



*Presentation of Prisoners and Heads, Crawford's Journal*

# Heirs of the Golden Horde

## The Russo-Turkish War of 1735-1739

### Historical Commentary

# Heirs of the Golden Horde

## The Russo-Turkish War of 1735-1739

### Introduction

#### Infidels and *Giaours*

For 240 years the Russians paid tribute to the descendants of the Tatar mercenaries of Batu Khan, and endured their slave raiding for another 200 years. By the decree of one woman the Tatars lost their political power; by the decree of another woman they lost their political existence.

By 1700, Tataria was a spent force, unable to threaten the heartland of Mother Russia. But Mother Russia was swelling, and her children needed protection. Expansion into the fertile southlands of the Ukraine kept the Tatar-Muscovite rivalry alive.

The Tatars also needed a protector, and found one in their coreligionists, the Ottoman Turks. An enemy *that* powerful forced Mother Russia to look for allies in turn, and she found one in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The stage was set for a series of conflicts that would not end until the cataclysm of the Great War.

Conquest of the Ukraine, a Warm Water Port, and Free Access Through the Dardanelles were the dreams of Peter the Great, founder of the Romanov dynasty. But it was his German niece, Anna Ivanova, who decreed the Tatars should be humbled, and his German granddaughter, Catherine the Great, who decreed they should have no right to be.

#### The Bear's Den

Students of war on the Eastern Front are quick to describe Russia: big, cold, and backward. It is a simple definition, true in its evocation, and otherwise erroneous.

Russia is a big land, but not a uniform frozen waste. The southern parts are either arid steppe or semitropical, featuring such items as wasting dry heat and malarial swamp, in addition to hyperborean winter cold. The north can be temperate, even hot in summer, and features thick swaths of forest and swamp. The watershed for the great land-mass of European Russia (the lands west of the Ural Mountains) runs east-west through the center of it, which means all the rivers eventually drain either north or south; critically, the Pripyet Marshes lie on this watershed and drain in both directions. That fact alone has had a major impact on the course of Russian history.

Russia is a big land, but much of it is not populated by Russians. The core of the original Russian lands, Muscovy and Novgorod, lay in the boreal zone on the north side of the watershed. This protected them to some degree from the Mongols and other nomads who disliked the forests. So Muscovy did not suffer the fate of her kinfolk in the Kievan 'Rus, who lay directly on the only practical east-west route into Europe (Kiev also lay on a great north-south trade axis – the Dnieper River – which made it a delectable prize).

Russia is a big land, and it takes a long time to build a nation in a big land. America, another big land, was colonised from the bottom up (despite left-wing propaganda to the contrary), by people of many cultures who shared similar visions. Russia was colonised from the top down, by imperial decree, imposed on people of many cultures who often had no part in the vision and reflected that fact in their attitude. Furthermore, the Russians themselves are extremely conservative in their ways (and even more chauvinistic than Anglo-Saxons). The biggest changes in Russia have come through revolutions, not the ballot box.

Until the 18th Century, very little of 'schoolbook' Russia even belonged to Russia. In particular, most of the theatre of operations for the War of 1735-39, an area which for convenience can be called the Ukraine, was under Turkish hegemony, mainly through their surrogates the Tatars and the Moldavians. The rest was either ruled

by Poland or inhabited by 'freedom-loving' Cossack bands of mixed parentage. The ever-expanding Grand Duchy of Muscovy held formal sway only in the north.

### The Theatre of Operations

The war between the Ottomans and the Russians covered a vast space, ranging from the lower Danube all the way to the Caspian Sea. And yet, there were only a few axes suitable for military operations. Even for the steppe's habitués there were only so many routes that could be used. Most of them followed rivers, which were also the only viable trade routes and thus dotted with most of the settlements.

In the east, there were two axes southward into Muslim lands: via Daghestan or via Georgia. The first led to Persia and the second to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans held a line of fortified trading posts (some dating from the days of Classical Greece, some originally Genoese) down the Black Sea coast: Taman, Anapa, Tuapse, Sochi, Sukumi, Batum, Potosi. There were no real roads, either between the forts, or in the hinterland. With great effort, while the Georgian tribes were friendly and the winters mild, the Russians would later demonstrate the ability to ooze through the valleys of the Caucasus and engage the Ottomans in Armenia and eastern Anatolia.

But in the 1730s the Russians had yet to secure the mouth of the Don River, let alone the line of the Kuban. Instead, the western Caucasus was a battleground between the Persians and the Turks. And the Russians could have formed an army out of the men they lost trying to hold onto Daghestan; by the mid-1730s they were retreating from a costly experiment there.

The Black Sea was the perfect moat for an empire, and in the 18th Century, that empire was ruled by the Ottoman Turks. They, and not their Tatar allies who lived in the steppes along its northern coast, controlled every port, and maintained a large fleet to police it. Peter the Great had been forced to scrap his nascent Russian Black Sea Fleet as a provision of the Treaty of Prût (1711). True, the Cossacks maintained pirate flotillas that were a nuisance to Turkish trade (they had, on occasion, raided Istanbul), and these could be augmented by Russian ships built far away up the Don and Dnieper rivers, but Muscovite naval power was at best restricted to the river deltas and the Sea of Azov.

These circumstances meant that the only viable axes of Russian advance lay in the west, against the Ottoman client state of Moldavia, or along the coast via Bessarabia to the heavily fortified Mouths of the Danube. In past centuries, the Ottomans had held suzerainty over Hungary and Transylvania, making it easier for opposing powers to come to grips over the Carpathian Mountains. But in those days, Muscovy lay well to the east, and it was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that had to deal with the neighbouring Infidels. Now, however, the Imperial House of Habsburg ruled Hungary and dominated Transylvania, meaning that the Turk in the Balkans was their affair. Except that the large population of Orthodox Christians invited Russian interference.

There was another option, never before attempted. If a base of operations were established in the Crimea, with its fertile land and pleasant climate, the Russians would be able to support a large fleet on the Black Sea, control trade, and strike directly at Istanbul. And as an added bonus, the Tatar race-enemy had his home there.

Thousands of Russians, Moldavians, and Poles passed through the great slave mart of Kaffa (Feodosia) every year, a fortified town built by the Genoese that was now a Turkish naval base. That trade would be stopped if the Crimea were conquered. Taking the Crimea would also drive a wedge between the various Tatar polities of the Ukrainian steppe and place their Khan (more correctly, 'Han') under Russian domination.

Yes, the Crimea was certainly an option. The problem was getting there.

## The Steppe

The steppe lands south of the great watershed are a level plain, really a plateau, sloping gently down to the Black Sea like the sides of a plate. Cut by numerous rivers, many of which form swampy canyons, the 'plate' is wooded in its northern parts, but absolutely treeless in the south, where the tall grasses can grow over a man's head. A knob of ground that would go unrecognised anywhere else (except the Western Desert) becomes a vital piece of 'high ground'. Such places are mainly to be found in the Donets Basin and along the Dnieper; elsewhere, ancient and not so ancient burial mounds, or *tumen*, dot the plains.

In the height of summer the steppe is extremely hot and dry, nearly a desert (and so it is described in travellers' accounts), and the smaller watercourses at the bottom of their brush-studded ravines are mere muddy pools connected by tiny trickles. The Tatars routinely burned the grass over large areas for the benefit of their herds, to ensure the old growth did not choke out the new; in war they did so as a stratagem.

In the winter the steppe is scoured by cold winds out of the east. The snow might not be as deep as in the wet forests of the north, but it is deep enough; drifts of 'dry' stuff blown by the wind and piling up like sand. Or the air can be as still and as clear as crystal – and so cold one might break it with a hammer. In the 18th Century, European armies did not campaign on the steppe in winter. But the Tatars did.

## The Rivers

Five great rivers (and many smaller ones) featured in the steppe war of the 1730s: the Don and its tributary the Donets, the Dnieper, the Kuban, and the Dniester. All were large enough to carry fleets of river craft, but none were deep enough for navigation in all seasons. Since they froze over in winter, however, they remained highways for the greater part of the year.

The Don and the Dnieper were the biggest and most important. The Don communicated with the Volga with only a short overland gap, and thus communicated with Moscow and St. Petersburg. Unfortunately, navigation below Voronezh, where the Russians had a naval yard, was problematic. Only flat-bottomed craft could make it down the river from this point, which was just as well, as only flat-bottomed craft could make it over the sand bars at the river's mouth. They also had to run a gauntlet of Ottoman forts, the greatest being the fortress of Azov.

Quite far down on the lower Don, the Donets had its confluence. It was also navigable, and was dotted with Cossack settlements running up to the edge of Russian-controlled territory: the Sloboda Ukraine, just above the Cossack town of Izyum. Here the Russians built a string of fortifications running all the way to the Dnieper, 400 Km away.

Navigable for much of its length, much of the time, below the site that would one day be called Dnieperpetrovsk the Dnieper ran through a series of cataracts – seven of them – that could be as hard to negotiate as the cataracts of the Nile. Below the 'Dnieper Bend' the river was easy to navigate, and ran out into a large *liman* (a shallow bay filled with river ooze). Like the Don, the mouth of the Dnieper was guarded by Ottoman fortifications: Oczakov on the north, and the small fortified town of Kinburun situated on the southern peninsula that enclosed the liman.

The Kuban River has its sources away up by Mount Elbruz and runs out into the Taman Peninsula that divides the Sea of Azov from the Black Sea. The river was a trade route, lined with many communities, and the basin it drained had been the breadbasket of the Classical Greek world. It was not a defensive barrier for the Ottomans and their Tatar clients, though; it pointed the wrong way. Here in the far south, Russian influence was weak, but the river was important for controlling the movement of the nomad Tatars; recently, the powerful Kalmyk people, enemies of the Tatars, had begun drifting into the region, encouraged by Moscow.

The Dniester was a borderline of the Ottoman Empire, actually of one of its semiautonomous Principalities – Moldavia. Deep cut and rocky in its middle reaches, slow and winding near the sea, the Dniester was monitored by two massive fortresses: Bender, blocking the path into the Balkans via the steppe itself, and Khotin, at the 'top' of Moldavia; a Polish castle that the Turks had captured and improved. Bridging the river below Khotin would be a difficult operation, especially if a Turkish army were nearby.

## The Crimea

The Crimea is an anomaly. The name is a Tatar word for 'dead end'. Nearly cut off by water from the rest of the Ukraine, parts of it enjoyed relatively mild winters and summers. The southern reaches were mountainous – according to geologists, originally part of the Carpathian range – and the gently rolling foothills were heavily settled and farmed. The Krim Tatars called it their *yurt*, their homeland, but many tribes had done the same in the past: the Cimmerians (of Conan fame), Scythians, Goths and Alans; nearly a hundred nationalities have lived there.

Land access to the Crimea could only be had via the Isthmus of Perekop (Prekop), defended by a Genoese-built line of fortifications. Alternatively, there was the Spit of Arabat on the eastern side, a thin sandy peninsula that almost reached the mainland; the gap could be bridged. Otherwise, one needed control of the seas to enter the Crimea, and *that* was the Turks to hold or give away.

## Sources

This author was fortunate in finding two excellent primary sources for the Russian campaigns available in the English language, plus two good secondary sources that draw both on them and on sources in other languages.

The first is General C. H. von Manstein's 'Contemporary Memoirs of Russia' (*average price \$180 new or \$50 used*). Manstein served in the Russian Army throughout the 1730s and 1740s, and wrote of the War of the Polish Succession, the Russo-Turkish War, and the Russo-Swedish War of the early 1740s. He served as Field Marshal von Münnich's aide-de-camp (Münnich was the *Generalissimo* of the Tsaritsa's Army) and was present at a number of engagements during the Russo-Turkish War, including the storming of the Lines of Perekop in 1736, the siege of Oczakov in '37, the march to the Dniester in '38, and the invasion of Moldavia in '39.

*[Tsaritsa is slightly more accurate than 'Empress'; it translates as 'princess', but THE Tsaritsa was Supreme Autocrat of All the Russias.]*

The second source is the Earl of Crawford's Journal (Vol. 2 of 3). Crawford was a Scottish nobleman, closely tied to King George II's Whig regime, a British general who fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy, and a lord lieutenant (district commander) at the time of the Jacobite '45 (where he accompanied the Hessian contingent into Scotland). He was also Grand Master of the Scottish Masons, and this is probably the reason why his extensive journals wound up in the private library of Benjamin Franklin. They are now the property of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. Apparently, the last time they were examined was in 1903.

*[Since first writing, it would appear Davies (see below) has also referenced it.]*

Crawford received permission from King George to serve as a volunteer in the Russian army for the campaign of 1738 (along with other prominent adventurers from various nations), and he left a diary of his experiences, plus a number of excellent maps which he commissioned in 1739, when he had gone on to view the Danube Front (he was critically wounded at the Battle of Grocka). The maps have been redrawn for this commentary by Paul Dangel, with many thanks from this author.

A key secondary source is Robert Bain's 'Pupils of Peter the Great', a recently reprinted 19th Century work which includes a chapter on the war and is a useful summary of Russian life in Court and Camp during the first half of the 18th Century.

For this edition of the Commentary, mention should also be made of Brian Davies' recent trilogy on the Ottoman-Russian struggle for dominance. His second book, *Empire and Military Revolution in Eastern Europe*, covers Russia's expansion into the Ukraine and has a large section devoted to this war. The publication of this book was one of the reasons for the rewriting of this commentary.

For an examination of events on the Danube, where the Russians' Imperial (Habsburg) allies fought the Ottoman Turks for three years (1737-39) see this author's Commentary on the Türkenkrieg. Readers may notice the odd discrepancy between the two works. This can be put down to a) deeper research conducted since the earlier commentary was written, and b) the Russian perspective. Because Turkish records are hard to obtain, the following history is Russian-orientated. It would be interesting to see things from the Tatar perspective, but this is difficult. Although their nobility were literate, their culture is an alien one to Westerners; more importantly, the Russians suppressed it in the process of suppressing them.

## Dates & Measurements

Period sources suffer from the compilation of the existence of two Western dating systems, usually called Old and New Style. There was an 11 day difference between them in the 1730s and '40s. Today we use the latter dating, as did many Continental countries in 18th Century. The English, however, used OS. Where possible in this account, the modern dating system has been used. Peter the Great tried to introduce the Western calendar to Muscovy, with mixed success; being a Westerner, this author chooses to ignore the traditional Russian calendar. Should the reader note a discrepancy, it will probably be due to the author's inattention.

Period sources tend to use *leagues* or *versts* as a unit of distance. *Miles* are also used, but are dangerous, because there are a variety of feet in a mile depending on the country in question. Crawford sometimes uses Polish miles, equal to 10 Km each. In general terms a league is the distance a man can walk in an hour, roughly 3 English (or American) miles. This is a far more sensible unit of measure than we Moderns are forced to use because some 19th Century Rationalist decided Science was the new Guiding Light. Knowing that a league is an hour's walk, one can look at the ground, walk it, look again, and then be able to appraise just how long it will take to move a camp, or put in an assault, or where a caravanserai should be built. Any other unit of measure requires an accurate map and a literate person to interpret it. A modern French league is 4 Km but in the 18th Century it could range from 2.4 to 6.2 miles (10 Km). However, since Manstein sometimes gives both French leagues and Russian versts (just over 1 Km) for the same distance marched, it is clear his French league is equal to 4 Km (3.96 Km to be precise). Throughout this commentary, kilometres will be used when possible, based on these calculations.

## Rumours of War

### Flint Sparks

However far in the past one may seek for a first cause, the troubles of the 1730s can be dated from the Russians' ill-fated try at annexing Daghestan. The Persian province of Daghestan lay on the western shore of the Caspian Sea, bordered on the north by Kabardia and various Cossack posts on the Terek River, and on the south by the province of Azerbaijan, also coveted by Russia.

In those days, of course, crude oil was not a commodity. Nevertheless, the province had strategic value. It was the gateway to the Iranian plateau, and beyond that, Mesopotamia southward and Transoxania eastward. It was also the graveyard of armies. The Terek delta was a vast wetland, bounded by steppe and the foothills of the Caucasus. The coastal plain north of Baku was a narrow, arid strip. South of Baku, it and the foothills to the west were subtropical jungle and malarial swamp. The Russians lost 135,000 men here over their twelve-year period of occupation, the highest loss for any of their 18th Century campaigns. Most men died of disease. One

officer reported that out of a draft of 26 of his peers, only he was left, after just two years' service in the province.

*[The ecological mess at Baku, by the way, is not entirely the fault of the Soviets; the ground and sea there have always been saturated with oil seeping out of the ground. There used to be a Persian temple there (fire-worshippers) with its own 'eternal flame'.]*

Because of geography and because of the political situation, a clash with the Tatars was inevitable. It came in 1732. Nadr Shah's Persia had been at war with the Ottoman Empire for several years. The Tatars were a valuable Ottoman client state, capable of threatening the Persians' northern flank in the Caucasus. But the swiftest way through the mountains – really the only way given the fierce tribes occupying the western end, was via Daghestan, which, thanks to a marriage of convenience with the Persians, was now well stocked with Russian garrisons. And every year the supposedly neutral Russians became more bellicose and interfering.

*[Well, the Russians had to give the Persians a bone or two to avoid being kicked out. By a diplomatic fiction they were guarding the territories they had stolen from Persia for the Persians, who were 'too busy' to do so themselves.]*

### A Flash in the Pan

The first clash came early in 1733. In December of 1732, the newly-invested Nadr Shah launched a campaign against Ottoman-held Bagdad. The Turks called on their Tatar allies to take the pressure off with a raid into the northern provinces of Persia, where the State's authority was weak. The Russians, having more or less completed their withdrawal from Daghestan, were established north of the Terek River and presumably would not interfere.

The Tatars set out in February. Having been told by the Ottoman Sultan to hurry, the commander of the Tatar force, Terti – or Feh'ti – Geraï, the *Kalga Sultan* or commander-in-chief of the Khan's armies, was left with few choices. He could either cut across Kabardia – the northern foothills of Caucasia, risking the ire of the Kabardians, or through the steppes north of the Terek River, lands under nominal Russian dominion. He appears to have chosen the former course.

*[The Kabardians were more than loyal Russian allies, their aristocracy belonged to the Russian Court.]*

Khan Kaplan II Geraï's own *divan* (council) had overruled his objections to such a risky march, less because of the need for haste and more because the leadership wanted to make a statement about who ruled the Kuban. They felt bolstered by the Porte's own stand – the Sultan had written to the Russians reminding them that Kabardia was a neutral zone. From the Tatars' perspective, permitting Russian domination in the lands north of the Caucasus, even by proxy, would mean the release of the local Tatar bands from the Krim Horde's grip and a tacit invitation to their eastern rivals, the Kalmyks, to migrate into the region.

*[The area was a melting pot of renegade Cossacks, renegade Tatars, and renegade Kalmyks. Kaplan II ruled the Krim Tatars from 1730 to 1736, being removed from his office by the Ottomans for general fecklessness.]*

Hearing of the Kalga Sultan's approach, the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg, governor of the region (who will appear again), warned him off. In response the Kalga Sultan attempted to incite a revolt among the Tatar tribes living north of the Terek. The local Tatar chiefs passed the Kalga Sultan's written pleas on to Hesse-Homburg unopened. They wanted no trouble.

For the irascible Hesse-Homburg, this provocation was too much. He dispatched a sizeable part of his mobile forces – a regiment of dragoons and another of infantry, supported by several hundred Cossacks – to intercept the Kalga Sultan.

The latter's route is not entirely clear, but it appears that the Tatar Host crossed the Terek above the bend of its upper reaches, and rode hard across Kabardia, south of the river. They were not intercepted until they had arrived in the vicinity of Grozny, probably because



the bulk of the Russian garrison forces were based on the Greben Line (round about Grebenskaya), 60 Km or so northeast from Grozny.

Now, for most of the Host's route eastward, a ridge of land, the Balasha, parallels the Terek on its southern bank. East of Grozny this ridge closes down to the river, forming a chokepoint that the Russians could easily hold against the Tatars. So, it is probable the Host rode to the south of this feature. However, they would have to pass through the Balasha at some point; the best location (from map interpretation) appears to be a gap at the town of Gudermes, about 36 Km east of Grozny. Once through this gap they faced one more major obstacle, the Sulak River, but that was in Daghestan.

