanders were rulers of their own states. Habsburg failure in the *Türkenkrieg* can be partially accounted for here, because the

system broke down when the commanders decided to bring their factions and personal dislikes into the field.

### Infantry and Cavalry

Between 1737 and 1739, the Army consisted of 52 infantry regiments (44 German, 3 Hungarian, 2 Italian, 3 Walloon), each notionally of four battalions, but actually reduced to three (except possibly for the Hungarians, Italians, and Walloons). A 3-battalion regiment comprised 15 fusilier and 2 grenadier companies – 5 line companies per battalion.

[In the Theresian Period, battalions per regiment were standardised at 3 battalions for a German regiment and 4 battalions for a Foreign one (including the Hungarians).]

Infantry battalions were nominally around 1,000 men each with 3 battalions per regiment. During the *Türkenkrieg*, the average battalion strength seems to have been 350 men each, thanks to the losses suffered in the War of the Polish Succession, as well as to malaria, plague, and enemy action.

The Cavalry consisted of 41 regiments (18 Cuirassiers, 14 Dragoons, 9 Hussars). Dragoon and Cuirassier regiments were supposed to be of 1,000-1,200 men in 6 squadrons (12 companies plus an elite company of grenadiers or carabiniers, respectively). In 1731 4 companies were added to make them up to 1,440 men each, but this seems to have been a paper reform only. Hussar regiments were also 1,000 men strong, but in 5 squadrons (10 companies). During the *Türkenkrieg*, units seem to have been near their official strengths (1,100 for Cuirassiers and Dragoons, 800 for Hussars), at least initially. Against the Ottomans, cavalry was of more use than infantry.

There were also a handful of *grenz-husaren*, that is, small bodies of hussars incorporated into one or another Frontier District, and quite a number of mounted *landmiliz*; the Hungarian *insurrectio* (feudal-style local forces) were also mostly mounted. Serbia contributed 4,500 mounted infantry, and some of the other *grenz* (Frontier) units were likewise mounted, though only for purposes of transportation. There were even two companies or squadrons of 'Bulgarians' recruited in Little Wallachia.

### Artillery & Technical Services

Prior to the 1740s and Prince Liechtenstein's reforms, the Artillery was divided into *Feldartillerie* and *Hausartillerie*. The latter included both fortress (garrison) and siege guns. The same organisation ran the arsenals and artillery depots, rather like the British Ordnance Board. The field artillery comprised the battalion guns used by the infantry, and the larger 'battery' pieces, most of which were not very manoeuvrable.

Until 1700, artillery personnel were seconded to the Army for individual campaigns without being a part of the institution, much like the supply services. They had their own ranks and pay scale, their own administrative bodies. As technicians, gunners were rated more highly than their equivalents in the cavalry and infantry, and the arm as a whole had great prestige, even before Liechtenstein's reforms made it the best in Europe. Higher pay meant there was no shortage of recruits, but the men had to be literate. A good proportion came from Bohemia; indeed, foreigners were not permitted to serve as 'other ranks', thanks to the 'cutting edge' technical nature of the work. Infantrymen made up the labour force

After 1700, artillerymen were permanently incorporated into the Army, although contracted civilians continued to be used for transport. Even though there were scores of artillery pieces stored away (like the Soviets, the Habsburgs never threw anything out), the number of gunners remained relatively small: 651 men, including 36 Miners, in 1734. Gun calibres were of the usual types, 3- 6- and 'light' 12-lber field guns and 'heavy' 12- 18- and 24-lber 'positional' artillery. There were 7' and 10' howitzers and

10- 30- 60- and 100-lb mortars; also 'perriers' – mortars firing stone grapeshot.

In the 1730s and 1740s, much of the artillery tended to be immobile. Fortunately, so did that of their adversaries. It was often a case of the infantry and cavalry defending the guns, rather than the guns covering the other arms.

Miners were considered part of the artillery, but not the Engineers; there was a single company of Miners during the 1730s, who, like the gunners, used infantrymen for grunt work.

The administrative body for the Artillery was called the *Obrist Land- und Hauzeugamt*, directly subordinate to the *Hofkriegsrat*, and often run by one of its members. Under it were the various field corps. Originally there were three corps: German, Netherlandish, and Lombardic. However, despite their regional affiliations, members of any corps could expect to serve in any theatre. There was also the – garrison artillery.

The arsenals and gun foundries coming under the *Hausartillerie* were administered in a hierarchy stemming from the principal arsenal at Vienna, except for elements relating to the field artillery which were incorporated in the *Feldzeugamt*. The department responsible for command and administration was called the *Artilleriestab*. Finally, there was the *Rosspartei*, which arranged for transport.

