

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05508-6 - History of the War in Bosnia during the Years 1737–8 and 9

Omer Efendi Translated by Charles Fraser

Excerpt

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ACCOUNT
OF THE
WAR IN BOSNIA,

From the beginning of the *Muharram*, 1150 of the Hijra,
(April the 19th, 1737, A. D.) to the end of the month
Jamāda 'l avval, 1152. (August the 13th, 1739, A. D.)*

WHEN, by the will of God, the war broke out in the eastern districts, and when several of the troops which had been sent to aid the true believers, had fallen a sacrifice to the greatness of the distance, the badness of the water, and the unhealthiness of the climate, it so happened, by the permission of God, that the plague made its appearance in the kingdom of Bosnia, and caused the destruction of multitudes.

It was owing to the perfidious Muscovite infidels

* European accounts state, that hostilities began early in 1737, and that the peace of Belgrade was signed on the 1st of September, 1739. A. D. The last day of *Jamāda 'l avval* fell on the 13th of August, 1739. The date assigned in this work therefore appears to be sufficiently exact, as some days must be allowed from the termination of hostilities to the conclusion of peace.

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having violated their engagements with the Porte, that five thousand chosen men, standard-bearers, surgeons, and a number of brave officers, had been sent to the Russian frontiers, for the purpose of aiding the army of the faithful against the aggressions of the infidels. This circumstance left the kingdom of Bosnia in a great measure exposed, and also afforded an occasion to the infidel Germans to believe, that the country was in such a defenceless state, that they also were induced to violate the peace. Both Germans and Muscovites had formed, long before this, schemes against the peace and tranquillity of the empire; and now both began to put their wicked designs into execution. Owing to the disasters which had befallen the empire in the east, these hateful wretches, the Germans, were led to think, when they perceived that Bosnia and the adjacent provinces were in a defenceless state in consequence of the war with the Muscovites, that the exalted Mohammedan power had become lax and feeble. They became inflamed with prospects of success, and wickedly resolved on attacking the Ottoman empire in various quarters. According to the account of the people of the country, their first object was to conquer Bosnia, and then the other provinces. The same account states, that more than a hundred and fifty thousand troops, from the German territory alone, came successively against Bosnia.

When the German and Muscovite emperors had formed their base intentions against the Ottoman

empire, as before hinted, they at the same time deceitfully manifested an appearance of friendship. The Muscovite, however, soon returned to his old villany, whilst the Germans, with a hollow show of good-will, continued to respect the existing treaty of peace. The Porte, in consequence of this appearance of good understanding manifested by the Germans, was deceived; and hence became less attentive to the affairs of the frontiers on the west. The Germans, however, no sooner perceived that the army had been sent to the frontiers of Muscovy, and that several provinces of the empire had been thus necessarily deprived of military force, than they forgot their engagements, seized the opportunity which now offered itself, and determined on immediately entering the Ottoman frontiers. They commenced their operations against Bosnia* by dividing the army, which was collected into five divisions, each furnished with every thing necessary for the war, and attacked it in five different places. The *first* attack was directed against Banialuka.† Eighty thousand Germans, and twenty thousand Hungarians, under the command of the Prince of Hildburghausen, and four other generals, were sent to reduce the above place. At the distance of eight hours‡ journey from this fortress, they threw several bridges over the Save; by which means they crossed

* See Preface.

† A fortified town on the river Verbas, about ten leagues south of the Save.

‡ *An hour's journey* is about three English miles.

into Bosnia, and posted themselves in a palanka* called Gradishka. The generals of the fortresses Khurwatbani, Copur, and Waradzin, with their dependencies, fierce as dæmons, divided their forces, consisting of Germans and Croatians, into two separate divisions, and marched against Buzin and Chetin, two fortresses on the utmost confines of the Ottoman empire. This formed the *second* grand division of the enemy's army.