*[An alternative gap lies farther east and south, but it leads into a tangle of low hills before debouching on to the coastal plain. Grozny did not exist at this time. It was founded in 1818.]*

Marching to intercept, Hesse-Homburg learned the Tatars were at a place called Tschetschenei. The next stop along their route was a village called Goraitshkie (Goriachii). According to Manstein there were only two paths the Host could take, both of them 'defiles'. One was large and one was small.

*['Tschetschenei' is simply the Germanised version of 'Chechenyi' or Chechnya. Now, Manstein claims it was a village, but perhaps this is an error in translation. Perhaps the Tatars had merely crossed the border into Chechnya; in those days the border with Kabardia (Ingushetia, to be precise) ran along the Sunzha River, on which Grozny is sited. Alternatively, there is a town called Chechen-Aul, which lies at a ford of the Argun River, about 18 KM southeast of Grozny. Either way, a single march would take the Tatars to Goriachii (assuming this author has correctly identified that place).]*

(The location of Goriachii is hard to determine. If Tschetschenei is indeed Chechen-Aul, the Host's eastward march would have to take them to the gap at Gudermes. For a mounted army, and especially for the Tatars, a march of 36 Km would not be an all-day affair. Tatars had been known to ride 100 Km in a day. Although this author cannot confirm it, Gudermes would seem to be at or near the site of Goriachii; one old German map names the place 'Gortchau', which is at least similar to 'Goriachii'. Certainly, the Russians deployed on across the Tatars' line of march to Goriachii, which would necessarily be the case if Gudermes were the place of action, since the defiles lie west of it.)

*[Confusing the identification of the place is the fact that the town of Goriachii Klyuch is a watering spot in the hills south of Krasnodar, and the only 'Goriachii' that is recognised in this part of Russia; also, 'Goriachii' is Russian for 'hot' – the place is a hot springs. But the mere fact that Hesse-Homburg's troops were based at the other end of the Caucasus negates this choice of location.]*

The term 'defile' can be used for a number of features: a river running between steep banks, a ravine, a pass, a gap in a belt of woodland. The key point is that it restricts movement to a narrow front. The gap of Gudermes does indeed feature two defiles, one to the west and one to the south. To enter the western defile, which is perhaps 1-2 Km wide, the Host would only have to cross a brook. After entering the southern one the host would be riding beside a substantial river. The southern defile is wider (4 Km), if one ignores the river, or smaller (1 Km), if the river is taken into account; either way, one pass is wider than the other.

500 dragoons were sent to cover the small defile, while Major-General Eropkin (or Jerepkin), with 500 more dragoons (presumably the other half of the regiment), 800 infantry (probably 2 battalions), and the Cossacks, covered the easier way. Hesse-Homburg kept 400 dragoons and 400 infantry in reserve.

The Tatars began the battle by feinting toward Eropkin's post, then sent the bulk of their army against the weakly defended, but difficult smaller defile. Their assault was described as ferocious. The Russians withstood the onslaught for some time but would have been overwhelmed by numbers if Hesse-Homburg had not marched up with the reserve, followed soon after by a portion of Eropkin's force.

*[Tentatively, it can be suggested that the Tatars attempted the western pass first. Finding it blocked, they swung round to the south, to what might have seemed a wider passage before they came upon the river, which forced them onto a narrower frontage than they had expected.]*

No sooner had the Russians consolidated than the Tatars attacked again, furiously. Beaten off with musketry and cannon fire, they came on a third time, forcing the Russian left wing, under Eropkin, to retire 500 paces. Fortunately, this put the Tatars in enfilade to a battery of 5 field guns rushed from the other defile, which proceeded to wreak havoc. The guns saved the Russian force from a rout. The Tatars abandoned the field, leaving over 1,000 dead out of an army of 25,000. The Russians either lost about 400 dead (Manstein) or 55 dead (Davies).

*[Since Davies only mentions the 500 men initially holding the position, it may be that this force lost 55 men and the rest were lost in the general fight, or that the excess were the overall 'campaign' losses.]*

Ultimately, the Tatars worked their way around the Russians, who were probably only too glad to see them go, and carried on with their expedition.

### Distractions

Tensions died as the Russians became immersed in the War of the Polish Succession (1733-35), but they did not go away entirely. The French, backing the other candidate for the Polish throne, tried to make trouble by stirring up the Ottomans into breaking diplomatic ties with Russia.

*[The French had a great fear of Russia at this time. They foresaw that Central Europe would always be dominated one of two superpowers. In those days, the only strong central power that could act as a balance was Austria, but she was in Russia's pocket. In a later age, the French and the Russians would battle directly for the fate of Central Europe.]*

This was also the time that Humbaraci Ahmet Pasha, a.k.a. le Comte de Bonneval (who was a free agent, not a legal French 'military advisor') obtained notoriety for teaching the Turks how to fight in the European manner. The conservative-minded Turks treated his efforts as an amusing side-show, but at the time, Anna Ivanova, the Russian Tsaritsa, made strenuous efforts to obtain the removal of all foreign 'experts' at the Porte by offering them better contracts.

In view of the situation, St. Petersburg renewed its agreements with Persia in 1734, particularly the 1732 Treaty of Resht, which stipulated no Persian peace with the Turks without considering Russian interests in return for the Russian evacuation of Daghestan. Ironically, the war against the Tatars would begin as the excuse for it was removed. The Terek River became the new frontier. The Persians, by the way, later reneged, making peace with the Ottomans in 1736, while the Russo-Turkish war was ramping up.

*[Nadr Shah is often called Thomas Kouli Khan in Russian sources, but his leaning toward the Christian faith was more apparent than real – he also made Sunni Islam the official religion of Persia in hopes of cementing peace with the Ottomans; in actuality he was as agnostic as Frederick the Great.]*

When the War of the Polish Succession began to wind down to a successful conclusion for Russia (the Habsburg-Romanov candidate, Augustus III of Saxony, was enthroned as King of Poland), and affairs on the critical Swedish front were quiescent (the last of the issues surrounding the Great Northern War being wrapped up at this time), St. Petersburg's attention swung south again. War with the Porte was swiftly decided upon.

### Make War, Not Peace

Several reasons can be cited for a war which, in General von Manstein's words, 'cost immense sums and a great number of lives, without any real advantage resulting' (Manstein, *Memoirs of Russia*, p.90). The *casus belli* was the repeated violation of Russian territory by the Tatars, mainly in aid of the Ottomans' eastern campaigns, but also in pursuance of their slave raiding. The Ottoman Sultan repeatedly warned the Khan to be careful during these years, and no 'grand raids' for human flesh were conducted, but the Khan could not control his noblemen, many of whom took their personal

followers on small forays to keep them amused. Raiding was their way of life and an integral part of the economy.

Behind this immediate issue lay the strategic vision of Peter the Great, of 'reclaiming' the Ukraine and establishing a naval presence on the Black Sea. Russophobic historians suggest that even in his day the ultimate goal was free access through the Dardanelles and the removal of the Turks from Europe: Russia, the 'Third Rome', inheriting the mantle through a Byzantine marriage contract and their religious conversion to Orthodoxy, would throw off the infidel yoke borne by Constantine's city. This, with expansion to the Pacific and to India, the control of the Baltic Sea, and the domination of Eastern and Central Europe, would bring the Russian empire to its 'natural extent'.

In 1736, Minister of War and Generalissimo of the Tsaritsa's Army, Count Burkhardt Christoph von Münnich, submitted his intentions in writing (quoted in Davies *Empire*, p.191):

'In 1736 Azov will be ours. We will become masters of the Don, Donets, Perekop, the Nogai domains between the Don and Dnepr along the Black Sea, and perhaps even Crimea will belong to us.

In 1737 all of Crimea will be subjugated, with the Kuban, and we will acquire Kabarda. The Empress will be sovereign on the Azov Sea and the river mouths between Crimea and the Kuban.

In 1738 we will subjugate without the slightest risk the Belgorod and Bucak hordes on that side of the Dnestr, and Moldavia and Wallachia, which bend under the Turkish yoke. The Greeks will find salvation under the wings of the Russian eagle.

In 1739 the flags and standards of Her Highness will be hoisted... where? In Constantinople.'

Perhaps this piece of bombast had to be spouted to obtain sufficient artillery ammunition, but Münnich seems also to have been carried away with the idea.

The Church, one of the two pillars of the Muscovite State, certainly wanted a *reconquista* of Orthodox lands. There was talk of a grand plan to encircle the Black Sea along the lines of Münnich's boasting; the word on the street was 'Istanbul in three years'. And the Russians had already made attempts at cultural penetration of the Balkans, to the dismay of both the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. However, real Russian gains were to be far more modest, and so were their final plans, which proved difficult enough to achieve as it was.

It is a fact that before his death, Peter the Great established several magazines on the Don and the Mius Rivers, plus large quantities of stores for building river flotillas on the Don and the Dnieper. Revenge for the humiliating surrender on the Prut in 1711 was certainly a motive in the present war.

For their part, the Turks, facing near-certain disaster in Iraq and eastern Anatolia, did everything they could to maintain peace with Russia. They rebuked their vassal, the Khan of the Krim Tatars, overlord of all the *hordes* of the Ukraine. Apart from the perennial raiding issue, the Khan had spent the winter of 1734 at the Ottoman fortress of Bender, from where he offered support to Polish malcontents who opposed the instalment of the Saxon Elector as their new king – much of the Russian Army was still trying to stamp out the flames of revolt. On top of this, the Tatars had welcomed several thousand Zaporozhian Cossacks (predominantly Polish Ukrainians) into their ranks. All this made for one Sultan-sized headache. Through the Russian representative at Istanbul, recalled to the Russian Court to give a last-minute briefing, the Turks offered many vague concessions. But, even if Anna Ivanova had truly wanted peace, which she did not, it was too late.

(The Cossacks of the Left Bank (eastern) Ukraine were at this time under reasonably tight Russian control. Many of the Zaporozhians of the Right (Polish) Bank, however, were still in opposition to St.

Petersburg after their ill-fated alliance with Charles XII during the Great Northern War. Exiled, they had gone over to the Khan of the Tatars, and were allotted an encampment at Oleshki (just across from Kherson on the Dnieper). However, they soon became disenchanted with their treatment as second class citizens. Just prior to the start of the war, they received a secret pardon from the Tsaritsa; she ordered them to desert as soon as war broke out, which they did enmasse, to the Tatars' great consternation.)

## 1735: Chastisement

The Russian High Command developed two strategies. The first was to divide their forces, sending the Regular or Mobile Army across the Dniester – a direct attack on the Ottomans – while the Don Cossacks and the Kalmyks tried to intercept the main Tatar column returning from Persia after its foray in 1734.

*[The Kalmyks were one of the large nomadic 'hordes' of Eurasia, at this time dwelling between the Don and the Volga. They were descended from a Mongol tribe, who, as good Lamaist Buddhists, hated their Turkic-Muslim neighbours. Recent turmoil within the society had driven a sizeable group southwestward into the Kuban, where the Russians reluctantly took them on as clients – specifically, as auxiliaries for this campaign of 1735.]*

However, this plan was dropped in favour of a concentration against Azov, at the mouth of the Don River. This would allow Russian ships built at Voronezh to enter the Sea of Azov, and it was hoped would eventually lead to the reconstruction of Peter I's old naval base at Taganrog.

*[Rostov-na-Donau did not exist in the 1730s. It was one of many garrison towns founded by Catherine the Great a generation later. Azov lay in the delta itself, on the south bank, where the Turks could gain access by sea – provided the river was in flood and properly dredged.]*

General Weisbach, Governor of the Ukraine, one of the many German generals on the Russian staff, was given command of the attempt and told to begin preparations in mid-August. He soon discovered the time was not ripe for an attack on Azov. The season was too advanced. It had been intended to use the existing supply stocks, laid in by Peter the Great, but many of them, through improper storage, were useless. Few troops were available, either.

The bulk of the Mobile Army was still in Poland hunting down die hard bands of 'rebel' Poles. Marshal Lacy still had not returned from his expedition to the Rhine (a first for Russian arms), and the remnants of the *Nizovoi* Corps, the occupation army of Daghestan, were yet to arrive home (and would not be fit for operations when they did). 20,000 men, mostly dragoons of the *Landmiliz*, were about all there was available, plus the services of some 8,000 *kozaki*.

Adding to the concern, the bulk of the Turks' Rumelian (European) troops were reported to be concentrating at Bender. So, a third course was adopted: a stab at the Crimean Tatars. This could be portrayed as a punitive raid, giving the hard-pressed Turks the opportunity to do nothing (and perhaps lose face). With the steppes cowed and the entire Russian Army freed from other commitments, Azov would be taken easily in 1736. It was expected that a fresh Persian offensive would prevent the Ottomans from making any effective counterattack.

Count Burkhardt Christoph von Münnich, arrived at Poltava – regional headquarters – in early autumn, where he received a commission from the Tsaritsa appointing him joint commander of the Armies of the Don and the Dnieper. He, too, saw there were not enough resources and too little time. The Generalissimo discovered his commissariat was nonexistent. He had no artillery. But Münnich was a risk-taker.

Then a series of misfortunes bedevilled the Russians. Weisbach died suddenly. Though this gave command to the hawkish Münnich, he in turn went down with malaria for three weeks. He was not the only one. Lieutenant-general Douglass, a Scot, was summoned to replace Weisbach, but Douglass caught a fever. Eventually, General Leontiev got the job, but it was now October. Azov was out, but the

Crimea might still be practical – the distances seemed short enough on the Russians' crudely drawn maps.

Leontiev's orders were to 'obtain satisfaction' from the Tatars for their recurrent border violations. In practice, this meant the freeing of Tatar captives if any could be found, the rustling of Tatar livestock, the laying waste of the lands between the Crimea and the Ukraine, and the entire extermination of the Nogai, a large group of nomadic Tatars, notorious slavers. 'Entirely exterminate' is General Manstein's phrase. These were thought to be easy goals, since the Khan of the Crimea and the best of his men had been rushed east to help the Ottomans stem the Persian tide.

#### Baron Burkhardt Christoph von Münnich (1683-1767)

Commander-in-Chief and Minister of War under Anna Ivanova. Imperial Count. Founder of Russian Philhellenism. Born at Neuenhundert in Oldenburg. Entered the French service very young, transferred to Hesse-Darmstadt, and then to Saxony. Joined the Russian Army of Peter II as *General-anschef* and Count. First task was the completion of the Ladoga Canal project (he amazed the Russians by actually finishing it). Made Field Marshal and president of the Council of War in 1732. Responsible for the founding of the Cadet Corps and reorganising the Army generally. During the War of the Polish Succession he successfully besieged Danzig. Made his name in the Russo-Turkish War with a series of successful campaigns: invading the Crimea (1736), capturing Oczakov (1737), Battle of Stavuchany and the capture of Khotin, leading to the conquest of Moldavia (1739). His downfall came due to his fascination with high politics; his rival the Duke of Courland (E. J. Biron) had more skill than he in this regard. In 1741, he was arrested while attempting to leave Russia after Anna Ivanova's death. Condemned to death and actually mounted on the scaffold, but sentence commuted to exile in Siberia. Released in 1762 on accession of Peter III. Catherine II employed him as director-general of the Baltic ports.



von Münnich

## Into the Steppe

The 1735 campaign is a microcosm of the entire war. Leontiev's corps marched out from the Lines of the Ukraine – a 400-kilometre-long anti-Tatar barrier, begun in 1731 and still under construction – in early October. Thanks to the delay in starting, some regular troops were available to take part; the corps of 39,795 men broke down into:

- 10,000 regulars.
- 10,000 *Landmiliz* (frontier militia; those fit for 'expeditionary' work were usually of good quality).
- 20,000 Cossacks.
- 46 guns.

The corps marched (October 1st) down the Orel River and out onto the waterless steppe (October 6th), arriving at Kamenoï Saton – the last fortified way station before the Dnieper had to be abandoned and the line of march directed across the arid steppe to Perekop – on October 13th.

Enroute, some 4,000 Nogai Tatars (nomadic tribesmen dwelling on the Ukrainina steppes) were killed. 3,300 cattle were rounded up, and a certain amount of devastation applied. It is not specified whether the bulk of the Tatar dead were non-combatants, though this may be presumed. In any case the distinction is meaningless in the cultural context. By all accounts the Nogai women were some of the nastiest Amazons one could hope to avoid. To the Russians they were all bandits and slavers, the remnants of the Mongol hordes who had oppressed them for centuries. 'The only good Tatar is a dead Tatar.'

It began to get cold. Very cold. The pasturage failed. Daily, it rained heavily, and at night the temperatures dropped below freezing. Men and horses began to sicken and die. With no place to leave them, the army was forced to drag the infirm along. From Kamenoï Saton, Leontiev still had ten marches to make before reaching the Crimea (where, according to some Zaporozhian renegades, they would be able to winter). On October 13th the weather turned sour. On the 16th, Leontiev called a council of war, where it was unanimously agreed to retreat and go into winter quarters. The next day, the snows came. And fell hard. A foot of snow fell the first night out of the post, and 1,000 horses died during the storm. The blizzards lasted for days. The cold was incredible, even for the Russians. In the end, they lost 9,000 men and 9,000 horses, nearly all to the weather. It took the army until the end of November to reach safety.

General Leontiev underwent a court-martial but was exonerated. Having followed Weissbach's plan to the letter, it was obvious he had had no choice but to retire. There was consolation. The Tatars had again ridden into Daghestan in aid of the Ottomans – hence their lack of resistance against the Russians. But, hurrying home to defend his people, they had been caught by the snow as well. The army broke up, in a race to find shelter. Reportedly, over 10,000 men died, and 50,000 horses.

*[The Tatar numbers are not inconceivable, though perhaps inflated. 10,000 out of 25-40,000 is quite possible, and so are 50,000 horses, since each Tatar typically had 2-7 remounts. The Tatars were a horse people, but they had no compunction about riding their mounts into the ground, and often hamstringing horses before abandoning them. This early winter was a disastrous event, worthy of surprised comment.]*

## 1736: Farewell Tatariness

Münlich, meanwhile, having recovered from his bout of malaria, spent the autumn preparing for 1736. He examined the docks at Voronezh, where the Don River flotillas were built and maintained, and ordered similar docks refurbished and expanded at Bryansk on the Dnieper. He ordered the repair of the completed segments of the Lines of the Ukraine and a speeding of its overall construction, and placed garrisons in every defensible location to limit Tatar raiding. Manstein gives a good description of these Lines (pp. 93-94):

'They had been projected by Peter I in order to check the inroads of the Tatars. After his death, nothing was done in the matter till the year 1731, when the lines were begun. They were finished in 1733 but the forts were not so until 1738. The right of these lines rests on the Dnieper, the left on the Donetz. They are in length above 100 French leagues [400 Km]. At convenient distances there are forts, fifteen of which had an earthen parapet staked, a ditch full of water, a glacis, and a palisaded counterscarp. Between these good forts there are, besides, some good redoubts and redans. There is a body of militia [20,000 dragoons] to guard them, posted in the forts and in villages built on purpose for them.'

Manstein then goes on to explain that the Ukrainian *Landmiliz* that man the Lines are paid less but are allowed farmland as crown peasants – i.e. they were not serfs. Most of the *Landmiliz* were mounted, for transport purposes).

The Lines were also covered by a continuous ditch and *abatis* running from one end to the other. It was not possible to keep the Tatars out, but their parties had to be small, and could be trapped on their way home. The forts remained inviolate, since the Tatars had no siegecraft to speak of and were psychologically unprepared to assault them, even when only weakly garrisoned.

### Preparations

Münlich established his headquarters at Izyum, a Cossack town on the Donets, down-river from the Lines. His goals for 1736 remained the taking of Azov and the conquest of the Crimea. Unfortunately, this shifted the strategic lines of advance enough that new magazines had to be constructed. Though a chain of depots had been ordered in 1735, running from southern Poland to the Donets, Münlich still found himself behind schedule.

The repentant Zaporozhians (about 7,000 of them) said that April was the best month for a march into the Crimea, but it would be difficult to make that timetable work. The good news was that the harvest in the peninsula had been exceptional; Münlich reckoned he only needed two months' provisions, which would mean the army could travel relatively light.