There were two 'schools' of engineers, both based in the Austrian Netherlands (at Mechelene and Brussels), but many officers were qualified engineers; it was a branch of science much pursued by aristocratic society. In the 1730s, all the Engineers were officers, who used the infantry for whatever tasks had to be accomplished. Infantry battalions were supposed to have their own pioneer platoons.

The Pontoon Corps was as much a branch of the Navy as of the Engineers, since many of its personnel were watermen of one form or another. It was a separate organisation, the *Obrist Schiff- und Brückenmeister-Amt*.

Supply services were largely contracted civilians; this included the teams needed to pull the guns and supply wagons, plus the sources of food, clothing and equipment. Medical services were integrated into the regimental system. They improved as the century wore on, but the Habsburg medical branch was always accounted one of the best in Europe (keeping pace with European modernisation); unfortunately they had no ambulance service, and had to use supply wagons (which rested on the assumption that the drivers would not flee the battlefield).

### Home Defence

Like most European states, the Habsburg Monarchy still retained the feudal levy in law, really as the basis of the military tax system. In an emergency, however, the levy, or *Landsturm*, could actually be called up; this was done during the War of the Austrian Succession. But the levy was unreliable, and put weapons in the hands of serfs. It was also called up by the provincial Diet and could rarely be employed outside its homeland. Slightly better were the *Landregimenter*: semi-regular forces akin to modern militia units. Free companies were also hired, usually for garrison work.

### The Military Border

The famous Military Border was initially established by the Kingdom of Hungary and followed roughly the same pattern throughout its existence, though its bounds changed. Within a designated border zone, 20-60 miles wide, soldiers were settled in colonies, either as farmers, or town dwellers, or a mix of both. Often they were expected to support themselves by trade or farming, though some units were paid professionals, and others were pensioned and at the same time encouraged to work for their

living. It all depended on the bargain struck with each group of colonists.

The very first colonies were composed of Greeks fleeing the Ottomans, who were given land and tax-free status by the King of Hungary in exchange for military service. But the system collapsed during the Turkish onslaught against Hungary. After the Habsburgs took over the Crown of St. Stephen, they re-established the Border, partly for defence, and partly in order to repopulate the region (the Turks had a habit of laying waste the territories surrounding their own).

The Habsburg Monarchy's Border began with Croatia, Slavonia, and Western Hungary as far east as the Tisza River. As they acquired the rest of Hungary, the Banat, Wallachia, and Transylvania, they expanded the system. However, the 'true' Military Border remained Croatia and Slavonia. Here they settled Slav refugees, known as *Uskoks* ('refugees'). Some of these were based at Zengg, on the Adriatic coast, and made their living by piracy against the Turks and Venetians, while others dwelt in fortified burghs inland, and practised banditry against the Bosnians. The border zone was always porous; the Ottomans levied taxes while raiding, and so did the Habsburgs!

Eventually the *Uskoks* were driven away from the Border and their role was diminished. As a replacement, the Habsburgs brought in German settlers. This was also done in Middle Hungary and Transylvania, where they founded towns. Slavic and Magyar components also existed, based in the countryside, and were known as *Hadjúks* or 'foot soldiers'. They were given tax-free or reduced-tax status, and freedom of religion – the central government frequently pestered them with Roman Catholic priests, however, and as late as 1735 there had been a major mutiny over this. *Feldmarschal* von Seckendorff, the commander-in-chief for 1737, was against raising more militia in the newly acquired territories, saying they were fit only for banditry.

It should be noted that *frei-compagnies* were not hired on the Border, but in the interior. The Germans supplemented their meagre pay with second jobs, while the *Hadjúks* did indeed practise banditry (few received any pay at all). The term *Grenzer* replaced *Hadjúk* as the 18th Century progressed; it means a borderer who serves in exchange for land.

The *Grenz* system has been best studied at its western end. Here, the colonists were assigned to major fortifications (Germans) or to border posts (Slavs). The land they were given had been expropriated by the Crown from magnates who had fled their domains long ago. Initially there were two districts, Slavonia, with an headquarters at Warasdein, and Croatia, with an headquarters at Karlstadt. As the system grew, the districts were divided into Captaincies. Croatia, for example, was divided into Zengg, Thurn, Ogulin, and St. Georger (all named after the fortifications where the men were mustered). Funding for Slavonia came from the Estates of neighbouring Styria, and for Croatia from the Estates of Carniola. But the Army ran the Border.

Under the Captaincies were the *Zadrugas*, and under them the individual landholders and their families. A refugee or colonist family would be assigned a plot of land as a military fief – outside *civilian* jurisdiction, something the remaining Hungarian magnates objected to strenuously, without effect. Having a body of men who owed fealty to the central government, located in the midst of a fractious nobility was a useful thing for the Monarchy.