The *third*, a band of German and Lyka† infidels, amounting to twenty thousand, under the command of the generals of Lyka, Carloff, and Sang, planted themselves before Osterwitch-atyk.‡

The *fourth*, an army of fifteen thousand Germans, and as many Slavonians or Servians, and Hungarians, made their way through the circle of Belgrade, and fortified themselves in the vicinity of Tzwernek.§

The roads of Bosnia, Romeli, and Albania, being almost entirely cut off by the enemy, they formed the design also of taking possession of the main road which leads to and from the interior of the empire to Bosnia; and therefore sent their *fifth* army towards

* Palanka (پالانكا) is derived from the Hungarian *planca*, and means a petty fortress surrounded by palisadoes.

† Possibly the name of a particular body of Hungarian troops.

‡ A little town with a castle, on the confines of Hungarian Dalmatia.

§ Sometimes written *Zwornick*, a-walled town defended by a castle, on the Drin.

Yangi-bazar,* which is the key of Bosnia. On their way to that place they reduced the fortress of Niss. In this state of affairs it was next to impossible for the Islamite army to re-enter any of these places.

Thus was Bosnia not only nearly surrounded, but its total overthrow threatened by an immense horde of infernal firebrands, furnished with every sort of weapon and apparatus of destruction fit for that purpose. After they had fortified themselves in their various positions, however, and before commencing actual hostilities against Bosnia, they fixed a day on which the different leaders entered into correspondence with the German emperor, and agreed to proceed no further in their movements till they heard from him: and thus, for a time, they manifested hesitation and irresolution.

It was during this time, when the Muscovite violated the stability of the peace, and hastily employed his strength in injuring the country of the Osmanlis, and when the Germans commenced their aggressions against Bosnia, that the men of the frontiers, in such circumstances of doubt and perplexity, began to revolve in their minds these inauspicious appearances, and subsequently formed the plan of defending themselves and their country against the efforts of the enemy. The accounts which they had received relative to the way in which the enemy had collected, and how they were busily

* A town in Servia, a hundred and twelve miles south of Belgrade.

employed in building ships (or boats) on the Danube and the Save, were more than sufficient to excite their terror and amazement. The men of the borders, as well as the people of Bosnia, were universally plunged into a state of despair and distraction.

All these things, however, were not hid from his Excellency Ali Pasha, the august vizir, the governor of Bosnia. The vizir, expert in affairs, prudent, and incomparable, in order not to awaken or increase the perturbation of the people, or augment their perplexities, though he well knew the state of affairs, kept all his griefs and agitations within his own breast. From the very first appearance of these troubles, the illustrious vizir was full of care and anxiety as to the result, and carefully attended to them all; so much so, indeed, that his thoughtful and agitated mind kept him, on many an occasion, from taking his usual rest either by night or by day. The distressing letters and petitions which were sent to him for assistance from the men of the borders, as well as those which were sent him from the other inhabitants of the kingdom, and the judicious answers which he ordered to be returned in reference to their urgent claims, are not forbidden to be touched upon in this work. I have laid a statement of the whole of these affairs before his Excellency the Prime Minister, and I am anxiously waiting for his Highness's commands; and even the sentiments in some of the letters which have been sent from the royal camp, and which affirm that we are even now on good terms with the Germans, are not prohibited

being adverted to, inasmuch as they were intended to soothe and allay the agitations of the people.

From other documents it would appear, however, that it was after the German armies had come from the inner provinces of their empire towards Bosnia, and pretending for a time, as already observed, that they had come with no hostile intention, that the illustrious vizir became informed, by letters and petitions from all ranks and conditions, of the real state of affairs. This sad intelligence, it is said, soon excited terror, and spread a mysterious amazement among the easy and undisturbed inhabitants of Bosnia: it sunk them into the depth of surprise. The vizir was no sooner apprised of this intelligence than he made all necessary enquiry as to the actual appearance of the enemy, and sent a special messenger to their infamous chief. The messenger lost no time. On his arrival he represented to the chief, in the name of the vizir, that the time specified in the treaty of peace concluded at Puzzeroff* with the German emperor, had not then expired: and therefore wished to be informed why they had come with such hostile appearance as they presented, and thus awakening the fears of all the inhabitants of that quarter, as well as threatening ruin and destruction to the Ottoman empire. The hateful and cursed commander replied: “We are not come with any hostile intentions, or with any view opposed to the good understanding and friendship which subsist