Breaking into the Crimea required taking the Or-Kapi, the fort that sat in the centre of the wall crossing the Perekop Isthmus. According to the Zaporozhians, this was manned by Tatars, not the tougher Ottomans. Once on the peninsula, taking the primary towns of the south and west coast would allow reinforcement by sea; to this end, capturing Oczakov and the smaller fort of Kinburun at the mouth of the Dnieper was essential.

*[Oczakov, or Dziarcrimenda, became of secondary importance after the founding of Odessa in 1794.]*

At a tactical level, Münlich tried to prepare his regiments with a number of innovations. One of these was the reintroduction of 18' pikes (Manstein says 21'); another was the discarding of the halberds and spontoons of the NCOs and officers in favour of small 'guns' with bayonets affixed. The guns seem to have been useful. The pikes (350 per regiment) proved an irritation. They were carried by the second rank of the battalions, who, if they did not manage to spit the first rank, or bash them over the head, were forced to operate with different drills; logistically, each battalion had to add two carts to its train in order to accommodate the pikes of those who

were sick (in the event, nearly everyone tossed their pikes on the carts). The only thing they were good for was firewood on the treeless steppe, and making scaling ladders: the Generalissimo was always chronically short of real siege equipment.

A better solution than the pikes for battalion defence was the portable *chevaux-de-frise*, or as the Russians called them, *rogatki*, made of spears stuck in blocks of wood, which were carried in pieces and assembled whenever the army halted. Each regiment was issued 20 sections. In the presence of the enemy, they could also be carried as a screen while the army advanced. Other precautions would be taken as routine, namely the construction of camp earthworks and redoubts at the close of each day's march.

*[The Imperials on the Danube did much the same, but with less success – camp and march discipline was poorly enforced, and they were facing large numbers of Ottoman infantry as well as mounted men.]*

On the steppe, too, the Tatars frequently burned the grass: a) to ensure fresh, tender growth for their herds, and b) to harass their enemies. Münlich ordered a quantity of special brooms for fire fighting and instituted the habit of clearing a 2' wide strip of dirt around every camp.

In early February of 1736, Münlich left Izyum for the fort of St. Anna on the lower Don. Before the establishment of nearby Cherkassk, St. Anna was the military capital of the Don Cossack Host (a 'host' being the same thing as a 'horde' – basically an 'army'). Marshal Lacy, an Irishman born, would actually command the siege, but he was still in transit from Europe, having, as noted above, led a corps to the Rhine during the War of the Polish Succession. After initiating operations here, Münlich would return to the Lines and take command of the force invading the Crimea.

*[The location of St. Anna varies with the sources. Most modern maps place it below the confluence of the Donets and the Don, while Bain states it was at the confluence, on an island. Manstein says it was about 8 leagues (32 Km) from Azov. Part of the problem is that the Don Cossack riverside communities were long, stringy villages running into each other: The vagaries of the river itself meant that sometimes they were on the north bank, and sometimes on the south, or even in midstream.]*

To distract opposition from the Army of the Don, the Khan of the Kalmyks, Don Duc Olmo, would take the field and ravage the Kuban region south of the Don. The Kalmyks would be supported by Cossacks, and by the Kabardian people of the northern Caucasus, whose leaders included members of the Russian nobility.

*[Don Duc Olmo was the leader of the splinter group of Kalmyks looking for new lands; as the price of his cooperation he was recognized by St. Petersburg as the 'paramount chief' of the Kalmyks.]*

### A Just War, or, The Ostermann Weekend

All that winter, the Porte was in a state of great uneasiness. The news from the Persian Front was dreadful, and it looked as if the botched Russian attempt on the Crimea was not going to be the last. The Grand Vizier did his utmost to avoid war, talking with both the Imperial and Russian envoys, offering to make good all claims against the Tatars. He approached the Maritime Powers (Britain and Holland), who had 'interests' in the Eastern Med. But they did not impress the Tsaritsa. It became obvious that St. Petersburg was looking forward to this war, and that the Tatar Question was only a pretext. The Porte did what it could with limited resources. Azov received additional troops and stores and the garrisons around the Black Sea were alerted.

In Russia's defence, it should be stated that there was strong peace party, led by Count Ostermann. Ostermann's power was on a par with Münlich's but his sphere was foreign affairs. Münlich survived life at Court by being the 'simple soldier'. Ostermann survived by a series of 'diplomatic illnesses' that struck whenever affairs lined one clique up against another. He survived the pre-war arguments in the same way.

Nonetheless, Ostermann and his party took the risky step of arguing that war against the Ottoman Empire would be expensive and futile

– much better to concentrate solely on the Tatars. It would be easy to persuade the Ottomans to blame it all on their clients. The Tatars would be punished as bandits, but their lands, held 'in fief' so to speak, from the Sultan, would not be annexed.

Münnich's mind was divided. Initially he said he was against a wider war, but his argument for a base on the Black Sea was incompatible with this view. Manstein writes that once war had been declared, Münnich would have been happy to see it continue for some years – it enhanced his own power, after all.

Ultimately, the Tsaritsa, Anna Ivanova, Duchess of Courland and Supreme Autocrat of All the Russias, bears the responsibility. The Romanovs were the State, and everyone else was their servant. In some ways she is a surprisingly enigmatic figure, willing to let her aristocrats start a war while she amused herself at Court as if she had no interest in the matter, yet desiring to fulfil the vision of her uncle Peter the Great. Perhaps her implacability toward the Ottomans stemmed from something as simple as the fact that the Porte refused to address her as 'empress' while according that honour to one of Russia's 'client allies' – the Habsburgs.

Ostermann was made to write a letter to the Sultan in which the Tsaritsa deplored the necessity of having to defend her realm against the depredations of marauders and those who supported them; that the Ottomans did not rein in their clients because they had no desire to do so; that the Tatars and by implication their masters at Istanbul were a 'clear and present danger' to Russia, etc. etc. but that she wanted nothing more than to come to a fair and just settlement with the Porte, blah, blah, blah... The letter arrived at the Grand Vizier's office at the same time as news from Azov: the fortress was under siege.

*[Interestingly, Manstein says that the Ottomans, for the first time, did not imprison an enemy's envoy, which was their usual custom on going to war (alternatively they might behead the representative, or force him to accompany their army so he could watch his countrymen die). As rulers of the world, the Sultans did not accept embassies, only supplicant envoys – dogs who could be beaten when the All Highest was angry.]*

Immediately, the Porte declared war on Russia. Unfortunate in a way, because no one else had made such a declaration, and it automatically made the Ottoman Empire the aggressor. Somehow, the current Grand Vizier, Siladar Seyyid Mehmed Pasha, managed to scrape up an army. He crossed the Danube with it, but that was all. If the trend of later years is any indication, it probably took him half the campaigning season to put it together, and the other half to keep it together. 1736 was a very bad year for the Turks.

It was starting out well for the Russians, though. Azov was locked down without any trouble, and Münnich's army did something no Russian army had ever done before – penetrate into the Crimea. And in the East, the Kalmyks savaged the Kuban.

### And Quiet Flows the Don

For several years now, the Russians had made it their practice to station a fairly large body of men at St. Anna for 'summer manoeuvres'. This year had been no different. Münnich arrived at St. Anna on March 8th, to find a corps of six regiments of foot, three of dragoons, and about 3,000 Cossacks of the Don. Not the fiercest of the Hosts – that would be the Zaporozhians – but the most reliable. The Turks were not fooled, but they remained uncertain.

The men were not in the best of shape, with many sick, and the corps was already low on provisions, since the prewar stocks proved perishable. Nonetheless, Münnich quickly ordered an advance.

*[Brian Davies gives the following breakdown:*

- 37,352 regulars, being 5,157 dragoons in 5 regiments, 24,372 foot in 18 regiments, 1,035 garrison dragoons (of the Azov Regiment), and 6,770 garrison foot.
- 8,000 irregulars, specifically Don Cossacks, of whom about 2,000 were on foot. The latter formed an advance guard.
- Plus 36 regimental guns and 284 siege guns and mortars.

*But the campaign opened with just 9,000 men, because Münnich learned the enemy garrison numbered no more than 3,000. Furthermore, due to bad weather, the foe could not be reinforced. This sort of gamble was typical of Münnich.]*

To cover the southern flank, as the corps was ferried down the Don by Cossack boatmen, some 20,000 Kalmyks rode beside them. Their role was not to take part in the siege, but to prevent any overland relief and to employ their spare time slaughtering Tatars. The Kabardians performed similar screening movements away in the eastern foothills of the Caucasus, as did the Terek Garrison.

The Turkish commandant of Azov, playing for time, sent a message of welcome to Münnich, protesting eternal friendship and offering his services if required. Münnich was polite in return, treating the emissary to a grand review of his army, which, by recycling regiments, he made appear to be more like 20,000 than 10,000. There is nothing new under the sun.

On the 27th of March, 1736, Münnich unleashed his men. After an uneventful approach march, on the 31st, Major-general Sparreuter, with 600 men and some Cossacks, dashed on ahead of the army and seized two key outworks with the loss of 'only the stern of a canoe'. These were two towers, one on either side of the Don, at a spot called Kalancha.

The Turks recovered quickly. As Münnich came up, taking several more outworks and throwing up redoubts of his own to guard against sallies, they began firing a minute gun to alert the neighbouring population (who perversely chose to seek shelter at some Tatar encampments instead). On April 3rd, a night assault under general Sparreuter carried Fort Lutick on the northern side of the delta. The Russians suffered 3 dead and 12 wounded and took over 50 prisoners. With this fort in Russian hands, Azov could be bypassed and encircled. Completely blockaded, the town's only hope was that the Turkish Navy could force the mouth of the Don and land reinforcements.

*[Such bland statements cover the fact that most of these minor actions – like Lutick – were technically challenging; they were amphibious night attacks, hard enough to pull off with high speed zodiacs, GPS, and night vision equipment. The Russians had rowboats, the stars, and torchlight for their tools.]*

On the 4th of April, *General-anschef* ('General in Chief', i.e. a full General) Levaschev arrived with another regiment of dragoons and 3 more of infantry, drawn from forces based in the Kuban. Münnich placed him in temporary command until Lacy showed up, and left to start the primary operation of the campaign, the advance into the Crimea. He met with Lacy at the main Russian camp of Tsaritsynko (Tsaritsynka), on the Dnieper, and set about accelerating the buildup of his own Army of the Dnieper.

*[Bain says Münnich arrived at Tsaritsynko, at the western end of the Lines of the Ukraine, at the end of March. Manstein says the 18th of April, or in NS, the 7th. Part of the discrepancy may be the use of 'old style' and 'new style' dating, but the difference in the dating systems was only 11 days. Davies accepts Manstein's dates.]*

Lionised by the Austrians on his way home, Lacy's Irish ego had been further inflated by messages from St. Petersburg that seemed to suggest he would be given an independent command. Münnich, rather brusquely, treated him as a mere subordinate. But, after comparing their somewhat contradictory instructions, they came to an agreement. Münnich would give the orders, but would not do so unilaterally. They planned the coming campaign together. Nevertheless, the incident rankled with both of them, the more so because of the Austrian treatment of Lacy; Vienna hated Münnich and the sentiment was reciprocated.

*[Lacy's treatment in Vienna makes an interesting statement about the Imperial exchequer. In audience, the Kaiser gave him a jewelled portrait and 5,000 ducats. On his way out the door, the Exchequer 'borrowed' the money, and the portrait – to be given to the next person in the queue!]*



## To the Ends of the Earth

The bulk of the Army of the Dnieper was assembled by the 10th of April, three days after Münnich arrived in-theatre. On paper, he had:

- 19,695 dragoons, in 10 regiments (alternatively, 12 regiments).
- 24,372 regular foot, in 18 regiments (alternatively 15 regiments).
- 10,000 Ukrainian *Landmiliz* in 10 regiments. Most of the *Landmiliz* were mounted, but 4 regiments out of the Russian TO&E were foot, and some of these were present.
- 500 hussars and 500 'regimental' cossacks from Sloboda (Right Bank) Ukraine.
- 3,700 Sloboda Ukraine Cossacks, 4,000 Don Cossacks, 16,000 'Hetmanate' Cossacks, sometimes called Malorussian or Left Bank Cossacks (in other words 'tame' cossacks), and 6,000 Zaporozhian Cossacks.
- 150 Chuguev Kalmyks (Christian converts) and 180 'Novopavlovsk volunteers'.
- Plus 48 regimental guns and 18 field guns.

This comes to 80,000 men, which is what Münnich originally contemplated using. In actual fact, Münnich had about 54,000 men (Bain says 57,000). The Hetmanate appears to have been left out of the final count. Only 12,000 of them showed up, all poorly mounted or riding on carts, and badly armed and provisioned – more a beggar band than a cossack host. Davies quotes a complaint made by Münnich to the effect that, having been forced to bring them along, he found they acted like 'mice eating away our bread'. No doubt the government department known as the Governing Council of the Hetman's Office, in the time honoured fashion, gave Münnich the leavings – why should they send able-bodied farm workers?

Senior officers under Münnich were the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg as Master of Ordnance and commander of the Center, lieutenant-generals Leontiev (Vanguard) and Ismailov (Rearguard), plus major-generals Spiegel, Prince Repnin, Magnus Biron, Stoffeln, Hein, Tarakanov, Lesley, and Aractshev.

Rations for two months were issued. Lieutenant-General Prince Troubetskoi was Commissar-General; it was his responsibility to maintain the flow of supplies from the depot at Tsaritsinko. Münnich threatened to hang him if he did not keep army supplied. 'Seemingly impossible things can be brought about in a very short time in this country, by such threats' said the Generalissimo (Bain p. 242). Münnich had the authority to carry out his threat unilaterally, too.

Due to a shortage of transport animals and carts, supplies would be floated down the river to forward dumps in the vicinity of the Zaporozhian Cossack *Sich* (the word means 'settlement'), just above the confluence of the Ingulets River and the Dnieper.

Overland convoys would also be formed as materiel was accumulated. Escorts would be provided by regiments that had been quartered too far away to make the rendezvous. Münnich was impatient to be gone.

The army was divided into five columns: a vanguard of the vanguard (3 regiments of foot, 3 of dragoons, and some light troops under General Spiegel), van proper, center, rearguard, and rearguard of the rearguard (under General Tarankov). Tarankov's column consisted of late arrivals under his personal command and marched some distance behind. The rest marched more or less together. They followed the Dnieper, their main line of communications, arriving at Kamenoi Saton, at the base of the Dnieper Cataracts, about the 4th of May.

*[Davies gives Spiegel 4 foot regiments and 2 dragoon regiments and has him setting off on April 11th, followed by Colonel Dewitz and 4 regiments on the 12th, Leontiev with 6 regiments of foot and the Landmiliz on the 13th, and the remainder under Münnich on the 14th. Though the army 'followed the river' the actual march routes lay between 5-50 Km from it.]*

Along the way, redoubts were constructed, with usually a battalion's-worth of men left behind to guard them. These proved invaluable for protecting supply convoys and couriers. The garrisons were set to work collecting hay for the baggage train. None of these forts were taken by the Tatars; the Russians even disdained to dismantle them at the end of the campaign, because the Tatars would not use them.

*[However, 1736 was the only year Münnich made use of these fortlets; he felt that the Tatars might be emboldened over time and besides, they drained a lot of manpower. The 'great square' methods described later proved effective enough on their own.]*

From Kamenoi Saton the army marched in the direction of the Zaporozhian Sich. Even today, large sections of this country are desert patched with small copses, without much cultivation. Close to the river, however, its eastern (or southern) bank features a wide swath of marshland, even more difficult to negotiate.

*[This author was struck by how much the desert terrain resembles the artillery ranges at Shilo, Manitoba. Not that this will convey much to most readers.]*

Five marches were made before the first enemy contact on the 7th of May. This was a body of about 100 horsemen who rode off as soon as the Cossacks tried to pursue. The next day, a larger mass appeared on their right flank (that is, between the Russians and the Dnieper), and from now on contacts were frequent.

However, the enemy would not fight. So, on the 9th, Münnich detached five parties, each consisting of 400 dragoons and 150 Cossacks. Spiegel, one of those *gung-ho* officers who collects wounds and briefs full of 'mentioned in dispatches' in equal proportion, was responsible for them. They were to fan out in front of the army, but to remain in eye contact with their neighbours; should the Tatars take the bait, the remaining groups would close up.

*[According to Bain, visibility was excellent for mounted men: (p. 243) 'the whole country between the Ukraine and the Crimea being perfectly flat, not a hillock or a ravine appearing once in ten leagues, while the enemy could be seen approaching almost from the horizon'. Manstein in partial contrast comments on the grass which could grow over a man's head, and also on the 'remarkable' tumen or kurgans (burial mounds) that are often the highest points in the land; most of the ones he encountered seem to have been those of Tatars, bearing Arabic script, but the practice goes back to prehistoric times. One was made famous during WWII, at Stalingrad: the Mamayev Kurgan. The man supposedly buried there was one of the most ferocious leaders ever spawned by the Golden Horde; his ghost must have drunk its fill of blood in 1942.]*

## The Battle of Tartars' Wells

In the vicinity of the Ingulets, the Dnieper really begins to widen out, dividing into a number of streams. Like all deltas, the land is low, marshy, and fringed with woodland. On the right (or northern) bank the ground is firm, and here, above the confluence of the Ingulets, sat the old Ottoman fort of Kazykerman. This fort was now in Russian hands and had already been developed into a fairly strong position.

At a spot on the opposite bank had been the rather insalubrious encampment allotted by the Crimean Khan to the Zaporozhians when they broke with Moscow. Having broken in turn with the Khan, the Cossacks had recently crossed the river again and set up shop on the right bank, in the angle of the Ingulets and the Dnieper.

*[On some old maps, the camp allocated to the Zaporozhians by the Khan is named 'Islam'.]*

On the left bank, a little above Kazykerman, was the Czernaia Dolina, a shallow valley running up from the Dnieper in the direction of Perekop. This would be the route the Russians would take after they had regrouped and resupplied.

8 Km short of Kazykerman, a raiding party of 200 Tatars was spotted approaching. Getting too close to one of the screening parties, they were badly mauled and fled up the Czernaia Dolina. After a pursuit of a further 8 Km, Spiegel found himself under



attack by 20,000 horsemen led by the Kalga Sultan. As the Russians would learn later, this was merely the vanguard of a 100,000-man army under Khan Qaplan II Gerai himself, currently camped at the Lines of Perekop. (The Khan managed such numbers by calling up every male from age 17 to 70.)

Summoning the other parties, Spiegel called on his dragoons to form square with the first rank dismounted and placed his Cossacks within. The Tatars milled around on all sides, firing 'clouds of arrows' and uttering frightful yells. Bands of Tatars kept darting in and out, some coming as close as 100 paces. The dragoons would hold their fire until the last minute, then fire a volley by platoons, maintaining a continuous fire until the Tatars were out of range again.

After a few such trials, the nomads maintained their distance, but rode round and round the square, shooting their bows and letting off the odd carbine. This went on for six hours, until Marshal Münnich rode up. He wore neither mask nor coonskin cap, but he did bring Leontiev's vanguard of 3,000 dragoons and 2,000 Cossacks, closely followed by picquets from every infantry regiment and ten companies of grenadiers. The Tatars fled upon seeing the dust cloud.

This action cost the Khan more than 200 dead (that being the number of abandoned bodies). The Russians suffered 50 killed and wounded, mainly from arrows. Spiegel was one of the wounded. Manstein regards this first action as valuable because it taught the Tatars to fear the Russians, and the Russians to despise the Tatars.

On the 10th, the Russians went forward up the Czernaia Dolina. It was some 80 Km as the crow flies from Kazykerman to Perekop, first across the desert, and then through seas of grass. For safety, the army was, for the first time, formed into a giant hollow square. Infantry and dragoons comprised its edges. Artillery was stationed at the corners, and the baggage and mounted parties took shelter in the center. Groups of Cossack musketeers rode 'shotgun' on the wagons. They camped again at Tatarskie Kolodesi, or Tatars' Wells, the only source of potable water within 40 Km.