The *Zadruga* was the 'house community' or extended family, similar to a village, though the people might be spread out over a large area of farmland. Groups of *Zadrugas* came under the authority of a *Knes* or Captain. He was responsible for maintaining the border posts in his command under repair, and providing recruits. Each *Zadruga* had to provide one man, fed and

equipped. Leaders were either elected, or their names submitted to the authorities for approval. If this appears similar to the Ottomans' *timar*-fief system, it should. It was a direct copy.

Although the system has a feudal ring, and suggests small bands of warriors of little use outside their own district, in fact the numbers garnered by it were huge. In 1740 it was estimated that 45,500 men were available for service. But, like the Ottoman system, only about 20% actually served at any given time.

Croatia, run by the Aulic War Council (*Hofkriegsrat*) was paid for by the Croatian Estates and overseen by a *Banus* or commissioner. Licca alone supported 7,000 men.

Slavonia was under a general officer; appended to Slavonia were the fortresses of Essek, Brod, Titel, Szeged, and Arad. The zone from Titel to Transylvania was commanded by the general in command at Szeged. Slavonia proper supported 1,500 foot and 950 horse, plus 3,200 *Landmiliz* manning the frontier *Tshardaken* (guardposts). The region was entirely under military rule, and the troops themselves were used as forced labour on 'civilian' projects. The Tisza-Máros line supported 2,500 border guards who lived in somewhat better conditions, receiving pay and land.

Serbia, newly conquered, provided, as mentioned previously, 4,500 mounted men; they amounted to most of the able bodied males of the province, counting those in Belgrade who were not already under arms.

### Hungary

Hungary apart from the Military Border had special status. The Hungarian component of the standing army was separate, formed early in the 18th Century after the kingdom was accused of not contributing sufficiently to the common defence. For the 1737-39 war only three foot regiments existed, and they were not employed offensively as their reliability was suspect. However, large numbers of Hungarians did serve in 'German' regiments, and a notable exception must be made for the Hussars (9 regiments).

The problem was, the Hungarian nobility were not taxed for military purposes. That burden fell on the peasants and townsmen, who were not obligated for military service. The nobility also preferred to avoid military service, and would certainly not join a regiment of their 'oppressors'. Because they were not taxed, they could not be compelled to serve. The lower orders were only required to serve when their own aristocrats called them out.

Hungary still used the *Insurrectio* and *Portalis Militia*. The former were feudal cavalry. The latter were a mix of hussars and foot soldiers. The name 'hussar' indicates the formation's origin: it means 'twentieth', that is, out of twenty households, one man was chosen to serve in the field. The Twentieth was also a tax based on the same concept. The *Insurrectio* was a field force, while the *Portalis Militia* (the foot component, anyway) was normally employed in siege work. Although these levies were raised in emergencies, the Habsburgs encouraged the induction of soldiers into regular Line regiments.

### The Reichsarmee

The role of the Army of the Holy Roman Empire, or *Reichsarmee*, was that of an auxiliary corps, primarily intended for defence, freeing up the *Kaiserliche Arme*e for offensive operations. It was only formed in time of need, with each member of the Diet contributing forces according to a set schedule. In the case of the most powerful princes, these were usually separate from their own standing armies, though naturally the latter might also serve in the common cause, and particularly against the Turk. The smallest members generally pooled their resources, perhaps contributing only one man each - frequently such contributions were commuted to a tax.

By 1700, the northern (Protestant) princes tended to refuse to participate, meaning the *Reichsarmee* was generally composed of South Germans, led by Habsburg generals. Its quality was poor, and after Leuthen in 1757 it earned the name 'Reißcharmee' – the 'runaway army'.

In the case of the Turkish Wars, which were popular causes, the *Reichsarmee* could be expected to send contingents to fight in the primary theatre, paid by a tax known as the Roman Month (originating in the tax levied when the Kings of the Romans made the pilgrimage to Rome for their elevation to Emperor). There was also the *Reichstürkensteuer* tax.

A sample of the Empire troops that took part in the 1737-39 war include contingents from Würzburg, Cologne, Wolfenbüttel, Hesse (paid for by Saxony), Saxony (elements of the Saxon Army), Bavarian (elements of the Bavarian Army), Cologne (paid for by Bavaria), Modena (not within the Empire, but a close ally of the Habsburgs), and Genoa (contracted marines).