* It was at this place the famous treaty was concluded in 1718 between Charles VI. and Achmet III. It is usually written, *Passarowitz*.

betwixt the German emperor and you. Though we are come near to you," continued he, "it is only with the view of guarding our own frontiers." The messenger said in return: "How does it come to pass, seeing there is no declaration of war, that it is become necessary at this time, and in opposition to established custom, that you should come here with numerous troops and warlike stores?" The fierce and execrable chief answered: "We have been so enjoined: we do not know the reason of it. When St. Peter's day (the 29th of June) arrives, you will receive an answer." On finishing this sentence, he gave such symptoms, in addition to the above answers, as left no room to doubt any further of their wicked and hostile intentions. The messenger returned, and related circumstantially the whole of his interview with the vile chief to the illustrious vizir.

The vizir, after weighing all circumstances, saw it was right to remain no longer inactive. Couriers were immediately sent to all quarters, giving information of the state of affairs, and calling on the inhabitants every where to prepare for resistance. The grandees of state, the nobles, the enlightened men of the frontiers, the judges, the mufti, the priests, and the other learned effendis, were all invited to assemble. This mandate they all promptly obeyed by assembling in Traunick, the metropolis of Bosnia. After they had all assembled together in the governor's palace, his excellency the governor, the illustrious vizir, entered immediately on the business which had led to their convocation; and,

after saluting them all in the most respectful and appropriate terms, he proceeded thus: “ Ere now you will all have learned that the Germans have collected themselves in large bodies on our borders, and that they appear prepared for commencing hostilities against our country. This was a kind of trouble which we did not anticipate, because we understood we were on a friendly footing with the German emperor; and still these wretches, the Germans, maintain a feigned appearance of friendly intentions and good faith. These inflamed and raging Germans, contrary to the treaty betwixt the German emperor and the Porte, have been collected from the inner provinces of their country, and are now within our borders. This German army has divided itself into certain divisions, and stands prepared for carrying their machinations against our country into effect. You are, besides, acquainted with the nature of the letters and petitions which have reached us from the rulers and commanders on our frontiers; and also with the message which was sent to the hostile chief, and the answer which he returned.” The illustrious governor, after laying these things before the assembly, requested them to declare their sentiments, and offer their suggestions; “ so that by this,” said he, “ it may appear how such weighty counsel and ardent patriotism may be considerately, properly, and correspondingly brought to have effect.” The assembly took all these things into quiet consideration. The heart of each of them became cheerful to a great degree:

they continued their sittings; carefully weighed and examined the various and important propositions submitted to their deliberation, and entered fully into the views of the governor. The grandees noted carefully down, and put into form, all these transactions: and let it be observed, in justice to the illustrious governor, that it is owing to his judicious measures and consummate wisdom that our country was preserved, or rather delivered, from the movements and cruelty of the deceitful Germans; that it did not fall, unprotected as it was, a prey to their ambition, by the stratagems which they had employed to overthrow it.

St. Peter's day (the 29th of June) was the day the enemy had determined on for commencing their work of destruction against Bosnia. It was therefore said in this assembly: "We are not ignorant of the fraud and deceit of the enemy of our faith. Let us be found ready and united, exercising complete foresight, and making every necessary preparation for meeting them with fortitude and valour. If the enemy commence their threatened hostilities, let us be found trusting in the arm of Omnipotence, and fleeing to Him for protection—let us hasten to the place where the enemy of our faith and of the empire first show themselves, and vigorously and manfully oppose them—let us, trusting in the all-avenging God, righteous and holy, quickly move against this hateful horde, and employ our utmost endeavour to oppose their assaults." When the governor understood these sentiments, coupled as