*[According to an eyewitness account, although the square was relatively lightly encumbered and thus made reasonable progress across the steppe, it was forced to stop each time one of the wagons lost a wheel, and often made halts after advancing only 4-500 paces.]*

On the 13th, probably at or near the Wells, the Cossacks caught two couriers coming from the Ottoman Grand Vizier. They were carrying letters to the Khan refusing him any aid for the season, and castigating him for involving the Porte in an unwanted war. (He would ultimately be deposed, a right that the Sultans preserved, though they used it sparingly.)

On the 15th, the Russians broke camp and were immediately assailed by the bulk of the Krim Tatar nation. Standing their ground, the Russians beat them off in about two hours, mainly with cannon fire, having 'killed a great number' with their initial discharge. The army then marched 24 Km to the Kalantschi (Kalancha) River, about 30 Km from Perekop. The Tatars fled behind their Lines on the isthmus. Münnich advanced without opposition 'to within cannon-shot' on the 19th.

*[The location of Czernaia Dolina is uncertain. Modern maps are not much help. The lakes have been drained and the rivers chopped up by irrigation canals. According to Manstein's editor, Czernaia Dolina means 'black soil'. Apparently this refers to large patches of black mould that contrast with the usual limestone of the steppe. According to Bain's sources, it means 'black valley' and was associated with a small lake. The old maps are vague as to its location, sometimes showing it south of Kazykerman and sometimes to the east. Confusingly, there is a modern hamlet of Chernaya Dolina well to the east, though close enough to be a candidate. One old map shows it (as a lake) lying southeast of Kazykerman, on a direct line with Perekop. The same map marks some Russian redoubts on the left bank of the Dnieper, opposite Kazykerman, and shows the Tatars' Wells as a string of three small lakes just beyond the Czernaia Dolina; a branch of the Kalancha River nearby then provides a descent to the Kalancha proper. From here, there was a recognised 'road' to Perekop. All these features would have been necessary navigation aids. The Czernaia Dolina valley may be what is now a rather prominent stretch of farmland about 10 Km above the Ingulets confluence*

*that heads south from the Dnieper between two patches of scrub desert fringed with plantations of trees (presumably a reclamation project). The river hamlet at its northern end is called Kozachi Laheri. Exiting this stretch of farmland, one is pointed in the direction of the upper reaches of the Kalancha River, the last major barrier before Perekop. Extrapolating from the number of march days, one arrives at an average of 13 Km per day – which is normal for a force consisting of infantry and artillery – with a two-day pause at Tatars Wells. This places the battle of Tatars' Wells near the small community of Tarasivka. The march from the Dnieper near Kozachi Laheri to Tarasivka would take 2-3 days (10th to 13th), and, the interception of the couriers would be most likely to occur at the oasis. After a rest of two days, the Russians would be attacked there, march to the Kalancha in two stages, then to the Lines in three more stages. The known locations of Kazykerman and the Kalancha disqualify the hamlet of Chernaya Dolina from any involvement.]*

### The Storming of Perekop

Perekop is Russian for 'a ditch drawn across a road'. The name is sometimes given as 'Prekop'. Bain describes the Tatars' defensive Lines as:

'a deep trench five-and-twenty fathoms broad, drawn across the isthmus connecting the Crimea with Russia, and defended by an earthen wall eight fathoms high, and nearly five English miles long, reaching from the sea of Azov to the Black Sea. In the center of the Lines stood the fortress of Or-Kapi, possibly of Genoese origin, an oblong square, the walls and narrow bastions of which were made of square flagstones. It was garrisoned, as were all the Crimean fortresses in those days, by Turkish regulars, Janissaries, and Sipahis, some four thousand in number, while the bulk of the Tatars lay behind the Lines.' (Bain, p.244).

*[By 'sea of Azov is meant the shallow, reedy lagoon known as the Sivash. Bain's 'fathoms' appear to be 3' each, not 6' each. Manstein gives 12 toises (6' each; i.e. 72') across and 7 toises (42') deep.]*

Manstein says that the Lines were 7 Km long and adds that the only entrance was via a gate on the road to the nearby town of Perekop. There were 6 towers at regular intervals, each mounting cannon. The breastworks had recently been repaired, and perhaps even enhanced.

From the bottom of the ditch to the top of the wall was 70' (66' by averaging Bain's and Manstein's data); the wall being of a thickness to support that height. Manstein further reports that the Tatars had had 5,000 men working to improve the Lines for some years, and that the wall was regarded as impregnable. His opinion is that only the Tatars could have made such poor use of it; but he also points out that it was easy to bypass with the proper knowledge of the ground.

On his arrival, Münnich immediately summoned the Khan to surrender:

'As soon as the army had arrived near the lines, Munich sent a letter to the Khan, acquainting him that he was sent on the part of the empress, to punish the Tatars for the frequent incursions they had made into the Ukraine, that he was proceeding to execute this order, and lay all the Crimea to waste; but nevertheless if the Khan would put himself under the protection of her imperial majesty, receive a Russian garrison in Perekop, and bind himself to acknowledge the sovereignty of Russia, he would immediately enter into a negotiation, and cease from all hostilities; but that the surrender of the town of Perekop was an indispensable preliminary. In answer to this letter the Khan, on the 30th [19th], sent a Mirza, or Tatar gentleman, to Munich, to represent to him that no war having been declared, he was astonished that they should come to attack him in his own country; that the Tatars of the Crimea had never made any irruption into Russia; that if any such there had been, it must have been committed by the Nogays, who, though they had long

been under the sovereignty of the Tatars of the Crimea, had never been amenable to order; that to these guilty parties Russia ought to confine her resentment, and punish them at her pleasure, of which, in fact, a beginning had been made last year. He added, that as to himself, he was too much hampered with the court of Constantinople to be able to break with it; and that as to Perekop, were he even willing to surrender it, the garrison there would not consent, consisting as it did of Turks and being independent of his orders. Meanwhile he entreated the marshal that he would suspend hostilities, as he was ready to enter into immediate negotiation; and he ended by declaring that if attacked he would defend himself as he was able.' (Manstein, pp. 105-106)

In other words, '*come out with your hands up*': *'you'll never take me alive, copper'*. Negotiations having failed (the *mirza*, by the way, was kindly used and returned, bearing a Message of Woe for the Tatar Nation), Münnich set about preparing for an assault. It would have to be that, as he had no siege equipment of any kind, no boats to outflank the position by sea, and no wood to build anything. (Everything, firewood and water included, was carted across the steppe; the army had something like 90,000 wagons.)

*[Manstein explains that marching in square, which became the custom for every campaign, was very easy on the steppe, where there were few hills and gullies, and where no road had to be followed. However, the desert-like conditions meant a huge baggage train, even though post-Petrine regulations had reduced the number of carriages permitted to the officer corps. 90,000 wagons was the minimum number he recalled seeing. Most were one-horse carts capable of carrying 900 pounds. 40,000 carts were required for a six-month's supply of flour; regimental baggage came to an additional 250 vehicles apiece. On top of these were the officers' personal households (hunting dogs, silver samovar sets, object d'art collections, servants, mistresses and wives, favourite nephews, toadies), the transport of the irregular troops – which belonged to them and could not be requisitioned without payment or a fight – the artillery train, and 7-8,000 sutlers and medicine-show types (there does not seem to have been an official mobile brothel, however – that would be too 'French'). On the plus side, fodder was usually plentiful, unless the Tatars burned it first. Interestingly, water casks were saved for use as pontoons.]*

The army was organised into six columns (Manstein says 'marching by the right'), leaving only the sick and ten men per company to guard the baggage. 2,500 men (including the 1,500 assigned to crew the guns) under Prince Repnin were set to make a diversion on the Sivash end in the hour before dawn, while the bulk of the army attacked the other end.

The approach march was made by night on the 21st, began at 8pm, and was amazingly quiet; Russian troops were renowned for their march discipline (given the harsh punishments for infractions this is perhaps not surprising). An hour before dawn on the 22nd they halted about a kilometre from the walls (after the parley in front of the position, Münnich must have encamped at a safe distance) and waited for the diversionary attack to go in. The feint worked. As the sun came up, the Tatars on duty were dismayed to see how they had been decoyed. The camp was just stirring.

Now the general advance began, artillery on the wings of each column. The Janissaries guarding the walls, and those Tatars with muskets, gave them a hot fire, and the scale of the ditch disconcerted the attackers for a moment, but they pressed on. The ditch, stone-lined, was completely dry (it was not supposed to be flooded). Up the earthen wall they went, hacking out steps with axes and musket butts, and even hauling up their battalion guns by hand. Other pieces firing from the flanks of the columns kept the enemy's heads down. First to the top were an Ensign Rechenberg and an Orthodox priest, who incited the soldiers to 'mount boldly and fear nothing as the cause was God's and the Empress' (Bain, p.245).

The sight of this human steamroller was too much for the Tatars. They fled before the Russians got over the wall. With the gate in Russian hands, the Cossacks poured through, narrowly missing the greatest prize of all – the Khan, whose morning devotions they very

rudely interrupted. They did manage to plunder his cash box and scored a telescope that had belonged to Peter the Great (which Münnich promptly requisitioned – the Cossacks would only have smashed it). The Khan and his harem fled all the way to Balaklava, while the rank and file of his army took refuge in the hills.

The whole affair took less than an hour. Only the Or-Kapi and the Janissary garrisons in the towers held out. The cannon in one tower gave problems. A number of Russians were killed. Manstein, our source, then a captain of grenadiers in the regiment of Petersburg, volunteered to take 60 men and storm the tower, which he did – the door was cut open with hatchets and the men burst in. Manstein offered the garrison quarter, which was accepted, but one of the Russians decided to try poking a Turk with his bayonet, at which the Janissaries drew swords, killing six grenadiers and wounding some others. The entire garrison of 160 men was butchered in the frenzy that followed.

After some argument with the commandant of the Or-Kapi, Münnich gave the Ottomans honours of war with permission to go to Koslov (Eupatoria) and take passage to Constantinople. But this was merely a pretext to lure them out; the contingent of 2,554 men was taken as hostage against the return of some 200 Russian merchants taken captive years before (who never were returned).

### Life in the Crimea

The storming of Perekop was the high point of the campaign. Münnich paused to regroup, finding much in the way of loot and tribute in the enemy 'depôt' (there was a substantial town of 800 houses), but little of practical use. The Russians did recover some of the cannon lost in the campaigns of the 1690s.

The Crimea was not what the Russians expected. It was hot, and humid, and the Tatars had removed everything they could that might be of use to the Enemy. Worse, Prince Troubetskoi, despite Münnich's threats, had failed to maintain the army's supply lines. For five weeks, now, the army had been rationing food and water – little meat, and wheat bread instead of rye. The soldiers found wheat, a luxury item, to be bad for their digestion. There was no fodder either. Münnich, who had never been to the Crimea before, had been led to believe by Cossack horse traders (*oh dear*) that the region was a verdant breadbasket, with excellent pasturage. It was, sometimes, but not at the height of summer.

*[Although, apparently, there was plenty of game, and easy to catch, too. Manstein says in every campaign the men could catch more quail, by hand, than they could eat.]*

Diseases began to appear: dysentery and malaria. The men did not help matters. Russian culture was still extremely religious. Although the Church had granted a general dispensation for this 'crusade', the soldiers maintained their <numerous> fast days. With thousands of men and animals sick or weakened, the army was beginning to fall apart.

At a council of war, held on the 26th of June, most agreed the sensible decision would be to remain at Perekop until provisions arrived – they had only 12 days rations left – and send raiding parties into the Crimea. But to Münnich, this was a craven choice. He insisted that the army press on and utterly rout out the 'scum' infesting the peninsula, leaving only a garrison at Perekop (800 foot and 600 Cossacks) to work on putting it in a state of defence for the winter.

The same day, Lieutenant-General Leontiev was detached with 10,000 regulars and 3,000 Cossacks to take the fort of Kinburun, on the southern shore of the Dnieper Liman. This small town, located opposite the much larger fortification of Oczakov, not only helped to guard the mouth of the river, but also covered a ferry crossing (the punting-raft variety); Münnich was concerned that the Cedans and Bujak Tatars who lived by the Dniester would try to reinforce the Crimea. A secondary reason for the move was the fact that great herds of Tatar cattle had been sent there for safety.

## The Plot of H-H

This council opened a breach between the Generalissimo and his Marshal of Ordnance, the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg. It was the latter who pressed hardest for a cautious strategy, though partly because he hoped to replace Münnich with himself and was forming a party for the purpose. Over the next few weeks, Hesse-Homburg would do more damage to the campaign than the Tatars.

The Prince had performed well in the action at Goraitshkie in 1733, but unkind observers said he had used up so much courage there that he had little remaining to fuel the rest of his career. Closer examination suggests that the prince, a devious fellow who had already famously betrayed an earlier rival – Marshal Dolgoruki – was jealous of Münnich and wanted the supreme command (remember, Münnich was not just the army commander, he was also Minister of War). He felt the Generalissimo, of lesser birth than himself, did not deserve such an exalted rank.

Hesse-Homburg tied his star to the Birones. The Grand Chamberlain, Ernst Johann Biron, was the Tsaritsa's favourite – for 'favourite' read 'lover' – and a number of his clan had obtained high posts in the army. Hesse-Homburg believed with their aid he could engineer a coup against Münnich. He made his attempt in the middle of the campaign.

The officer corps was canvassed and an address of 28 articles was drawn up. The gist of the document was that Münnich was leading them into disaster while at the same time abusing his position. Hesse-Homburg put himself forward as the 'champion of the common soldier'.

Münnich received this outrageous document but sent it back, unread. In a face-to-face showdown with his officers, they balked at a mutiny. But the Generalissimo did not remove the prince from his command. He feared that it was a put-up job originating at Court. Hesse-Homburg had indeed written to the Grand Chamberlain asking for his support, but had been refused. Biron sent the note to Münnich, which had the double effect of both seeming to support the Generalissimo while at the same time hinting that there was a cabal forming against him at Court and that he had better behave himself. That was how Biron operated.

### Ernst Johann Biron (Biron) (1690-1772)

Born at Kalnciems, in Courland. Grandson of one of the Dukes of Courland's grooms who received a small estate. Ill-educated, and expelled from the Academy of Königsberg for 'riotous conduct'. In 1714 went to Russia to seek his fortune but failed to get a place at the court of the princess consort, Charlotte of Brunswick. Returned to Mittau and obtained a position at the court there, and contact with the young Duchess of Courland, Anna Ivanova. Supplanted her current paramour in the latter's absence and ensured his disgrace and exile just to make sure. Retained his influence over Anna until her death. Made Grand Chamberlain of Russia on Anna's accession as Tsaritsa in 1730. This earned him an estate worth 50,000 crowns a year. Changed his name to Biron (claiming ties with the French ducal house of the same name).

Described as 'mean, treacherous, rapacious, suspicious and vindictive', and loathed by persons of every station, but his reputation for intrigue was overblown. His vices were rather of the sordid variety. Could be insinuatingly agreeable if he tried. At the height of his power, he and his wife (who owned diamonds worth £600,000) rivalled the Tsaritsa herself in opulence and accumulated estate after estate – half of the Court's bribes passed through his hands. There was a special department of state to take care of his stables.

In June 1737 the Kettler Dukes of Courland became extinct and Biron was elected Duke (the electors were paid heavily for their vote of confidence). Anna made him her Regent (1740) on her deathbed (reluctantly – she knew the Court would tear him to pieces). Three weeks after his elevation he was taken from his bed in the middle of the night – by his arch-rival Marshal Münnich – and imprisoned. Sentenced to be quartered; which sentence was commuted to banishment for life to Pelym in Siberia. Recalled on the accession of Peter III in 1762 after an exile of 22 years. Catherine II reinstated him as Duke of Courland (1763) as it was obvious he had learned wisdom; his later rule was rather benevolent. Died at Mittau, 1772.



*Biron*

### Further Adventures in Tatar-Land

Meanwhile, there was still a campaign to conduct. Münnich had 47,000 men left for mobile operations. Holding a review before breaking camp on the 27th, Münnich put on a brave face: 'Keep a stout heart, my children!' cried he. 'We shall soon, I know, have good meat, and fresh water, and to spare!' – 'God grant it, little father!' they shouted back 'for we want it badly enough!' (Bain, pp. 246-247).

The march to Koslov (Eupatoria) was the worst the army had yet endured. The Tatars burnt everything they could not carry off, and poisoned the wells. Those that were not fouled by the Tatars were salt. Scouts found only three potable streams within a 144 Km (36 league) radius. The enemy harassed the Square constantly, and on the 28th of June, they actually broke into it when the army was forced to split while crossing the Baltschik inlet. Fortunately, the enemy squadron, only 200 strong, headed straight for the baggage, ignoring the defenders. The main body of Tatars cheered them on but did nothing else. Some were cut down while some escaped.

On the evening of the 29th, Münnich detached his grenadiers, with 1,500 dragoons and 2,000 Cossacks, under Major-General Hein, to attempt a dawn assault on the main Tatar encampment, which was only 12 Km off. Manstein commented bitterly that 'if any other general than Hein had been pitched upon for this expedition it would in all probability have succeeded' (p.112). Hein spent half the night parading his men and then marched off very slowly. The Cossacks, bored with Hein, rode on ahead and attacked the camp by themselves but were driven away with great loss. Only Hein's belated arrival saved them from complete destruction.

Münnich occupied the Tatar campsite on the 30th of May, pausing to court-martial Hein (he was broken to the ranks, lost his patent of nobility, and was compelled to serve the rest of his life as a private in a militia dragoon regiment). However, the Tatars had been spooked and withdrew for several days (which was another reason Münnich was angry with Hein). On the 5th of June, the Russians approached within 8 Km of Koslov.

Once again, an advance guard of grenadiers and Cossacks rushed ahead, on the 6th, this time led by General Magnus Biron (an

adequate commander). A great fire had been observed and the assault troops found the town abandoned. The Turkish population had burned the Christian quarter before fleeing to Bacha Serai, the Tatar capital; the Turkish garrison had sailed off to Istanbul.

This was a stroke of luck. Koslov had a peacetime garrison of about 3,000 men, a harbour fit for 200 ships, strong walls, and much artillery. More importantly, the Russians captured 10,000 sheep and a number of cattle, enough meat, with that found at Kinburun, to last until the winter. They also found enough stores of rice and wheat to feed an army larger than their own. For the Cossacks, expert plunderers, there was great store of rich clothing, precious metals, and jewels.

*[Eupatoria is the oldest town in the region, the place where Grand Duke Vladimir was baptised when he married a Byzantine princess in 988 AD and made the Russians the preservers of Rome's flame.]*

At last, on the 8th of June, Major-General Lesly arrived with a convoy of replacements and provisions. He reported that a day earlier he and his 2,000 men had been attacked by the entire Tatar army. The fighting had been so close that the general had killed a Tatar with his own sword, but the two cannon the Russians had with them did great execution and the enemy was beaten after about four hours. On the 11th, the Army of the Dnieper set out again.

Münnich was now justified in his insistence that they press on. Deceiving into thinking the Russians were about to retreat, the Tatars applied scorched earth to the expected route, only to find the Russians marching forward, along the coast, toward their capital at Bacha Serai.

### **Bacha Serai**

Bacha Serai (Bakhchisarai) means Garden of Palaces. It was all of that. The town was situated in a rich valley, and had some 3,000 buildings, including the Khan's palace, various administrative buildings, a famous *madrassa*, and several fine mosques. There were trees – real trees, not scraggy thorn bushes masquerading as trees – pleasant gardens, orchards. At the prehistoric cave-town in the hills nearby was the steppe's very first printing press. Bacha Serai was the home of the Tatar elite, and the houses were as one might expect (and about a third of the houses belonged to Christians). There was even a Jesuit mission (not spared by the Orthodox Russians).

*[The printing press was used for secular as well as religious material and was a product of the 'Tulip Period' of the 1720s, when Western manners became all the rage at Istanbul.]*

On the 12th, the Russians neared Bacha Serai. Lieutenant-General Ismailov and Major-General Lesly had been sent ahead during the night of the 11th to clear outlying villages, where the Tatars had established a forward defence. After a stiff fight, the Tatars were routed, abandoning yet another large herd of cattle.