### The Kaiserliche Armee

The standing army of the Habsburg Monarchy originated, like those of the rest of Europe, in the periodic hiring of mercenaries and the mustering of militia for long campaigns. Paid by the Crown, they were politically reliable (most of the time), unlike feudal hosts. In the beginning, men were attracted to the colours by recruitment bounties, paid per campaign. But as the wars got longer, it became cheaper to retain soldiers under arms instead of disbanding them in the winter. Often the same men were being paid for each campaign; often they refused to fight until they had received their bounties.

The first standing army was run by the Estates, but the fledgling apparatus was destroyed during the Thirty Years War and replaced by the familiar entrepreneurial system, where military captains contracted with the State to provide bodies of troops. The most famous of these men was, of course, Wallenstein. He was also the last of the great mercenary captains, being murdered on the Emperor's orders after he got too big for his boots.

The dangers inherent in hiring mercenary armies who were only loyal to their paymaster led the Habsburgs to follow the prevailing European trend of subjecting the Army to the State, though some of the entrepreneurial spirit survived. Unlike some states, the Monarchy went so far as to use conscription, arguing that the men were eligible under the laws for serving 'in defence of the realm' (i.e. the men were called up under the regulations for the old feudal levy). Conscription was necessary because voluntary enlistment would not yield the required numbers.

Starting from very small numbers, the Army ballooned during the War of the Spanish Succession. At its official inception in 1649, the army consisted of 9 infantry regiments and 10 cavalry regiments, plus a little artillery. Numbers shrank to as low as 13,000 men in peacetime, but by the War of the Spanish Succession, the paper strength of the army was established at 110,000 in peace, and 160,000 in war, mostly fortress garrisons. 21,000 were needed for the Reich, 60,000 for Italy, 74,000 for Hungary, and 11,000 for the Austrian Netherlands. These numbers exclude the Military Border and the various provincial self-defence forces.

In 1736, Empire-wide, the army's paper strength consisted of 90,929 infantry and 40,084 cavalry. The same year, there were in Hungary (i.e. from Croatia to Transylvania) 29,048 infantry, 25,503 cavalry, 10,000 border militia, and 80 guns. 40,000 men remained in Italy to cover against renewed Bourbon aggression, another 10,000 plus remained in the Austrian Netherlands (which was virtually a separate establishment); for the campaign of 1737, after subtracting losses from attrition, *Feldmarschal* von Seckendorff had 35,000 foot and 21,679 horse with which to prosecute a major campaign.

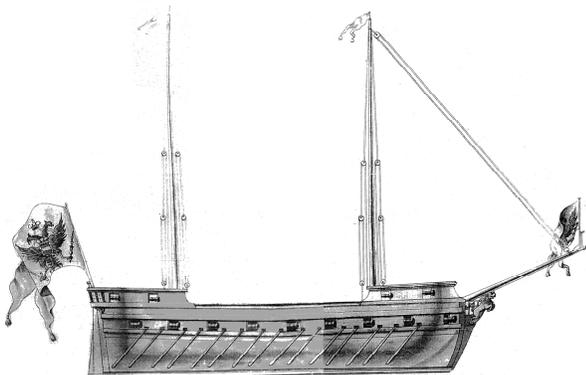
By the 18th Century, the Estates had lost control of the Army, except for finances. As noted elsewhere, the main source of Army income was the *Kontribution* tax. The Estates were also required to send quotas of men at the end of each campaigning season (in the early days, they had paid bounties to attract recruits, but no more). As an example, the War of the Polish Succession and the *Türkenkrieg* combined required 128,000 recruits and 28,000 horses from the *Erblande* alone (not that they got them). In Bohemia, women found themselves behind the plough.

The methods used when filling quotas varied. Some districts simply rounded up undesirables and shipped them off. Others contributed money in substitution, so that the regiments in their area could send recruiting parties off to exotic locales in the *Reich*. Subcontracting was permitted. Eventually a routine developed across the Monarchy: in peacetime, the regiments did their own recruiting, usually of experienced men and NCOs, ensuring they maintained a reasonable cadre, then in wartime the so-called *Landrekutenstellung* conscripted raw manpower. As an example, in 1737, 20,000 recruits were needed. 9,000 of these came from the Estates; the rest were obtained from the Empire and elsewhere.

Tall men were preferred, since in theory they could handle a musket better. Average age was 25-30. Apart from Germans, the regular army had many Czechs and Hungarians. Walloons and Italians were well represented, but also Poles, Jews, and even French. (Gypsies were *officially* verboten). In the 'German' regiments, everyone had to learn 'Army German'; in the 'national' units, the men spoke their own language.

Auxiliary corps were also hired from the German States, Hesse being the prime example of such practises. These were not *Reichsarmee* forces and could expect to see hard service. Sometimes the auxiliaries were provided as part of an Imperial obligation, however. Other times the lending state was paid for the service, or its prince given some sort of gift.