*[2 regiments of dragoons, 4 of foot, and a group of Cossacks took part.]*

During this clearing operation, it was learned that 6-7,000 Turks, who, as will be explained, had been turned back from Azov, had landed at Kaffa in the southeast and were hourly expected by the Khan.

The 12th saw Münnich's army at the entrance to the defile leading to Bacha Serai. From where the Russians stood, on a plateau overlooking the town from the north, their route appeared to be a difficult one, dominated by other heights that swarmed with Tatars.

Münnich decided the town itself was the key to the enemy defences, and resolved to seize it (most likely because it contained the only wells and store houses in the vicinity). In a daring night march, the Generalissimo led three quarters of his effectives right through the Tatar position! The Tatars were completely unaware of their passage and awoke to the amazement of seeing an enemy army drawn up for battle between them and their capital.

A mixed body of Tatars and Janissaries (riding double) attacked furiously, pressing the Vladimir regiment and their Don Cossack supports hard. Major-General Lesly counterattacked with 5 more regiments of foot and relieved them. At that, the Tatars decamped, setting fire to the town as they fled. Bacha Serai, abandoned by its citizens, was plundered and 'reduced to ashes' (including the Khan's palace and his extensive library – but the Tatars burned the palace themselves).

*[Russian casualties were 284.]*

The enemy had not entirely departed. While the good work was going on, they rounded on the Russian camp, commanded by the ubiquitous Major-General Spiegel. They inflicted about 200 casualties and took some prisoners from among the various foraging parties, but otherwise accomplished nothing.

On the 19th, the Russians encamped and consolidated on the banks of the Alma River. On June 23rd, generals Ismailov and Biron were sent to take out Simferopol, at that time known as Ach-Metrid or Sultan Serai, the home of the Kalga Sultan and several important *mirzas* (local notables). The town, once again empty, was once again burnt to the ground (most buildings in the Crimea, even the palaces, were of wood). Although harassed by the enemy, the column suffered very light casualties. This was to be the last action of the campaign.

*[Troops involved were 8,000 regulars plus 2,000 Cossacks, and 10 guns. 12 men were lost in skirmishes.]*

Now, even the Generalissimo began to think it would be better to return home. The Turks were holed up in Kaffa awaiting more reinforcements, the Tatars were in the wild hill country of the southeast coast. The heat was excessive, and the lands farther on had been laid waste. Foraging parties were routinely ambushed, the local Armenian merchants were charging outrageous prices for provisions, and the even the large herds of livestock the army had taken were a liability because there were not enough men to escort them properly. Army strength was down by a third.

*[Davies notes that the Russians made efforts to combat dysentery by maintaining strenuous camp hygiene, belying the typical view of 18th Century Eastern armies as ignorant and ill disciplined; the crucial issue was the lack of fresh water in an age where chemical treatment was impossible, and which also led to heat prostration and similar disorders.]*

### **Home We Go**

Therefore, Münnich ordered a withdrawal to Perekop, claiming the enemy had done his work for him. The clincher, however, may have been the mutinous rumbling of Hesse-Homburg's clique. They threatened action if the army proceeded any further. As already recounted, the Generalissimo faced them down, but, fearing the long arm of St. Petersburg, felt it prudent to end the campaign.

Reaching Perekop by the 7th of July, the Russians relaxed for a time. More convoys of food and replacements came in. Leontiev sent good news from Kinburun. He had negotiated a surrender (May 29th) by allowing the 2,000-man garrison to withdraw to Oczakov, and had taken the town without losing a single man. He had also released 250 Russian slaves, found 49 brass cannon, and acquired 3,000 horses. His Cossacks had discovered a herd of 30,000 sheep and about 500 cattle. Leontiev remained in situ in case the Bujak Tatars of Bessarabia showed up, but they never did.

On the other hand, the Crimean Tatars emerged from their retreats and began to raid as they could, running off with sheep and cows, and the occasional prisoner. Horses were the best prizes to be had. The nomads slipped across the Sivash – the shallow, reedy sea to the east of the isthmus – and attacked Münnich's lines of communication. This would have a beneficial effect for the Russians next year, because in trying to locate the routes the Tatars took, they found a number of safe passages across the Sivash. At the time, however, these raids were very irritating.

By now, Münnich had decided his original plan of wintering in the Crimea would not work. Even Perekop was not secure. He sent the Ukrainian Cossacks and the Zaporozhians home, the latter with instructions to scout west as far as Bender on the Dniester. He wrote to Court, outlining his position and requesting permission to call it a day. And he sent away the sick under strong escort.

About the 8th or 9th of July, the Lines of Perekop were breached in several places, and the towers razed. Shortly after, the army set out for home, arriving on the Samara River by the 18th of July, without incident. Leontiev rejoined them on the 23rd of August, bringing most of his booty; Kinburun was razed. Major-General Spiegel, who had been detached to reconnoitre the Sivash, retired on the outpost of Bachmut (located at a saltworks on a tributary of the Donets) to see if that were perhaps a better route to use next year.

*[Marshal Lacy would use the route from Bachmut. It was both shorter, and better provisioned, and the reconnaissance of the Sivash had shown that the Lines of Perekop were of no importance.]*

### Summing Up

Thus ended the first-ever Russian invasion of the Crimea. The after action reports were mixed. On the one hand, the very penetration of the region was a stunning blow to the Tatars, who had suffered grievous losses in men and materiel. On the other hand, Münnich discovered, on his final review before the regiments went into winter quarters, that his army had been cut in half – close to 30,000 men lost. No regiment had more than 600 men under arms. Only 2,000 had been killed in action. Desertion was never a great problem for the Russian Army, especially in the Crimea. Most of the men had simply been lost to attrition – disease, poor diet, and exhaustion.

In Manstein's opinion, the failure of the commissariat, which was not Münnich's fault but Prince Troubetskoi's, was only part of the problem. An admirer of the Generalissimo, he criticises him as 'too harsh', driving his men on in the heat of the day instead of wisely marching at night or in the early dawn. He makes the telling point that even officers succumbed. The third element, not of failure, but of less than stellar performance for the Army, was Hesse-Homburg's little coup.

Gathering a coterie of native-born officers around him, headed by Major-General Magnus Biron, cousin of the Grand Chamberlain, the prince's personal hatred of the Generalissimo led him to belittle his orders in front of the men; at the same time, his own conduct was 'slothful'. Back at Court, the Grand Chamberlain refused to participate in the plot. Hesse-Homburg's letter was simply circulated in certain quarters and the charges believed by those who wished to do so. This might have given Münnich no end of trouble that winter, but luckily, his worst enemy at Court had died the previous year, and the man offered the job of presiding over the investigative commission refused. This was Count Lacy, whose dislike of Münnich must have been overridden by his sense of honour.

*[Hesse-Homburg later tried to make up to Münnich, but never succeeded. Apart from acting rashly in the field, one of Münnich's other failings was a propensity for bearing grudges.]*

### Count Pyotr Petrovich Lacy (1678-1751)

Father of the Austrian Marshal Franz Moritz von Lacy. Born at Killeady, Ireland, near the town of Limerick, to an Irish-Norman noble family. At age 13 participated in the Jacobite defence of Limerick (1692), holding the rank of lieutenant. Exiled to France, his family joined the Irish Brigade. Father and brother killed fighting in Italy. Lacy then joined the Imperial service. After two years, followed his commander (Charles de Croy) into Russian service. Participated in the Great Northern War; twice seriously wounded. First action was at Narva, as a *poruchik* (lieutenant) commanding a band of musketeers. Made colonel in 1706. 1707 distinguished himself leading a brigade at Poltava. Served under Prince Repnin at Siege of Riga, where he was the first Russian officer to enter the city; appointed chatelain of Riga Castle. 1719 led an amphibious landing at Umeå in Sweden. Entered the Ministry of Defence as a general in 1723. In 1726 succeeded Prince Repnin as district commander of Livonia; 1729 made Governor of Riga. Made connections here with the Duchess of Courland, who later became the Tsaritsa, Anna Ivanova. Fought in the War of the Polish Succession: 1733 he and Marshal Münnich dethroned the newly-elected Polish king (Stanislaw Leszczynski) and laid siege to him in Danzig (1734). Detached to lead a corps to the Rhine as a demonstration. Made field marshal for his efforts. Immediately after, participated in the Russo-Turkish War: commanded the Army of the Don, taking Azov in 1736, and in 1737-38 conducting operations in the Crimea. At war's end, was made Governor of Livonia; Emperor Charles VI made him an Imperial count. Avoided disgrace after Anna's death because of his well-known apolitical attitude. Appointed Commander-in-Chief for the Russo-Swedish War of 1741-43. Conquered Finland in 1742, defeating a large but poorly-led Swedish army in several engagements. Resumed duties as Governor of Livonia until his death in 1751.



Count Lacy



## The Siege of Azov

It will be remember that General Levashev took command of the Army of the Don when Marshal Münnich left for the Dnieper. He took no action beyond tightening the blockade of Azov and fortifying his camp against surprise attack – the garrison had almost as many men as he. Münnich had only allocated six weeks rations to the Azov portion of the campaign; action would have to be taken soon.

*[Münnich had left detailed diagrams of the entrenchments he wished constructed but no actual instructions or timetable.]*

Marshal Lacy, however, did not arrive until the 4th of May. During the preceding month, the Turks had made several attempts to harass Levashev, trying about the 4th of April to capture a supply convoy (which formed a wagon laager and sent them packing after a two-hour fight), on the 6th to storm one of the redoubts, with no success, and on April 26th making a general sally with the bulk of the garrison. For this last encounter, General Levashev had prior knowledge and placed his Don Cossacks in ambush, attacking the Turks from the rear and forcing them to flee to the town with heavy losses. The garrison subsequently remained quiet.

Marshal Lacy very nearly did not make it to his command. Taking a short cut across the steppe with a small escort of Cossacks, he was waylaid by several thousand Tatars and only escaped by abandoning his carriage and baggage worth 4,000 ducats, jumping onto a cart horse, cutting the traces, and riding like the wind.

On his arrival at the army's main camp, he immediately ordered the opening of trenches and the formal commencement of the siege. The Turks resisted vigorously under their able *serasker* (commanding officer). For a long time, no progress was made at all. Marshal Lacy repeatedly risked his life, setting the example for his men, but to no avail.

The corps was beginning to dwindle. Strength returns from around this time list 8,493 Regulars, plus 3,381 Cossacks and Kalmyks, which was sufficient for the investment, but there were 700 sick, and only a third of the 'mounted' troops actually had horses. The siege train was stuck upriver.

But, on May 9th/10th, Vice Admiral Bredal came down the Don with a flotilla of 15 galleys, 9 prahms (shallow draught vessels used as floating batteries), many small boats, and the siege train. 4 infantry and 2 dragoon regiments also put in an appearance. Most important of all, he brought fresh rations.

Bredal was one of Peter the Great's admirals and played his part with some skill. 6 of the prahms were deployed across the estuary to block any Turkish relief, or escape, and the rest of the flotilla began to bombard the fortress. The train had to land a few kilometres away and be dragged into position.

Before this could be done, on the 10th, Major-General Brigny, with a party of 400 foot and 150 Cossacks achieved a lodgement in the Turks' outer entrenchments. The enemy sallied with 500 Janissaries and 300 cavalry and drove him out, but, reinforced, the Russians came back and drove the garrison out in turn. Lacy now commenced to bombard the town round the clock, both with his artillery on the landward side, and with the flotilla on the river.

Toward the end of May, a Turkish fleet appeared, commanded by the *Capitan (Kapudan) Pasha* (admiral), Dgianum Codja (Djanum-Hoca). His fleet was carrying 6-7,000 reinforcements for the garrison. Foiled by shoals and sandbars from sailing directly to the town, and unable to land on the beaches because the Russians had turned them into kill zones, the *Capitan Pasha* tried sending his men up in shallow-draught boats, but was prevented by the enemy's own ships. Despairing, he withdrew, ultimately returning to the fleet anchorage at Kaffa.

Until the 3rd of June, the Russians advanced by sapping, Lacy not wishing to risk an assault, and they fended off a few sallies. By the 4th they were within 40 paces of the palisade, but a strong sortie by

600 of the garrison drove them back, the Turks managing to undo much of their work and kill 33 men (with 823 wounded).

Lacy ordered an immediate counterattack, he and General Douglass bringing up fresh troops and pushing the garrison back. Lacy was wounded in the thigh and nearly captured when he advanced too far and was surrounded. But this action took the Russians to within 20 paces of the walls; they quickly established three batteries in a captured Ottoman redoubt. Successive assaults by the enemy could not dislodge the gunners.

Then, on the 8th of June, a Russian mortar bomb struck the main Turkish magazine and the whole place blew up. The stores were located right in the center of the town. Five mosques were destroyed, and over 100 houses; more than 300 men were killed outright.

*[After the Russians entered the town they found it to be no more than a shell.]*

This disaster did not end the siege. The primary sap continued to be advanced until the 17th, against fierce opposition. The Turks were living up to their reputation for siegecraft. Now that the Russians were up against the main retrenchment, Lacy ordered a night assault by a body of 800 grenadiers, 700 fusiliers, and a 600-man work party. Launching off at midnight on the 17th, the attack endured the springing of two Turkish countermines, which fortunately did no damage, and penetrated as far as the town gates before consolidating on the Turkish retrenchment.

The next morning, the commandant requested a capitulation. At first, Marshal Lacy insisted the garrison of 3,463 men become prisoners of war, but the *serasker*, bluffing, as it turned out, said he was prepared to 'bury himself in the ruins', and his men were granted passage – without military honours – to the town of Abskouk (Atsuk), which was a personal domain of the Grand Vizier. As was the custom, the Turks then gave the Russians possession of a gate.

Lacy took possession of Azov on June 26th, 1736, and sent the keys to Anna Ivanova. 291 Russian slaves were freed. The Russians discovered 137 cannon and 11 mortars, all brass, plus 26 iron cannon and 4 iron mortars, much ammunition, but very little food. This was the reason for the Ottoman surrender; as Manstein points out, the Russians had not even taken the covered way surrounding the inner fortress, let alone made a breach in the walls.

*[Some sources claim that the fortress surrendered immediately after the magazine explosion; they may be confusing the siege with Oczakov the following year, as there are several points of similarity. According to Davies, Russian army losses were 172 KIA, 1,367 WIA (101 mortally), and 28 MIA. The fleet lost 22 KIA and 77 WIA.]*

Marshal Lacy now attempted to fulfil the second half of his orders, which were to link up with the Army of the Dnieper, which, unbeknownst to the Army of the Don, was already preparing to withdraw for the winter.

4,000 men were left behind under Levashev and de Brigny, attempting to put Azov in some semblance of defence. (8,000 cannonballs had been fired into it). Levashev was made Governor of the region, and the Elder Brigny (there were two generals of that name) made commandant of the town.

On July 4th, Lieutenant General Douglass was dispatched with 2 dragoon regiments, followed shortly by 7,000 men under Lacy. They might have had some unpleasant encounters with the Tatar hornet's nest, but at the Miuss' River (August 8th) Douglass ran into some of General Spiegel's Zaporozhian Cossacks. The news of Münnich's retreat annoyed Lacy – more particularly, he resented not being informed: were the two of them not 'co-commanders'?

The marshal returned to Izyum by way of Bakhmut in late August, placing his men into quarters around the Donets River. They were not to get much rest. By October, the Tatars were out seeking reprisals and burned several villages. A party of Don Cossacks was detached and after three day's hard riding, caught and eliminated a



party of 200 Tatars (170 dead, 30 prisoners). The prisoners told the Cossacks that the Khan's brother was nearby, leading another 800 Turks and Tatars. The Cossacks instantly rode after this group, met them, slew 300, and took 50 prisoners. In all, 3,000 Russian slaves were freed, and the Cossacks rounded up 400 horses.

*[Some sources say Lacy returned to the Lines in October.]*

*[It was about this time that the Ottoman Sultan deposed Khan Qaplan II Gerai, replacing him with Feh'i Gerai, the former Kalga Sultan. A man often served as the Kalga Sultan before becoming Khan.]*

### **Don't Fear the Reaper**

So much for conventional warfare. There was a third theatre of war, just as important, and indeed, the only one to garner lasting results. This was the Kuban.

In a general sense, the Kuban is the region lying between the Kuban River and the Don River, west of the high ground called the Gora Ulka. South of the Kuban River was Circassia; north of the Don was the land of the Don Cossacks. The Taman Peninsula was more a part of Circassia than of the Kuban, and at the time, it was under Ottoman control, with a mixed population of Turks, Tatars, Cossacks, displaced people from the Caucasus, and Christian traders.

The Kuban was probably the richest, most pleasant land of all those lying on the Black Sea: the Chersoneses, breadbasket of the Greek world, inhabited by Tatars, Turks, Cossacks, Circassians, Greeks, Armenians, and others, who managed to coexist, ply their trades, herd their cattle, make their wine, and keep their bees in relative peace.

The Russians correctly appreciated that attacking this region would distract the Crimean Tatars from raiding northward. The Krim Horde held the overlordship of not only the Nogai and other hordes in this region, but of a number of Cossack bands who had slipped from the grasp of St. Petersburg. There were also a number of settlements.

For the rape of the Kuban, St. Petersburg called on their most powerful client tribe, the Kalmyks (Calmucks). Originally neighbours of the Mongols, this division of the Oirait people had, over the centuries, moved further and further west (they did not accompany Genghis Khan's armies), until they were grazing their herds in the lands between Tsaritsyn and Astrakhan. Once Animists, embracing Buddhism in the 17th Century did not make them any less warlike.

The Khan of the Kalmyks was Don Duc Olmo (or Ombo). In April of 1736, after screening the advance on Azov, he was asked to sweep the Kuban with 20,000 of his best men. They went forward in the time-honoured manner of steppe warriors, crossed the Kuban River, and entrapped 5,000 families (*kibitkas*, equalling a family each) of Kazyev (Kuban) Tatars between that river and the Urup, near the foothills of the Caucasus.

*[There may have been as many as 40,000 Kalmyks involved in the campaign, but 20,000 with the Khan.]*

The Tatars fortified themselves with a triple line of wagon barricades. Goldan Narma, the Kalmyk Khan's son, led 10,000 men in a dismounted attack, which, after two hours of intense combat, broke into the position. 6,000 Tatar men, including 24 *mirzas* (chiefs) were butchered; 10,000 women and children were taken captive, along with a large number of herd animals.

From here, Don Duc Olmo marched north to the Jegorlik, a tributary of the Manyk that runs through hilly terrain on the watershed between the western and eastern plains north of the Caucasus. The Kalmyks rested here for some time, until word came of a coalition of the four primary Kuban Tatar hordes, nearly 30,000 'tents', camped on the uplands 160 Km away to the west, behind a series of defiles. The Khan resolved to attack them first.

*[Some maps show several 'Jegorliks'; the one meant is the largest, a primary tributary stretching into Circassia.]*

Moving swiftly, the Kalmyks succeeded in bottling up their enemies, besieging their camp for over a month. The position was too strong to attack, but the Tatars, though more numerous, did not feel strong enough to break out. Each side hoped the other would run out of food.

After 37 days, Don Duc Olmo was reinforced by 5,000 Cossacks of the Don; he prepared a general assault. The Tatars, learning of the impending attack, beat him to the punch. They surrendered. Their sultan and 200 *mirzas* appeared at the Kalmyk camp, offering to submit to the authority of the Tsaritsa. The offer was accepted.

*[It would be interesting to learn whether the Russians had a liaison officer with the Khan – perhaps the Cossack commander served in that capacity.]*

This surrender took place in May. Little happened for the rest of the summer, but after the Russian Army had gone into winter quarters, St. Petersburg sent instructions to continue with the subjugation of the Kuban. Many Tatars still adhered to the Porte.

Don Duc Olmo, with two colonels of the Don Cossacks and a total of 25,000 men, set off on November 20th. As they approached the Jegorlik River, scouts captured a Tatar. Questioned, he let slip that a powerful *horde* of 20,000 warriors, the Cetishkul (Fetiskul'), had recently emerged from the higher pastures of Circassia and was even now encamped on the near side of the Kuban River. Aware of the Kalmyk presence in the region, they had established several fortified camps to cover their grazing grounds.

The Cossacks were sent to reconnoitre, followed shortly after by the Kalmyks. Coming on one of the posts at nightfall, the Cossacks stormed it and massacred all 1,000 of its garrison, except the commander, who was sent to the Khan of the Kalmyks for further interrogation.

Taking the Cetishkul by surprise, the Khan divided his army into several parties and attacked the Tatar horde simultaneously from all sides, routing them with great slaughter. After this success the Kalmyks pursued the remnants down the Kuban all the way to the Sea of Azov, as Manstein says, 'utterly crushing this horde' (p.146). The Kalmyks torched every village, sacked every town, not omitting the walled town of Kapil (Kopyl'), residence of Bachtî-Gerai, the Sultan of the Kuban.

*[Kopyl' was never rebuilt; the existing town of that name was constructed much later on a completely different site.]*

The operation was complete by about December 4th. According to the Khan, the Kalmyks and their Cossack allies had killed 15,000 Tatars, watched 5,000 more drown trying to swim the partially frozen Kuban River, enslaved another 10,000 women and children, taken untold numbers of animals, and levelled every population center they had come across. When a stray group of 3,000 Tatars appeared, they were promptly chased down. One wonders if the Dalai Lama approved. 200 local chieftains (*mirzas*) submitted to the Tsaritsa. All the booty was sent home, while the Khan and his men quartered themselves in the Kuban – they planned to join the coming year's expedition into the Crimea.

*[Davies gives the toll as 30,000 killed or enslaved and 20,000 horses taken.]*

### **High Politics**

In addition to the thousand-and-one tasks involved in running an army, Marshal Münnich was operating under a cloud. The Hesse-Homburg Affair was hatching eggs, and on top that, the Cabinet was annoyed the he had ordered a withdrawal in August (yes, they wanted it both ways – typical bureaucrats). Münnich opened old wounds by putting the blame on Marshal Lacy for his 'dalliance' at Azov. Lacy responded by charging he had not been given enough resources – few horses, and few vessels capable of negotiating the shoals at the mouth of the Don. Münnich's second argument was that he had been crippled by the operational conditions.

That last argument was valid, but high words were bandied about. The War Council stood by its chief – Münnich. The Cabinet ordered an inspection of the army by Marshal Lacy, who, as noted earlier, refused to head the commission, despite, or perhaps because of the ill feeling between the two men. Münnich wrote directly to Anna Ivanova, threatening to resign his command to Lacy. Though distressed by the losses of the campaign, and tentatively inquiring whether a peace treaty was in order, the Tsaritsa did not want to lose the services of such an able general, even if he was a *prima donna*. Her reply was reproachful, yet confident of his abilities, and had the desired result. In the end, Münnich's credit was restored (he scooped up a Ukrainian estate into the bargain), while Hesse-Homburg's star set, never to rise again.

The peace question did not arise merely from the apparent failure of the campaign (which was a matter of perception, anyway). St. Petersburg was having difficulty in interesting both the Habsburgs and the Persians in an alliance. The Maritime Powers (Britain and Holland), widely seen as pro-Turk due to their trade interests, were attempting to put the brakes on, as was their enemy, France (who was fearful of a Russian super-state emerging if the Ottomans fell). Most of Europe seemed to feel that the Russians were only continuing the war because they had 'talked big', but there was fear that given enough time they would crush the Turks.

Nadr Shah was preparing to come to a peace agreement of his own, so that he could go off and sack Delhi. He might have been persuaded to change his mind, but the Russian envoy had not been given enough funds to properly bribe the right officials (a chronic failure of Russian Foreign Ministries right into Soviet times). He complained bitterly at his 'embarrassment'. The Habsburgs, on the other flank, were still quivering from the last war. In the end, they would enter the fray in the summer, ironically after acting as mediators at the farcical Nemirov 'peace summit'.

The Russian Resident at the Porte, one Vishnyakov, kept the flame alive by 'preaching war to the death' (Bain, p.254):

'Now is the time,' he cries, 'not only to extinguish their bestial pride, but also to make a complete end of their lawless horde... There is none capable of resistance, everyone is full of fear. Your Majesty already reigns in the hearts of all the good Christians who still languish beneath the yoke of this expiring barbarism' (Bain p.255).

Vishnyakov's chauvinistic assessments would bedevil Münnich's attempts to 'read' Ottoman capabilities and intentions for some time.

### Ice Follies

The winter of 1736-37 was not a restful one. Much had to be done to bring the Army back up to strength. In September, Generals Keith and Rumyantsev had brought back the veterans of the Rhineland campaign. To them were added fresh draughts of recruits – 40,000 of them – from the seemingly limitless well of Russian manpower.

The new naval yards at Bryansk were turning out large numbers of river craft, particularly the so-called 'double-sloops' – flat-bottomed assault craft mounting four 4-lbers and eight 1-lbers and carrying 100 men apiece. These could operate on the river, or in the Black Sea. The Cossacks also contributed many of their special *boidacs* (small, handy river vessels with oars and a sail). It was hoped to have a fleet of 355 vessels capable of acting on the Black Sea.

There was also the threat of Tatar reprisals. Some small bands had already begun to raid the frontier, as has been seen. Münnich placed half his Army on the Lines of the Ukraine, and another 30,000 along 800 Km of the Dnieper, all the way from the Lines to Kiev. These were given the wonderful job of breaking river ice to prevent the Tatars from crossing. (The Tatars were quite prepared to violate Polish territory, and did so on numerous occasions.)

Over the course of the winter the Tatars made many raids, some great, some small, netting 1,000 families as slaves, destroying many villages, and even plundering some towns. Münnich was aware of

their intentions through a network of spies at the Porte: large raids, sponsored by the Khan, had to be vetted with the Ottomans. Small, 'unauthorised' raids were a nuisance because there was no advance warning, but on the other hand, they did not do much damage.

Because these small raids routinely caught the Lines' defenders while they were out in the woods and fields harvesting, Münnich's solution was to group 5,000 regular dragoons into two rapid reaction forces, one at the west end of the Lines and one at the east end. The garrison would give the alarm and the dragoons would pursue. Simply manning the Lines to full capacity was not practical because of the expense.

The biggest raid of the season took place in February of 1737. On the 14th, several thousand Tatars passed the Dnieper by crossing the ice near the town of Kaliberda. Major-General Lesly was responsible for that sector and ordered an immediate pursuit with the 200 men he had on hand. Initially, the Tatars retired, fearing a larger party, but they soon realised their error and began to pursue Lesly in turn. The Russian party was surrounded and killed, save only 20 men and Lesly's son, serving the general as his aide, who were captured.

Encouraged, the Tatars spent the next two days happily looting and burning, until the Russians had assembled a much larger force. These, under Major-General Rading, were posted to cover the Tatars' path of retreat. The latter managed to find a way through but lost 300 of their rearguard to 2,000 of Rading's dragoons; some booty was recovered.

*[In winter, horse-drawn sleds were used for pursuit, carrying three or four men each: a bit like the tank-sleds one sees in newsreels about Stalingrad.]*

Still confident, the Tatars then tried taking on the Zaporozhians – a bad mistake – and returned to their own lands considerably fewer in number.

*[Manstein makes an interesting digression into the mode of Tatar warfare. Lightly encumbered, and trailing a string of horses, they could make 25 leagues in a day without blowing their mounts; tired mounts were cut loose to recover and could often be picked up on their return (presumably strays, properly branded, would be returned to the owner by other Tatars). 48 hours was the most time they allowed themselves in enemy territory. To counter the Tatars, the Zaporozhians were set to watch the lower Dnieper and the lands between it and the Crimea. They would send warning by an ingenious set of triple beacons: one beacon for Tatars sighted, two for a post under attack, three for a penetration, at which the Cossacks would assemble and cut the Tatars off.]*

## 1737: Tatar Sauce

### Here We Go Again

Despite peace feelers from all parties, 1737 would be the bloodiest year of the war, as the Habsburgs opened up the Danube Front and the Russians pressed toward the Black Sea.

Münnich had learned some lessons from his first foray into the Crimea. This time, logistics would not be a problem, though the army would perforce move slower than ever.

The new Army of the Dnieper was 70,000 strong:

- 2,757 Guards, 50,580 regular foot in 63 battalions.
- 481 Guards cavalry (2 squadrons), a squadron of Münnich's *Cuirassiers*, 2,581 dragoons, 9,693 mounted *Landmiliz*, and 1,500 hussars.
- 6-7,000 Don Cossacks, 6,000 Ukrainian Cossacks, 1,000 Sloboda Cossacks. Plus 'some' Chuguev Kalmyks.
- 3,000 artilleryists and engineers, with 176 regimental guns, 63 field guns, 32 field mortars, and 118 siege guns and mortars.

*[The numbers should have been 90,000. The shortfall was partly due to sickness and partly due to a lack of mounts. The Guards and some of the Line followed in the rear as a body of reinforcements led by Major-General Gustavus Biron.]*

2,581 dragoons is the number Davies gives. It seems a low number – the dragoons and Ukrainian Landmiliz together comprised 145 squadrons, or 29 regiments, 9 or 10 of which were Landmiliz.

Other sources note the following artillery: 62 siege guns, 11 mortars, 16 howitzers, 165 field guns (from 3-lber battalion guns up to 12-lbers) and 392 light mortars (mainly Coehorn-type grenade launchers).]

Münnich's crew were joined by generals Rumyantsev and Keith, and by Prince Anthony Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (the fiancé of Anna Ivanova's niece), acting as a volunteer. Apart from these men, the primary officers included lieutenant-generals Leontiev, Karl Biron, and Löwendahl (who would serve France in the War of the Austrian Succession), and major-generals Tarankov, Magnus Biron, Prince Repnin, Stoffeln, Bachmetev, and Arachtshev.

The politicians tried to persuade Münnich to invade Moldavia, but he remembered the Moldavians had promised Peter the Great a 'spontaneous rising' that never happened. The Generalissimo thought that more preparatory work was needed, and countered that a less ambitious campaign against the chain of Ottoman fortresses that lined the Bug and Dniester Rivers would have the dual effect of a) tying down the Bujak and Crimean Tatars, who would otherwise head off to the Danube, per their treaty agreements with the Porte, where they would cause trouble for the Imperials, and b) preparing the way for a future advance into Moldavia once the Imperials were actually in a position to link up with the Russians.

The powerful fortress of Oczakov, located at the mouth of the Dnieper, was picked as the first target because it a) lay near the Crimea, which ought to be ravaged again, and b) its companion fort of Kinburun was already razed. Oczakov also lay a long way from the Ottoman mobilisation site at Bender, on the middle Dniester. The town had a relatively small garrison, perhaps 6-12,000 men. Bender was the second target, and Khotin, at the 'top' of Moldavia, the third. With these key locations in Russian hands, the Ottomans would have to abandon Moldavia and fall back on the Danube.

During the winter, a spy was sent into Oczakov, but the man came under suspicion and was confined in a place where he could see little. When he returned he gave the Generalissimo a total erroneous sketch of the fortifications. From this man's report, the entire Oczakov operation was constructed.

At the end of February, Marshal Münnich returned from Court. There was no time to lose. The Turks were already beginning to muster their own army at Babadagh. Rumours claimed there were even men from Egypt among them (those would have been a contingent of 3,000 Mameluks who were routinely requisitioned for European campaigns).

[At first glance, Babadagh (Old Man's Mountain) is an unusual mustering location. But, the Ottomans did not always pick their camp grounds solely for military reasons – Adrianople was the staging area for armies fighting in Europe simply because the Sultan had a hunting lodge there.

Located on a small lake of the same name, which connects with the larger Lake Razim (itself a lagoon of the Danube Delta), Babadagh is on the northern edge of the Drobruja hills, near but not on the Danube, near but not on the Black Sea. Attempts to fortify it were abandoned in the 17th Century. Yet, it had for a long time been a winter HQ for the Grand Viziers.

A number of factors can be adduced for this. From the point of view of army timetables, it was centrally located. Also, there was sufficient space in the lands north of the town for a spread of encampments protected by the bend of the Danube. There was good forage for the horses and a salubrious climate for the High Command.

But the most important reason was probably this: Babadagh was an important pilgrimage site for the Bektashi cult practised by the Janissaries, and, though the Tatars followed one of the Sunni schools, they also venerated the saint enshrined there (Sari Saltik). This would have enhanced the effect of the religious ceremonies conducted with the Army's campaigns.]

Fortunately the Sultan and his Grand Vizier, Silhâdar Mehmed Pasha, had so far only assembled 20,000 men, and had only three weeks' rations for twice that number. Detachments from Albania and

Bosnia had been sent to Bender and Oczakov, sorely depleting those regions of experienced manpower.

[Davies, quoting the Russian envoy to Istanbul, gives contemporary assessments of the various Ottoman commanders:

- *Silhâdar Mehmed Pasha? Inept. In the event this would prove to be hyperbole, though he was not brilliant, either. Or perhaps he had intelligent subordinates.*
- *Vagin Mehmed Pasha, commandant of Bender? Stupid.*
- *Tiagya (Yahya) Pasha, commandant of Oczakov? Intelligent, but a civilian. He was a three-tail pasha and son of the former Grand Vizier Ali Pasha (who, as a corps commander in the Balkans, would this year become the hero of Bosnia).]*

St. Petersburg had denied Münnich the option of using his cavalry against Perekop while the infantry laid siege to Oczakov, so he assigned the invasion of the Crimea to Lacy's Army of the Don.

### Advance to Oczakov

In March, as the spring grass began to peep through the snow, the Army of the Dnieper was placed on 24-hour notice to move. By the beginning of April, the first troops were in motion, marching regiment by regiment to the Dnieper and floating down it to Perevolotschnia, one of the better crossing places – the river could be bridged here with 'only' 128 boats. At the end of the month, the forces under Münnich's direct command set out from Poltava to Kiev across the still snowy countryside. From Kiev they also made for Perevolotschnia by boat.

Once assembled, the army was arranged into three 'divisions'. General Rumyantsev and the 1st division (8 dragoon and 15 foot regiments) crossed to the west (right) bank of the Dnieper at Kremenchug, General Leontiev and the 2nd division at Orlik (7 dragoon and 7 foot regiments), and Hesse-Homburg (still Master of Ordnance) with the 3rd division (9 dragoon and 11 foot regiments, plus the artillery train) at Perevolotschnia. It took until April 27th for the army to reassemble on the other side. Six days later the whole army marched off to the river Omelnick nearby, which they reached and crossed between May 15th and 18th. At Omelnick it was at last possible to graze the horses.

[Perevolotschnia or Perevolotchna now lies under the Dniprodzerzhynske Reservoir. Orlyk is about midway down the reservoir, on the left bank, and is also on the Vorskla River that comes down past Poltava. According to old maps it was formerly located between that river and the Orel River. Kremenchug is of course farther north, at the base of the reservoir of the same name. The army thus crossed on a (roughly) 65 Km front.]

[In the 18th Century, the term 'division' did not have the meaning it later acquired, but the Russians frequently used the word, rather than the more usual 'corps'. To them, a corps was an independent formation – a modern division, for which they would probably use the term 'army', not 'corps' – while a division was an integral component of an army that provided greater flexibility: able to function as a wing, or the center, or a reserve – like the Medieval concept of a 'battle'. Students of the Soviet era will remember that Russian divisions were smaller units than Western divisions. In this instance the arrangement was mainly administrative, allowing each division to manage its own tail.]

Münnich intended to bear toward Bender as long as he could, in order to put the enemy off the scent. For this reason, the army was to march across the Right Bank Ukraine in a southwesterly direction to the river Bug. The siege train and heavier baggage would be left behind under Prince Troubetskoi (still Commissariat-General), to be floated down the Dnieper once the rapids were navigable.

[The seven cataracts of the 'mighty Dnieper' were famed from ancient times but have long since disappeared due to Communist-era hydro projects. Troubetskoi should have been fired, but Münnich liked him.]

Near the middle of June, after travelling about 340 Km, Münnich arrived on the Bug, near Voznesensk, and threw three bridges across it. By the 18th the army was on the march again. So far, no sign of the enemy. Or of fresh water. They had come to the 'desert' of

southwestern Ukraine. From here, they had a further march of some 100-120 Km (100 as the crow flies) southeast along the Bug to Oczakov, or 160 Km to Bender along their original line of march.

Reports from Istanbul continued to talk of a combined Turk and Tatar army assembling near Bender, but in a leisurely manner; the enemy did not yet suspect the Russians had penetrated so far.

Still, after crossing the Bug, Münnich formed his army into three divisional squares, which marched in mutual support. He received reinforcements in the shape of several foreign volunteer officers, 28,000 more wagons, and 2,000 camels. Even without heavy guns the army moved very slowly. Supply transport was still insufficient to ensure a steady advance, despite the addition of the camels and the use of boats, while the officers defied court martial by routinely exceeding their quota of personal transport. The march from the Bug to the little tributary, Souchaia-tzchertala, a distance of 4 Km downstream, took until June 23rd.

At this point, Münnich learned that his ruse had failed; the Turks were assembling reinforcements for Oczakov. Leaving the heavier baggage and some of the field artillery under the protection of Leontiev and Tarankov and most of the former's division, he pressed on with all speed (June 24th). Ominously, water levels on the Dnieper remained low, boding ill for the arrival of the siege train.

On the 24th the army made 16 Km to the tributary Mertwie-Wody, suffering a little from lack of water. The 25th saw a march of 20 Km, 12 Km on the 26th (thanks to several defiles), 12 Km on the 27th (more defiles and the River Jatitzkaya). Scouts from Bender way reported enemy advance posts on the expected approach routes to that town, and on the 28th a party of them (probably Tatars) appeared and shadowed the army for a while.

The 29th was a brutal march, 36 Km from before dawn and into the night across a waterless tableland. The Tatars had burned the grass for 32 Km around Oczakov. Some Cossacks pursued an enemy cavalry squadron that had come from that fortress; their prisoners told of a 15,000-man garrison, 100 cannon, and 18 galleys plus other vessels in the roadstead. They were hourly expecting reinforcement by sea or land. It appeared the Ottomans had spent the last year repairing the place and adding to its works, and had also begun fixing the damage to Kinburun. But a piece of good news emerged as well. The Tatars of Bujak who had been camping beside the town had deserted their Sultan and gone off home in a body.

The Russians were now in the vicinity of Oczakov, and on the 30th of June their march, now only 6 Km from the town, was interrupted by a fight with the enemy advance guard, an affair that escalated from a small Cossack skirmish to a brigade-level engagement lasting four hours. From prisoners, it was learned the expected reinforcements, 7,000 Bosnians and *Arnauts* (Albanians), 5,000 of them mounted, had arrived the night before. Indeed, the Russians had just worsted some of them (at a cost of 10 hussars and 15 Cossacks to 100 Turks).

*[The reinforcements were moved in by sea, from the port of Akkerman on the liman of the Dniester. Rather than coming from Bender, they were probably reinforcements intended for Bender that were redirected from Babadagh on the Danube. The Bosnians included the flower of that province's sipahis, or noble horsemen. They were sorely missed when the Imperials attacked their homeland.]*

Suddenly, there it was. Oczakov. Mightiest fortress on the Black Sea coast. Mightier than Azov. Mightier even than Kaffa. With a garrison of 20,000 Janissaries, *sipahis*, and warriors from every corner of the Ottoman Empire, under the command of its military *serasker*, Mustapha Pasha (a pasha of two-tails) and the reinforcement commander Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha. Built on a promontory reaching south to Kinburun's peninsula, oblong in shape, with multiple bastions, it boasted a parapet, glacis, and 12' wide 'avant-fossé' on three sides. The Ottomans had pushed the defences even farther out by constructing a network of redoubts, describing an arc between the Dnieper Liman on the east and the

Black Sea on the west. But the fourth side, facing the roadstead, had only a low curtain wall.

*[Tiagya Pasha, the actual Governor, presumably provided civilian oversight.]*

### The Siege of Oczakov (1st – 3rd July)

*[The map on the following page is from 1787. The fortifications depicted in it are new constructions, but the relative positions, and perhaps the trace, are the same.]*

The Russians encamped within cannon-shot, in some turmoil. Smoke hung on the ground and flames danced in the darkness; the governor had fired the suburbs. The Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg took one look at the fortress and retired to his tent, declaring he was too ill to fulfil his duties. (Curiously, he recovered the instant the fortress fell.) The Muscovites had some cause to be dismayed – their siege supplies were nowhere to be found.