### The Habsburg Fleet



The notion of an 'Austrian Navy' is often treated as a joke. But, the Habsburgs did have a navy. Apart from the Zengg pirates, they maintained their own galleys and a limited number of sailing vessels; off-and-on allied states like Venice and Genoa provided manpower and additional ships. The Austrian Netherlands, too, had its flotillas, allied with the ill starred Oostende Company, and the Hansa Ports, as members of the Empire, were called upon for aid.

The Adriatic Fleet was primarily intended to protect the various coastal fortifications on the littoral and the short trade routes criss-crossing the Adriatic; the Levant was left to the Italians to police. Initially, the Zengg corsairs were all that was required. Then, in 1707, the Habsburgs acquired Naples, which extended their naval zone of influence while at the same time adding its own seagoing traditions to the milieu. The Fleet was born.

In those days, most navies were adjuncts of the Army; exceptions being countries with blue water fleets. Although the 'ship handling' classes were seamen, gunners and marines were usually under Army control, and army officers found themselves commanding squadrons and fleets (not individual ships, of course – those were the sailors' responsibility). The larger navies had academies, but even here the curriculum was very broad, providing a general education with only limited specialisation in naval matters.

Even the British routinely used 'generic' officers as late as the 17th Century. It was only after they began to project their power worldwide, and to place formations on blockade or patrol for extended periods, that the men in command had to become naval specialists. That, and the fact that employing a navy in such a modern way required the allocation of tremendous resources and thus its own logistical tail. For the Habsburgs, this never became an issue.

The loss of Naples during the War of the Polish Succession nipped their navy in the bud. The remnants remained long enough to be used in the *Türkenkrieg*. A new fleet was begun in the 1750s to guard against Prussian privateers – a new fleet: for lack of funds the old one had had to be scrapped during the War of the Austrian Succession. The new fleet went the same way after the Seven Years War. This was the essential problem. Although the Empire had its fair share of naval enthusiasts, there were not enough resources to maintain both a large army and a navy.

One Imperial officer did prepare plans for a naval force sufficient to protect the hoped-for expansion of Habsburg trade in the Western Mediterranean: 20 ships of 40 guns each, based on the Venetian model. It would have cost 150,000 *florins*. The navy that finally developed in the 1730s was not this large, but quite substantial for a land power: 21 sailing ships and 22 galleys, with personnel numbering just under 1,000. The commander was Gian Luca Pallavicini-Centurioni, scion of an old Genoese family with a long maritime tradition.

In previous Danubian campaigns against the Ottomans, the Netherlands had provided the manpower, and the Hungarians, particularly the men of Titel, at the junction of the Drava and Danube, who had a long tradition of working with river craft, provided the ships and barges. They were able to build large numbers of fast rowboats called *Nassaden* (Hungarian for 'boat') or *Tschaiken* (from the Turkish for 'rowboat'). For the 1716 war, the Imperials even had riverine 'pocket battleships'. But once that war was over, the flotilla was sold for firewood. Even commercial craft were reduced in numbers.

For the *Türkenkrieg* of 1737-39, operations in 1737 were hampered by a lack of river craft. Admiral Pallavicini persuaded the *Hofskriegsrat* to (essentially) transport the Adriatic Fleet from Trieste over the Semerling Pass to the Danube, for the campaign of 1738. By doing so, enough material and manpower would be available to allow the construction of a truly massive Danube flotilla.

The flotilla was constructed around the surviving hulks of Eugene's 1716 flotilla, fitted out with crews and stores from Trieste. Additional manpower came in the form of a Genoese regiment of marines, sailors from the Hansa port of Hamburg, and a collection of British and Dutch naval officers.

The ships came in various sizes, all shallow draught. Most ranged from 10-meter long Halb-Tschaika to the 24-meter long Ganz-Tschaika. These were oared vessels, armed with up to 6 swivel guns and carrying a crew of 40, mostly oarsmen. There were also a few sailing ships, with supplementary oars (as in the pictures above and below) and much heavier armament.

The largest were the:

*St. Gioseppe* (flagship – commanded by a lieutenant-admiral seconded from Diesbach's Regiment) of 50 guns, crew of 188

*St. Carlo* (Man-o-War) of 50 guns, crew of 168

*Cavallo Marino* (Man-o-War) of 50 guns

*Aquila Imperiale* (Man-o-War) of 50 guns

*Leone* (Man-o-War) of 50 guns

*Tritone* (Man-o-War) of 48 guns

*St. Leopoldo* (Frigate) crew of 32 (*possibly classed as a MoW*)

*St. Francesco* (Frigate) of 16 guns, crew of 38

*St. Theresa* (Frigate) of 18 guns, crew of 32

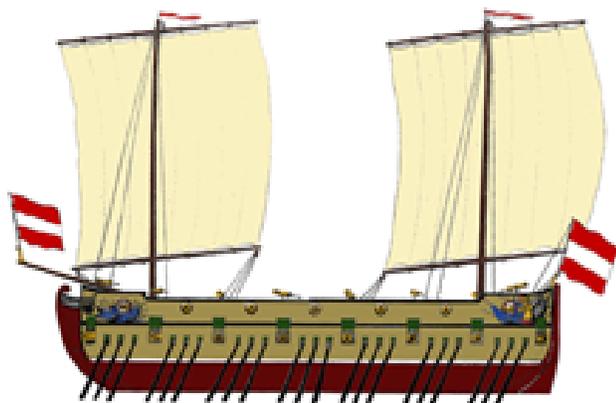
Crew numbers include shore personnel.

Two of the battleships were sunk in 1739, and three other ships had to be burned to prevent capture. Although little mentioned, the flotilla fought some tough engagements with the Turks before the capitulation that summer.

In the crisis of the Austrian succession war, no funding was available to maintain either fleet or flotilla and the Habsburg Navy ceased to be for a time. The personnel, however, proved eminently useful in the Pontooneer Corps.

#### **Feldmarshal Gian Luca (John Lucas) Graf von Pallavicini-Centurioni (1697-1773)**

Genoese by birth. Related to the Sforzas. Twice married, one of his sons also became a field marshal. Appointed the Republic's ambassador to Vienna in 1731; responsible for the Imperial intervention in Corsica (a Genoese possession at the time). When the War of the Polish Succession began, he entered Imperial service as Admiral of the Fleet and the Istrian Coast. Demonstrated ability in a 'cruiser war' against the Spanish and made *Generalmajor* in 1735, as well as *inhaber* of his own regiment. Commander in Chief of the Navy and the Danube Flotilla during the 1737-39 war; in 1738 he went to Genoa and raised 600,000 florins (200,000 from his own estates) with which to equip his forces. This was the same Pallavicini who fought with Piedmont-Sardinia in the War of the Austrian Succession, and who was responsible for the sieges of Mirandola (1742) and Parma (1746). He fought at Campo Santo (1743) and Piacenza (1746). Appointed to the Lombard Privy Council (a local version of the Imperial Privy Council in Vienna) in 1746; Viceroy of Lombardy from 1748-64, except for 1749, when he was temporarily out of office. Made *Feldmarshallieutenant* in 1741 and *Feldmarshal* in 1754.



## Strategy & Tactics

### The Imperial Side

Vienna had a long established mindset about the Turk. He was believed to be too numerous and too rapid in his movements to be successfully engaged by offensive strategy. The exception that proved the rule was Prince Eugene's brilliant campaigns during 1716-18, but even here the maestro was only given the opportunity thanks to Turkish overconfidence.

No doubt another Eugene would have been able to take advantage of the changing fortunes of war to outmanoeuvre even an Ottoman army, but no such man presented himself during the 1737-39 war. With only average leadership and a tired army, bold moves were believed too risky. Thus to a mindset born of an earlier age, when the Ottomans were on the rampage, was yoked hard necessity. Defensive warfare was the order of the day.

Geography heightened the difficulties. The borderlands were chronically depopulated and under-cultivated, subject to harsh weather summer or winter, and prone to devastating floods. An army that did not rely on depots and river transport risked annihilation. And depots mean slow, deliberate movements, prior stockpiling, the inability to change strategic direction.

War against the Turk was war without mercy, the closest thing to 'total war' before the 20th Century. Only the highest ranking prisoners could hope to be ransomed, the rest were either taken as slaves, or killed out of hand. Casualty lists, when there are any, typically give high losses. Partly this is the usual hyperbole, partly it is a testament to the ferocity of combat, but it is also due to the fact that the wounded are often included with the dead. There is an account of an Imperial deputation to the Grand Vizier's field headquarters discovering one hapless Austrian general's body parts ornamenting the meeting tent. Civilians were not spared, either; every Turkish war had its concomitant migration of refugees. And the Imperials were every bit as bad as the Ottomans, when they could manage it.

The Turks might be hard to catch, but once brought to battle, they usually had the worst of it, and there are accounts of relatively small Imperial forces driving off much larger Ottoman bodies, with heavy losses. However, such battles were rare. Usually, the Ottoman reconnaissance screen was so thick that the Imperials could not achieve surprise. An exception was the battle of Kornia in 1738, when the Turks attacked what they thought was the Imperial advance guard, only to discover Königsegg's entire army facing them. More typical was Grocka, in 1739, where Wallis thought he was attacking the Ottoman van in isolation, only to discover the Grand Vizier's forces already in position.