The Dnieper, so Troubetskoi said, was too low even for the double-sloops to make it down the cataracts without a great deal of work. All the siege material (ladders, fascines, and the like) was with the fleet, and thanks to the scorched earth policy of the Tatars, there was no wood beyond the charcoal remains of the suburbs. Troubetskoi The bulk of the field guns, marching up with Leontiev and Tarankov were still some distance off. On top of that, everyone, Ottoman and Russian alike, expected the swift appearance of the main Turkish army from Bender. Münnich alone was undaunted. The army still had its battalion guns, and a few mortars. Enough to make a start.

*[If (a big if) the Turks had set out to intercept Münnich right after he crossed the Bug, they might only be 60 Km behind him – a day's ride for their Tatar allies.]*

On the morning of the 1st of July, the Russians occupied all the ground between the Liman of the Dnieper and the Black Sea. Münnich called a council of war. It was quickly and unanimously decided to press an assault at all costs before the garrison could be reinforced (they were not yet aware it *had* been brought to full capacity). A formal siege was out of the question since they could guarantee rations for only eight days. While they were hammering out he details, the garrison launched a sally of 15,000 men, an assault so large it had to be formed into two divisions.

The attack on the Russian left was not pressed home, but that on the right threatened to break the line, covered by the Don Cossack camp. Münnich dispatched Baron Löwendahl with the army picquets and some artillery to help them, and after about two hours of 'brisk firing' the garrison was repulsed.

That evening, under bright moonlight, the Russians began their investment by constructing five redoubts in the remains of the suburbs, between which, and from, they could eventually extend their trenches – or would have, if the ground had not been as hard as concrete. Furthermore, the night was so short that none of the redoubts were anywhere near completion when day exposed them to enemy fire.

*[5,000 pioneers and 5,000 workers were employed in this Sisyphean task. Münnich tried get the most important one finished by putting 2,000 men on it, but they dug no more than two feet down.]*

Come the dawn the Turks opened up with everything they had. It was short-range for cannon fire, so Münnich recalled the work parties. But some good news came from the right wing, where brigadier Lieven and colonel Jerepkin had taken over a couple of walled gardens, fortifying them as makeshift redoubts. General Rummyantsev was sent over with the picquets of the right wing and some artillery to help deal with the inevitable sally.

At daybreak the army stood to, and at 6am the advance guard, consisting of the remaining picquets of the army, the grenadiers, and the Cossacks, dismounted, and began to close with the fortress, soon followed by half the army (the remainder staying in camp as a reserve under the nominal command of Hesse-Homburg).

*[Picquets were detachments of troops from each regiment, used for security in camp, and as a screen in combat, there being no such thing as light infantry in the Russian Army. Their routine employment in the advance guard and similar dangerous duties suggests they were volunteers.]*

The Turks 'made a stubborn defence' (Manstein p. 156) on the liman-side, where they had occupied a retrenchment and some walled gardens, but after a prolonged struggle they were thrown back onto their own palisades. Under cover of the gardens the Russians got up within musket shot of the counterscarp, where they remained all day under continuous fire until it was too dark to see. At the same time, Münnich ordered the bombardment of the town, and the cannon began plying it with hot-shot.

*[Manstein and the other sources all say that the artillery was delayed in transit, but Manstein also says that the Generalissimo ordered the firing of 'battering pieces', field artillery, and mortars. Obviously the Russians had kept their light guns; mention is made of them in every engagement, and they were the critical element in every case. But it is also clear that the siege artillery did not arrive until Oczakov fell – ironically on the same day it fell. Leontiev and Tarankov, with the field guns, apparently did not arrive until July 12th, but surely some elements could have been forced marched to assist Münnich. Perhaps Leontiev's division remained behind as a rearguard while the artillery was marched up under light escort.]*

The guns were not emplaced, merely sited in the garden 'redoubts', but the cannonade was effective. Soon, fires could be seen breaking out behind the walls, though it appeared the defenders had them under control. The Russians kept their fire up all through the night of the 2nd, while work parties tried fruitlessly to connect the various gardens with a trench system.

*[It was later estimated that 48 hours would be needed to achieve adequate protection from fire. Memories of the author's own experiences of being ordered to dig trenches in hardpan – with a helmet because there weren't enough shovels – come flooding back. And the NCOs shouting 'speedo, speedo'...]*

An hour before daybreak on the 3rd, Münnich qualified for Napoleon's maxim of what constitutes a great commander – he got lucky. A fire broke out that seemed beyond the capabilities of the defenders to contain. The Generalissimo ordered General Keith, in the center of the line, to close up to the glacis and distract the garrison from fire-fighting. Keith replied that he was already *at* the glacis and taking casualties. Münnich sent another order to increase the fire, then another for the troops to break cover and mass for volley fire. The Jacobite general, his Scots brogue thickening, protested at the casualties this would cause, but Münnich replied that the whole army, himself included, was now moving up to join him in a ring of fire against the town.

Keith was joined by Löwendahl's left wing, and they advanced together as far as the bottom of the glacis, where they found a 12' wide ditch. For the next two hours the men withstood a rain of shot as they tried vainly to find means of crossing the obstacle. A few did get over, but not enough. In dismay, the troops began to retire back to the cover of the redoubts. At this, the Turks made a sally with several hundred men, sowing confusion everywhere.

Münnich, in despair, threw down his sword, crying, 'All is lost!' He dashed off a verbal message to General Keith, bitterly blaming the latter's 'impetuosity' for the failure. This outrageous statement stung Keith into replying that if the Generalissimo did not hold his tongue, he would demand a court martial, at which the truth would come out.

Afterward, Münnich tried to make amends by visiting Keith before he left – the Scotsman had been badly wounded in the leg and had to be rushed all the way to Paris as the only means of saving it. According to Bain's sources (p.260):

'Monsieur de Keith, methinks it is partly to you that we owe the success of this great enterprise'.

Keith replied sardonically,

'Nay, your Excellency, nay, I don't want to make the least merit out of the affair. What I did was done absolutely in obedience to your orders.'

A general sortie by the garrison at this time would have done for the Russians, but Münnich's luck held. Around 9am, the burning fires reached the main powder magazine. The resultant explosion blew up half the town and buried 6,000 men in the ruins – 5,000 of them Bosnian *sipahis*. At this, *serasker* Muhsinzade and his council panicked.

Soon, the Ottoman banners hanging over the walls disappeared, to be replaced with white flags. A request was made for a 24-hour truce. This was rejected. The Russian counter-offer was immediate surrender of the chief officers within the hour, or no quarter. The demand reached the *serasker* as he and the pick of the garrison were preparing to flee aboard one of the Turkish galleys in the harbour. But before they could do so, they heard a tumult at the western end of the town, and cries of 'Nashy, Nashy!' – 'ours, ours!' The Cossacks had broken through the seaward defences.

Bored with the siege, a party of these men had decided to do a bit of sightseeing and spotted a small herd of horses near the water. Attempting to round them up, they also spotted the Turks waiting to embark on the beach and immediately charged, pursuing the enemy through the sea gate before it could be closed.

Outside the walls, Münnich took heart at this fresh development and ordered 6,000 men up to support the Cossacks. Inside the walls a cyclone raged, but there are two very distinct accounts of what happened next.

Manstein says that the *serasker* sent to Münnich again asking for nothing but his life, which was spared, and that order was restored, a gate secured, and the garrison marched into captivity. However, several hundred looters entered the town and engaged in a gratuitous slaughter of the inhabitants; many of the looters were killed when two more magazines blew up. Manstein also says that about 2,000 of the garrison made it to the galleys and escaped.

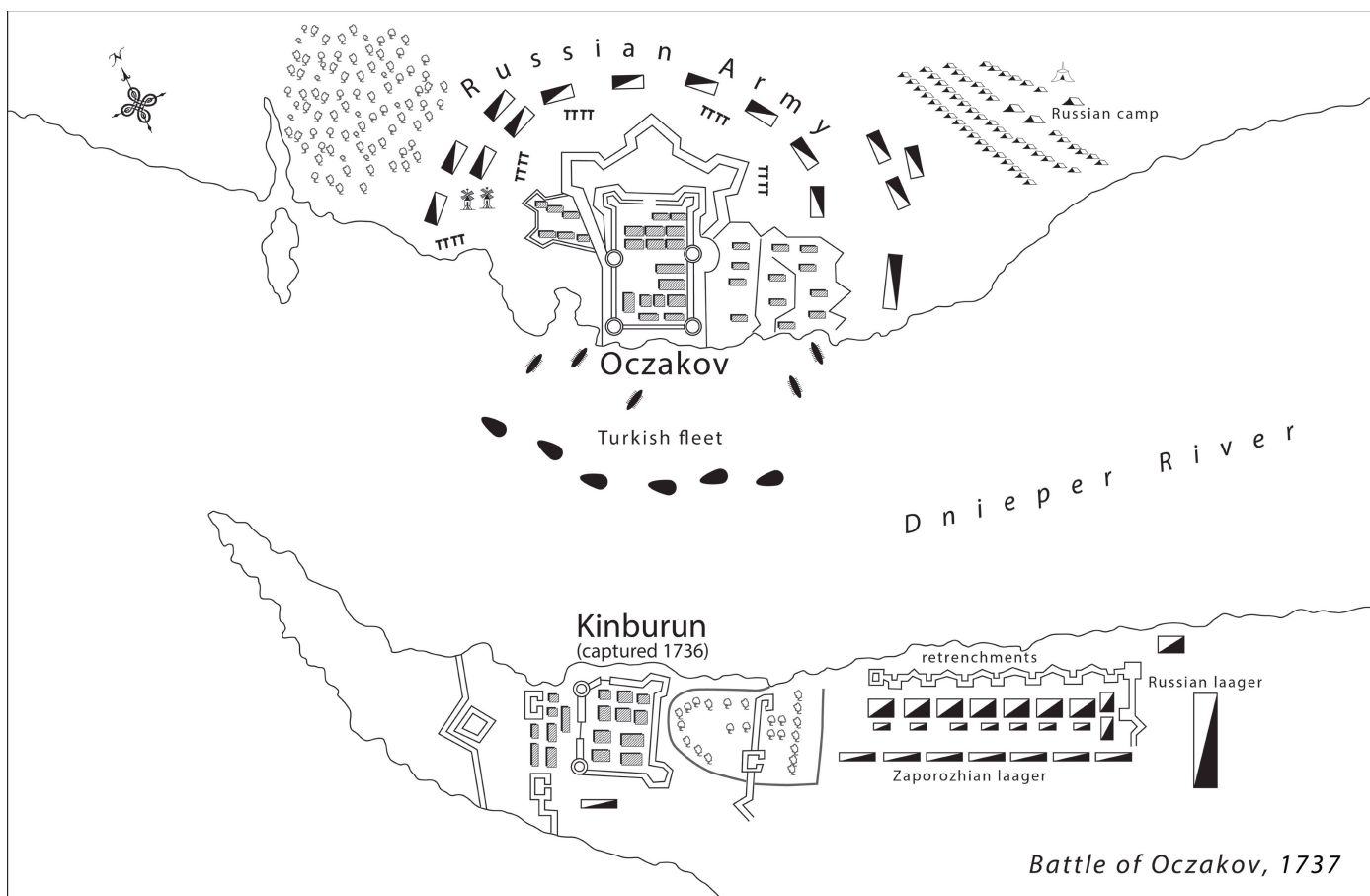
Bain's sources state that the *serasker* was captured by General Biron while trying to row out to his galley, that the Russians massacred the garrison to the tune of 11,000 souls, and that 3,000 *sipahis* drowned trying to swim to safety: in fact, that the entire garrison was destroyed, if one includes those who died in the explosion.

Manstein probably plays down the amount of 'massacring' that took place, but he provides detailed figures on the losses: just over 1,100 Russians killed and 2,700 wounded; in the Russian camp 3,200 Ottoman prisoners, 1,200 women and children, and several hundred freed slaves; 17,000 Ottoman interred dead, plus more bodies still in the rubble (figures given for July 10th). According to the courier despatched to St. Petersburg with news of the victory, the streets were full of blood and body parts, and the stench was so bad the army could not garrison the place but had to encamp 15 miles away.

*[Davies says the Ottomans estimated 10,000 of their own dead, not massacred, but from the fighting and the explosion, and that the Russians took 4,650 prisoners and 18 galleys, losing 47 officers and 975 KIA, and 89 officers and 2,752 WIA, including 7 of general rank.]*

Among the prisoners of rank were the *seraskers* Tiagya and Mustapha Pasha, and 30 other 'officers of distinction'. (Manstein pp. 160-161).

'On the ramparts were found 82 brass cannon, 6 iron, 7 mortars, and 1 howitzer. There were taken 9 horse-tails, 8 truncheons of command, and a great quantity of very fine arms. The colours were near 300; and the booty the troops got was very considerable.' (Manstein, p.161).



[The historian Thomas Carlyle has an entertaining summary of the siege, taken from his *Life of Frederick the Great* (adding colour to the year of 1737):

'OCZAKOW, 13th [OS] JULY, 1737. Day before yesterday, Feldmarschall Munnich got to Oczakow, as he had planned, '--strong Turkish Town in the nook between the Black Sea and the estuary of the Dnieper; --'with intention to besiege it. Siegetrain, stores of every sort, which he had set afloat upon the Dnieper in time enough, were to have been ready for him at Oczakow. But the flotilla had been detained by shallows, by waterfalls; not a boat was come, nor could anybody say when they were coming. Meanwhile nothing is to be had here; the very face of the earth the Turks have burnt: not a blade of grass for cavalry within eight miles, nor a stick of wood for engineers; not a hole for covert, and the ground so hard you cannot raise redoubts on it: Munnich perceives he must attempt, nevertheless.

'On his right, by the sea-shore, Munnich finds some remains of gardens, palisades; scrapes together some vestige of shelter there (five thousand, or even ten thousand pioneers working desperately all that first night, 11th July, with only half success); and on the morrow commences firing with what artillery he has. Much outfired by the Turks inside;--his enterprise as good as desperate, unless the Dnieper flotilla come soon. July 12th, all day the firing continues, and all night; Turks extremely furious: about an hour before daybreak, we notice burning in the interior; 'Some wooden house kindled by us, town got on fire yonder,'--and, praise to Heaven, they do not seem to succeed in quenching it again. Munnich turns out, in various divisions; intent on trying something, had he the least engineer furniture;--hopes desperately there may be promise for him in that internal burning still visible.

'In the centre of Munnich's line is one General Keith, a deliberate stalwart Scotch gentleman, whom we shall know better; Munnich himself is to the right: Could not one try it by scalade; keep the internal burning free to spread, at any rate? 'Advance within musket-shot, General Keith!' orders Munnich's Aide-de-Camp cantering up. 'I have been this good while within

it,' answers Keith, pointing to his dead men. Aide-de-Camp canters up a second time: 'Advance within half musket-shot, General Keith, and quit any covert you have!' Keith does so; sends, with his respects to Feldmarschall Munnich, his remonstrance against such a waste of human life. Aide-de-Camp canters up a third time: 'Feldmarschall Munnich is for trying a scalade; hopes General Keith will do his best to co-operate!' 'Forward, then!' answers Keith; advances close to the glacis; finds a wet ditch twelve feet broad, and has not a stick of engineer furniture. Keith waits there two hours; his men, under fire all the while, trying this and that to get across; Munnich's scalade going off ineffectual in like manner:--till at length Keith's men, and all men, tire of such a business, and roll back in great confusion out of shot-range. Munnich gives himself up for lost. And indeed, says Mannstein, had the Turks sallied out in pursuit at that moment, they might have chased us back to Russia. But the Turks did not sally. And the internal conflagration is not quenched, far from it;--and about nine A.M. their Powder-Magazine, conflagration reaching it, roared aloft into the air, and killed seven thousand of them,' [Mannstein, pp. 151-156.]--

So that Oczakow was taken, sure enough; terms, life only: and every remaining Turk packs off from it, some 'twenty thousand inhabitants young and old' for one sad item.--A very blazing semi-absurd event, to be read of in Prussian military circles,--where General Keith will be better known one day.]

[Pictured above: another fine line drawing by Paul Dangel showing both the siege of Oczakov in 1737 and the smaller operation to take Kinburun the previous year. Copied from a contemporary German-produced map to be found in the Hessisches Staatsarchiv.]



### James Francis Edward Keith (1696-1758)

Second son of the 9th Earl Marischal of Scotland. Brother of the contemporary Earl Marischal, George Keith. Received a literary and legal education (U. of Edinburgh), but always considered himself destined to be a soldier. As a young lieutenant colonel, took part in the Jacobite Rising of 1715 (the Keiths were strong supporters of the Stuart kings) and had to flee abroad when the rebellion collapsed. Studied at the University of Paris for two years. Returned to Scotland in 1719 as one of the leaders of the abortive '19. Through Spanish contacts obtained a colonelcy of a Spanish regiment and participated at the Siege of Gibraltar (1726-27). Barred from high command due to his Protestant religion. But the Spanish King recommended him to Peter II of Russia. 1728 made commander of a Russian Imperial Guard regiment. Served in the War of the Polish Succession and Russo-Turkish War, attaining the rank of General in the former, and Field Marshal in the latter. Wounded in the leg at the storming of Oczakov (1737). Participated in the Russo-Swedish War (1741-43) as second-in-command to Marshal Lacy and made governor of Finland. Took as a mistress (he never married) Eva Mertens, one of his POWs, by whom he had several children. 1747 decided he was underpaid and applied for service with Prussia as a field marshal. 1749 made governor of Berlin; brother made Prussian Ambassador to Spain. Fought in the Seven Years War. Distinguished at Siege of Pirna and Battle of Lobositz (1756), conducted Siege of Prague (1757), successfully defended Leipzig (1757), present at Rossbach, led raiding force into Bohemia. Participated in Moravian campaign (1758) but health broke down. Returned to service in the autumn but was killed leading a charge at Hochkirch (October 14th, 1758).



*James Francis Edward Keith*

Münich got lucky. Not only students of the siege, but his contemporaries as well felt he should have been defeated. At least the Generalissimo did not hang back. He had a horse shot out from under him and found five bullet holes in his cape after it was all over. The action was very hot. But, as M. Rondeau, the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg, wrote, 'Let this affair be related any way it must be confessed that it has cost the Tsaritsa many more brave men than this Court cares to own' (Bain, p.259).

### Aftermath

The rest of Münich's campaign was something of an anticlimax. Bender would have to wait until next year. Indeed, the great fear was that the Ottoman relief army at Bender would be cranked up and shot out to retake the fortress. Therefore, while Oczakov was refortified, the Generalissimo, with somewhat reduced forces (minus some 20-24,000 men, including detached garrisons), moved out toward the Dniester. But the Tatars had fired the grass on the west side of the Bug and there was no forage. So instead, the army marched and countermarched up and down that river in an effort to confuse the enemy.

Oczakov was garrisoned by 2 regiments of dragoons, 12 battalions of foot, 2,000 Cossacks, and a parcel of engineers, under Major-General Bachmetev. Apart from trying to shore up the walls, they were also to dig two small retrenchments, on either side, that would eventually be joined; given the limited time factor and the nature of the ground, this work was never completed. However, the finished sections were well-constructed. Two regiments were detached to reoccupy Kinburun (presumably the Ottomans had abandoned the place during the siege).

Münich had no sooner been rejoined by Leontiev's detachment on the 12th of July than the Russians did encounter the enemy (13th July), and in force. Münich was about 60 Km from Oczakov, on the Bug, when the enemy was detected only a few kilometres away, advancing toward them.

*[That would be about halfway between Mykolaiv and Nova Odesa.]*

Having heard nothing of the Ottomans or the Tatars for some time, the Russians had become slack. They still marched in square, but to speed their operations, the baggage marched at its own pace, and foragers were detached ahead of the army with minimal security. The first thing that happened was a raid on the baggage train. Münich, defending his property, managed to chase off the Tatars with his personal escort, but some losses were suffered.