Against a European enemy, the regular cavalry fought in three-rank line and marched in column of fours. Charges began at the walk, increasing speed close to the enemy. The last 20-30 paces were at the gallop. However, against the Turks, only the most reliable cavalry could be expected to retain its cohesion at anything over walking pace, and if cohesion were lost, the Turks were the better warriors.

Facing a mounted enemy, the cavalry's presence was critical. The recommended ratio was that 44% of the army should be horsemen, and the regiments were kept well up to strength, even over-strength. In combat, the armoured Cuirassiers were the most effective. Against the Turk, backplates as well as breastplates were worn, and men lined their tricorne hats with steel caps. Firepower was often more effective than cold steel, and all troopers carried carbines and pistols. If a charge were attempted, it would be conducted at a sedate pace, maintaining dressing. Even the cavalry sometimes formed square. Man for man, the Ottoman forces were superior in melee, but they would retire if they could not make headway.

Battlefield drills for the infantry were not standardised until 1749, although blanket regulations covered certain issues, like the use of Spanish riders (see below). From the regulations that were eventually codified into a single system, it would appear that the emphasis was on firepower over mobility, and securing one's flanks became an obsession. Of course, against the Turk, this was vital, and in the Balkan Wars, units, even whole brigades, often fought in square. This was possible because neither the Turkish cavalry nor infantry used firearms to any great extent, and the Ottoman artillery was generally fixed in place.

If required to manoeuvre, however, a battalion was divided into 16 platoons that could be combined into half-divisions of 2 platoons or divisions of 4 platoons. Companies could also be organised as 'divisions' – especially, the grenadier companies fought as such, when not brigaded into whole battalions. Movement was by column, and fire by four-rank line. The fourth rank could, with a flexible regiment, be detached to outflank a closing enemy. Very little skirmish training was conducted, even for the grenadiers who performed that role in many armies; in the Habsburg case, this role was assumed entirely by the *grenz* formations. As always, the bayonet was exalted but rarely used.

When facing the Turks in combat, the men carried boar-spears and timber baulks, which they could rapidly set up as 'Spanish-riders', a form of *chevaux-de-frise*. They then maintained a running fire, since pauses to reload by volley only encouraged the enemy to attack, and Turkish charges had a tendency to cause panic in the ranks. At Kornia again, some of the Imperial infantry fled, despite their defensive works, when their fire appeared to have no effect on a Turkish charge. Fortunately, thanks to thick smoke, the enemy did not observe their retreat and the line was stabilised.

Usually it was the Ottoman forces that 'ran away'. Being a mounted army, it was no trouble for them to retire when exhausted. They lacked the means to conduct firefights. If their initial rush had no effect, retreat is what they would do, only staying to fight – tenaciously – if their camp or some established position was nearby and there was hope of luring the Imperials on to destruction. Except in rare cases, the Imperials did not pursue, even if the foe appeared demoralised. There would usually be some fresh enemy corps in the vicinity, hoping to pounce on a disordered advance.

The only real chance of inflicting a severe defeat on an Ottoman army, exclusive of any *operational* activity of which the battle might be merely a feature, was if the Grand Vizier himself was present. This would mean a major encampment, the establishment of immobile gun batteries, and a further inducement to stick around in the potential loss of prestige should the Grand Vizier withdraw – he, too, was subject to the council of his peers, all eager for fame and glory.

### The Ottoman Side

Open ground was always best from the point of view of the Ottoman commanders. Defensive features could be constructed from scratch by a plentiful labour force, but open ground was needed for the deployment of their cavalry, a fearsome arm. It lacked sophistication, being capable of little more than a headlong charge at the gallop, and if repulsed, it frequently left the field. All the same, steady nerves were required to withstand a Turkish cavalry charge. Any foe that wavered would be cut to pieces, as in individual combat the Ottoman warrior could rarely be matched.

Both the Ottoman cavalry and the janissaries carried firearms, but rarely used them, disdaining the weapons as unmanly. They detested being fired upon, and often cited the enemy guns as their bane. It is reported once that the janissaries, kept at bay by a Russian infantry line firing at them continuously (the only way to keep them off), complained that their enemies were fighting

unfairly, 'but when they stop this abominable fire, when they come forward like brave men fighting with cold steel, then we will see how these infidels stand up to the slashing sabres of the true believers'.

Coordinated actions were rarely possible, especially where large numbers of provincials were involved or when the commander lacked authority. The cavalry disdained the infantry – even the janissaries – and the janissaries disdained the other troops. Each commander acted as he felt best, and attacks were often made piecemeal. Feigned retreats were a dangerous tactic, though, and the Turks were fanatical in defence or when storming a breach.

In most battles, the infantry fought in line and remained static; in the attack, deep columns were used, but that was generally for an assault on a fortification. Usually, the foot held a position around which the cavalry could rally. The artillery, if present, would be incorporated into this position. Light cavalry would encircle the foe while the heavy horse, the *sipahis*, waited beside the foot for an opportunity to charge.

The Ottomans had a good mix of artillery pieces, but would not bring the heavier guns along unless they intended to use them in a siege; even then they might cast them on the spot. Most effective on the battlefield was their version of the battalion gun, two barrels of which could be packed by a mule or camel and erected on wooden trestles on the battlefield. They also had a wide mix of mortars, howitzers, and grenade launchers, including a nasty trench gun.

## Annex

See the folded insert.

The Annex comprises diagrams showing the Imperial Order of Battle (a visual display of records, not battlefield deployments), plus lists of every known Imperial regiment's deployment at specific times during the war, a near-complete list of Imperial general officers in theatre, and a summary of Military Border forces. Most of the material comes from Brown.



*The Sublime Porte*

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Anderson, M. S. **War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime 1618-1789**. Sutton Publishing Ltd. Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK. 1998. General work.

Carlyle, Thomas. **History of Friederich II of Prussia**. Project Gutenberg online text version. Some mention of the war, but brief.

Davies, Brian. **Empire and Military Revolution in Eastern Europe**. Bloomsbury. London. 2011. Jeremy Black is the series editor. The publication of this book is one of the reasons for the rewriting of this commentary. The second in a trilogy on the subject, this one covers the 1735-39 war, as well as the Great Northern War and the later 18th Century period. Though most of the focus is on the Ukraine, there is a chapter on the Danube Front. Davies is both readable and comprehensive, although, having perused several of the same sources, this author noticed a handful of discrepancies in numbers and one or two mistakes in the account of troop movements.

Duffy, Christopher. **The Military Experience in the Age of Reason**. Routledge & Keegan Paul. London, 1987. Another essential read. Entertaining, too.

Duffy, Christopher. **The Wild Goose and the Eagle. A Life of Marshal von Browne, 1705-1757**. Chatto & Windus. London, 1964. Browne was at Banja Luka as the siege commander and later served in Transylvania.

Hickok, Michael Robert. **Ottoman Military Administration in Eighteenth-Century Bosnia**. Brill Publishing, New York, 1997. One of a series of volumes on the Ottoman Empire (Brill publishes many such series). As with most works, the book is not about the war *per se*, but uses it as an example – specifically the 1737 campaign in Bosnia, which is portrayed entirely from the Ottoman side. According to other authors, one should exercise caution, but that can be said of most books on the subject.

Hochedlinger, Michael. **Austria's Wars of Emergence. War State and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy 1683-1797**. Pearson Education Limited. London, 2003. Only a short section on the *Türkenkrieg*, but is a good background on the Habsburg military machine. Author is Senior Archivist at the Austrian State Archives. Extensive bibliography, by chapter.

Kahn, Robert A. **A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918**. University of California Press, 1974. Primarily political and social history. Not much on the 1737-39 war, but background to the period as a whole.

Murphey, Rhoades. **Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700**. UCL Press Ltd. London, 1999. Although predating the period in question, this book gives many details on the subject of troop strengths, logistics, and motivation. An excellent source but requires a basic knowledge of the Ottoman Army.

Parvev, Ivan. **Habsburgs and Ottomans Between Vienna and Belgrade (1683-1739)**. East European Monographs No. CDXXXI. Columbia University Press, 1995. Despite bad grammar (translation from Bulgarian), a very useful source. Is in agreement with Roider on some issues and not on others.

Roider, Karl A, Jr. **The Reluctant Ally. Austria's Policy in the Austro-Turkish War, 1737-1739**. Louisiana State University Press, 1972. For a book that is specifically oriented toward political issues, it contains a fairly comprehensive account of the war. Necessary reading.

Roider, Karl A, Jr. **Austria's Eastern Question 1700-1790**. Princeton University Press. 1982. Broader view than Roider's other book; he incorporates the same information to make the larger point. Good for placing the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires' relations in perspective.

Shaw, Stanford. **History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey Volume 1. Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280-1808**. Cambridge University Press, 1976. Comprehensive overview of Ottoman state. Only a short section on the *Türkenkrieg*, but gives broad perspective of the times.

In addition, various Osprey uniform guides, L. & F. Funcken's 2-volume set of plates (in French).

For period maps, the following proved invaluable:

<http://www.davidrumsey.com/>

Also Google Earth™.