The fate of the foragers might have been worse. The officer responsible for them, Major-General Lieven, failed to have them wait for their escort – two dragoon regiments. In consequence, a party of 350 soldiers and storekeepers under Colonel Fermor was surrounded by several thousand Turks and Tatars. Dismounting his men, Fermor formed them into square and beat off several charges. When the enemy tried to burn the grass, he was able to shift his position to a spot that would not burn. Eventually a part of the advance guard came on the scene and drove the enemy away.

In this no-name skirmish, 50 Russians were killed and wounded, and 100 taken prisoner, though some were quickly freed. According to the rescued men, the enemy consisted of 5,000 Ottoman cavalry and 10,000 Tatars; they had been on the prowl for General Leontiev's column.

Meanwhile, reinforcements were arriving at Oczakov: 1,500 Zaporozhians on the 15th of July, who reconnoitred the nearby islands for enemy presence but found them all abandoned; part of the fleet on the 16th, consisting of 14 double-sloops and 70 large boats – carrying the siege equipment and ammunition (*did we miss anything?*) A few days later the Zaporozhians began the first of several naval expeditions along the coast and up the Dniester, where they sacked villages and got a certain amount of plunder, besides causing consternation at Bender.

The expectation now was that the Dnieper flotilla would come up the Bug and support the army, so much of the artillery still with the army was put under guard of two regiments at a ruined town called Andriewska (there not being enough oxen left to pull it all, anyway); Münich took the rest of the men further upstream, eventually finding good forage on the eastern bank at a place called Ziczakleya, about July 22nd.

On the 28th, someone set fire to the steppe about 16 Km from Münich's forces, but no enemy was detected. Once again, the

Russians relaxed, to their undoing. On August 1st, 1,500 Tatars swam the Bug higher up and came down on the Russian camp, which at this time was laid out on both banks of the river. They did not attack the camp directly, but rode about, scooping up (or cutting down) parties of foragers, some of whom were 8 Km from the camp without any escorts at all. The enemy had already acquired 1,000 animals before the Cossacks of the Don were sent to intercept them. By sacrificing some of their best men (100 Tatars were killed, and 20 captured), the enemy got away with their booty. Münnich ordered an investigation and wound up punishing most of the regimental commanders involved.

The Generalissimo was thinking of calling it a day. It was too late now to start a real offensive against Bender – which he had been forbidden to try, anyway – and the enemy, likewise, would not be able to start operations against Oczakov, especially since the Russians intended to retrace their steps down the river. On the 2nd of August, General Rumyantsev took the Guards, some Cossacks, and the Ukrainian *Landmiliz* and marched for the Ukraine, escorting the army's prisoners. On the 9th the second instalment of the fleet was reported to be heading down to Oczakov (the last element would arrive in late August).

*[This portion of the fleet included 48 double-sloops, 57 large boats, and 4 'cantzchibasses'.]*

On the 10th the army moved down to the confluence of the Bug and the Dnieper and camped there while Münnich inspected the cleaned-up fortress. Major-General Stoffeln, an enterprising officer, was given command of it and an 8,000-man garrison for the winter. At the end of the month, the army headed north, dispersing to regimental quarters after crossing the Dnieper at Perevolotschnia.

### Lacy & the Crimea

While the Army of Dnieper assembled itself for the campaign against Oczakov, Marshal Lacy busied himself mustering 40,000 men at Bachmut with a view to invading the Crimea from the east:

- 16,003 regular 'cavalry': 13 regiments of dragoons and mounted *Landmiliz*.
- 33,720 regular foot in 20 regiments.
- 6-700 mounted Don Cossacks, plus Cossack infantry acting as botamen.
- 9,000 Ukrainian and Sloboda Cossacks. Plus Kalmyks in unspecified numbers. (The latter were building rafts to float themselves across from the Kuban.)
- 10 field guns and 22 mortars, plus regimental guns.

With Lacy were General Levachev, lieutenant-generals Douglass, Spiegel, and Brilly, and major-generals Jerepkin, Dewitz, Brigny the Younger, and some others.

According to Davies, 26,000 of Lacy's men were a special levy, drawing 'one man from every 125 souls'; 14,700 came from the Baltic and Central garrison zones. Pike numbers were doubled and 11,000 men were issued new fusils (from the Tula factory and from Saxony); regimental gun numbers were also doubled (to 4 for the foot and 2 for the dragoons. Rear hospitals were established in four locations as well as a pharmacy dépôt; all regiments were required to have attached physicians and barbers and to stock a large quantity of rudimentary medicines.

*[Davies also notes that the Ukrainian Cossacks were required to sell their grain to the Army at a fixed price, and that the population took this as an assault on their distilling rights! (Which were indeed suspended to ensure enough grain was obtainable.)]*

In the spring of 1737, the Army of the Don assembled at Fort Paulovsky (Pavlovsk), on the east bank of the Mius, part of the Taganrog fortress complex (though Taganrog itself was in ruins). From here the army marched (May 3rd) in several columns to the Kal'mius, where it waited several days for Rear-Admiral Bredal and

the Don flotilla. Redoubts were constructed all along the route for the protection of the supply convoys.

Lacy's instructions were to distract the Tatars from the operation at Oczakov, but also to seize the key sites of Kaffa and Yenikale; the latter guarded the exit from the Sea of Azov. The bulk of the army was to march overland, but Bredal had by now assembled 320 ships and 66 Cossack 'longboats' at Azov. With these, General Levachev's division could be ferried to the Kal'mius.



*Yenikale, southeast bastion*

The Russians had some difficulty getting their fleet onto the Sea of Azov, thanks to the shallow estuary of the Don. Both in 1737 and 1738 Bredal put several hundred boats on the sea, but they were all small coastal or river craft, no match for the larger Turkish galleys (though the Russians showed great spirit in trying to tackle them). Ottoman timidity did more for the Russians than fleet actions.

*[None of Bredal's vessels drew more than four feet of water.]*

Once the Navy was afloat, Lacy moved his base to the Berda River, where he was joined by Count Douglass and the dragoon regiments, who had marched down from Bachmut. Army and Navy remained in close contact throughout the campaign. Marching to the Molotzhnie-Wodi (Molochnye Vody) River, Lacy ordered the construction of a fort to cover the crossing point and left it with a strong garrison (he also deposited the sick there). Army and Navy arrived at the Kal'mius on May 23rd.

On June 16th, after an uneventful march and the construction of additional forts along the way, the Russians arrived at Yenitchi (Genichesk or Henichesk), a peninsula that reached out toward the Spit of Arabat, almost enclosing the shallow, reedy bay known as the Sivash, whose western end terminated near Perekop. The strait of Yenitchi was narrow enough to be bridged, and in any case could be forded with the right tides. The fleet anchored 'within cannon-shot'.

A bridge was constructed with all speed. Completed on the 18th, it was immediately crossed by some of the dragoons and 3-4,000 Cossacks. Two days later the whole army was marching down the long, sandy Spit of Arabat. On the 22nd, 4,000 Kalmyks under Don Duc Olmo's son, Goldan Narma, arrived by sea from the Kuban, on rafts they had constructed during the winter.

*[At the present time, the Yenitichi strait consists of two passages, separated by an island. The accounts do not mention two bridges, so one was either fordable or nonexistent.]*

Meanwhile, the Crimean Khan, Fe'tih Geraï, had been sitting snug behind the repaired Lines of Perekop with 60,000 men, expecting a repeat of 1736. The southern terminus of the Spit of Arabat was covered by a fort (of the same name), and thither he repaired with his army when he heard of the Russians' movements. With the Ottoman base of Kaffa at his back, the Khan would heavily



outnumber the Russians, and Lacy would have no choice except to retire up the spit or fight at a disadvantage. But the Irishman fooled the Khan.

Lacy discovered a place near the Saliger (Salhir or Salghir) River, where the Sivash was extremely narrow, and could be forded by cavalry. For the foot and the train, a floating bridge was constructed out of empty water casks and the portable *chevaux-de-frise*. 2,000 dragoons and Cossacks under an officer named Khrapov continued down the Spit as a diversion. And the army crossed into the Crimea. Indeed, the Marshal had more trouble from his staff than from the enemy. Every one of them except General Spiegel opposed the scheme and urged that they return home. In reply, he called for passports to be made out for all of them and summoned an escort of 200 dragoons to protect them on their way! He waited three days before accepting his generals' apologies.

*[The Salhir, the Crimea's most important river, runs in a northeasterly direction from the southern hills, emptying into the Sivash about halfway down the Spit of Arabat.]*

The Khan, meanwhile, decided discretion was the better part of valour and pulled his army south into the hills, hotly pursued by Cossack and Kalmyk raiding parties. After sorting out his command problems, Lacy also headed south, seeking to engage the Khan's army in battle.

The principal town on his line of march was Karasbasar (Karasu-Bazar, now Bilohirsk) one of the highlights of the Crimea. It boasted 6,000 houses, 38 mosques, 2 Christian churches, 50 watermills, and several other public buildings. Half the buildings were stone. The town lies at the entrance to the valley of the Black Karasu River, a tributary of the Salhir.

28 Km northeast of this town, on the 13th of July, the Russians were engaged by a large formation of the Tatars' best horsemen, commanded by the Khan in person. But after only an hour's combat, the Tatars withdrew, pressed hard by the Cossacks and Kalmyks, who chased them for about 16 Km into the hills.

Lacy established his main camp near the site of the battle, sending his light troops into the outskirts of Karasbasar, where they committed general pillage and returned with 600 prisoners, generous booty, and much livestock. Lieutenant-General Douglass, with the vanguard of 6,000 men (dragoons, foot, and light troops), marched on the town on the 15th of July, followed by Lacy. The train and the sick were left in camp with a guard of 5,000 men.

Apparently the Tatars were still in the vicinity, because the advance was opposed, though nowhere successfully. On reaching the town the Russians discovered a fortified hilltop camp nearby that contained perhaps 12-15,000 Turks. Giving Douglass only two more dragoon regiments, Lacy ordered the town and the camp to be taken, which the Russians did handily within an hour. The Turks fled.

After levelling Karasbasar, which had been abandoned by all except its small Armenian and Greek Christian communities (most towns in the Crimea has such communities), the Russians retired about 4 Km. Lacy obviously intended to employ a classic tactic: allowing a portion of an advancing enemy army to debouch from the pass before falling on them. The Cossacks and Kalmyks were sent raiding deep into the mountains to provoke the Tatars. But neither the Tatars nor the Turks would bite.

*[The ground directly north of Karasbasar is a perfect battlefield. There is a wide stretch of flat ground that descends to the town, flanked by an escarpment on the east (plus a small river) and knobs of high ground on the west that could be occupied by artillery. Any enemy approaching from the southern hills would be visible at a great distance over a wide angle of view.]*

However, when the Russians began to return to their main camp farther north, on the 16th, the enemy intervened. Manstein and Davies differ in their narrative at this point.

Manstein cannot be relied on, as he was not present, but according to him, the enemy suddenly appears on the far side of the Karasu,

apparent moving to cut off the Russians' path of retreat, or perhaps to attack their weakly defended camp.

Seeing this, Lacy swiftly orders his vanguard forward to attack. Douglass and the van cross the Karasu about 4 Km higher up and pin the enemy. They engage in an artillery duel (which probably means Turks were present), during which the Cossacks close to contact and put in three assaults, each of which is repulsed. On the approach of Lacy with the main body, the Tatars withdraw.

The Kalmyks, ordered to flank the enemy on the Russian left, vanish, to the dismay of Lacy, but return a couple of days later with 1,000 prisoners, having paid a visit to Bacha Serai.

Davies notes that Lacy was aware the Tatars had been massed on his flank; this was one of the reasons advanced for the army's retirement. He has the action begin after the Tatars themselves crossed the Karasu; Douglass is hard pressed until the Kalmyks swing behind the enemy (presumably from the Russian right, in this case). The Kalmyks vanish in his account as well, but Lacy is aware they are in pursuit and only becomes concerned after their return is prolonged.

On the 17th the Russians arrived at their camp and Lacy called a council of war. Everyone agreed they had fulfilled their operational goals and it was resolved to retire to the Ukraine. Technically, both goals remained to be taken, but Kaffa was 50 Km away, and Yenikale 130 Km. Both lay eastward, requiring a flank march past mountains swarming with Tatars. The Don flotilla was erroneously reported wrecked in a storm, so their naval support and lines of communication were presumed gone.

*[Triangulating those two marches with a line running 28 Km north from Bilohirsk places Lacy's camp roughly halfway between his Sivash crossing point and Karasbasar. There is a tributary of the Karasu, not much of an obstacle and not featured in the battle, that flows on a line parallel to it, no more than 5 Km away. The camp probably lay between the two. From this, Davies' account that the battle took place on the east bank of the Karasu is confirmed. The area is as flat as a pancake, except for the Karasu itself, which has cut itself a shallow valley.]*

A march back up the Spit of Arabat would be too risky, so the Russians sought to cross the Sivash directly to the mainland. Five days marching north took Lacy to the shores of the Sivash opposite the Shungar (Tschungar or Chonhar) peninsula. Enroute the Russians burned 1,000 villages, and took 30,000 oxen and 100,000 sheep (so much livestock, in fact, that the market was saturated). In return, the Tatars harassed the column, picking off stray servants and several hundred horses.

Crossing the Shungar estuary proved dicey. There are three crossing points currently in existence. The one to the east is only accessible by a march along a peninsula averaging 3-4 Km across and dotted with shallow lakes and swamps. However, that point is the only one capable of being rapidly bridged, being 150 meters wide instead of 2 Km as the others are, so it is the most likely candidate (the other crossing points are modern causeways).

*[The Shungar peninsula is bulbous, with a narrow neck joining it to the Ukrainian mainland; the neck features a shallow lake that nearly cuts it off. Fortunately the Tatars made no attempt to encircle the Russians on a grand scale.]*

After a bridge of boats was laid on the 22nd and 23rd of July the army began to cross. At this, the Tatars attacked in force, aided by several thousand Turks who had marched up from Kaffa. The Russian rearguard was assaulted several times, but though composed mostly of light troops supported by artillery, they kept the enemy at bay and finally drove them off leaving 100 enemy dead on the field. After this, the army crossed in safety on the 25th of July.

*[Manstein's editor notes the flimsy nature of the bridge: a mere 15 Cossack boats bouyed up with empty casks.]*

The month of August was spent at the crossing of the Molotchnie-Wodi, where, it will be remembered, a fort had been built. The marshal did not want to return to the Ukraine just yet. He had heard

rumours that the Khan of the Krim Tatars was intending to exit the Crimea via Perekop and either attack him, or possibly Oczakov, with about 30-40,000 men. Parties were sent all the way to Perekop to reconnoitre, and from prisoners it was learned that the Khan had indeed come out, but after learning that Lacy was occupying a fortified position on the Molotchnie-Wodi, he had given up his ideas and returned home.

*[That particular river had very high banks near the sea and it would not have been possible for the Tatars to make an opposed crossing to attack the Russian camp. The Khan was deposed for his timidity and replaced by Mengli II Geraï, who reigned until 1740.]*

### Naval Actions

A number of naval actions took place during the summer between the Don flotilla and the Ottoman Azov flotilla (now based at Kaffa). On the 4th of June a small boat under command of an able seaman beat off an attack by a Turkish *firkat* – not the smallest of warships. On the 29th of June the captain of a Russian vessel deliberately grounded it, evacuated the crew, and then, when the Turks tried to board it, blew the vessel up (the captain escaped). The biggest action occurred on June 28th, off the 'point of Kiskow' (or the spit of Barutchi), near Yenitchi.

Bredal had 100 sail under his command, all double-sloops or smaller. The Ottomans appeared with 2 men-of-war, 13 galleys, and 47 half-galleys, bent on interfering with Lacy's advance down the Spit of Arabat. The *Capitan Pasha's* pennant was observed. Bredal had been sailing toward Barutchi when he spotted the Turks. Not wishing to engage on the open sea, he moved his fleet inshore and anchored it. The bomb vessels were warped even closer in, and a battery of 15 guns (3-lbers to 12-lbers) was mounted on the cliffs above Yenitchi. The Turks rounded the spit about 2pm and engaged the Russians around 5pm.

*[The shore of the Black Sea is lined with cliffs – the Ukraine is really a plateau, and the rivers cut deep ravines as they reach the sea. Yenitchi was at the base of the plateau.]*



*Cossacks boarding a Turkish pirate vessel*

The action lasted until 8pm. With night coming on, the Ottomans withdrew, having suffered more damage – most of their shots went high, while they suffered plunging fire from the shore battery. Next morning, at 8am, the Turks returned for another three-hour engagement. The Pasha's vessel was in the van and pressed the closest, taking heavy damage. A number of the other Ottoman vessels were badly hit, and so the Turks withdrew. The Russians suffered only 30 casualties. Although the enemy remained in the offing until 11am, nothing further occurred; the Turks sailed away eastward. A sloop sent after them reported no contact and it was afterward learned that they had returned to Kaffa.

*[Manstein's editor has a long note (pp. 179-180) clarifying the general's otherwise obscure account of the crossing of the Shungar. In this note the editor also points out that the Don flotilla was – must have been – actively engaged in the Sivash (passing through the strait of Yenitchi), because it*

*provided the boats for the bridging to the spit of Arabat and the escape via the Shungar.] The Second Siege of Oczakov*

Lacy broke camp in September and went into quarters along the Donets and the Don in October. The Tatars did not pursue him; they had other plans. Münnich, too, by this time had crossed the Dnieper, headed for the Lines of the Ukraine. The Turks felt it would be safe to retake Oczakov.

It will be recalled that Major-General Stoffeln had been appointed commandant of the fortress. He had a lot of work ahead of him. Much had to wait on the arrival of convoys down the Dnieper, still subject to delay from unseasonably low water. Apart from improving the outer works, the place had to be made fit for habitation; men were still picking up diseases in September, from corpses buried in the rubble. By the time the Turks arrived, in October, Stoffeln's original 8,000-man garrison had dwindled to 5,000, 1,000 of whom were on the sick list. He would be facing 40,000 angry men.

The Ottoman counterattack was led by *serasker* Jentsch Ali (Jenc-Ali) Pasha, reputed to be one of their more able commanders. Though an attack was always feared, the Russians had little intelligence, and the first indication one was immanent came in early October. A Turkish flotilla came out of the west on October 6th. Two days later it anchored off Kinburun for two hours and landed some cavalry. Then they upped anchor and sailed away. It was afterward heard that they sailed into a storm.

The Ottoman fleet would try several times to deal with the Dnieper flotilla, which materially assisted the guns of the fortress, besides preventing enemy ships from interdicting the Oczakov-Kinburun ferry or directly bombarding the fortress. The pasha in command of the more powerful Turkish flotilla was ultimately beheaded for his failure. Manstein says there were never more than 14 enemy galleys present at one time.

*[Sources other than Manstein state that the Russian flotilla, which had been intended for action on the Black Sea – and which included several brigantines – suffered enough damage to prevent it doing so, which suggests at least one serious action took place.]*

The next act took place on the 9th, when the same body of Turkish cavalry appeared on the Oczakov shore and attempted to surprise the redoubt nearest the liman. They were spotted in time and driven off with heavy fire.

On the 15th, Cossacks reported the presence of the main body of the enemy landing from a flotilla about 40 Km away to the west. (Just outside the zone of scorched earth.) Stoffeln tightened up security and called a council of war, where it was unanimously decided to fight to the end without giving or receiving quarter. Two days later the enemy's van appeared.

The Turkish army consisted of 20,000 Turks under Jentsch Ali supported by the Sultan of Akkerman and Khan Begli Geraï, leading 20-30,000 Tatars of the Bielogorod (Akkerman), Krim, and Bujak Hordes. Apart from the Krim Tatars, these men were not vassals of the Crimean Khan but of the Porte.

*[Ferrying such numbers was not impossible for the Ottomans. They would be using galleys and barges, embarking the troops at Akkerman near the mouth of the Dniester. Davies says the Tatars were all Crimeans, but Begli was not their khan; likely he was the khan of the Bujaks, though it could be he is the same man as the Sultan of Akkerman, because the Bielogorod Horde were quite powerful.]*

The Turks invested the entire length of the defences, camping within a cannon-shot and a half of the glacis. Immediately, bodies of horse began probing the redoubts and skirmishing with the Cossacks, who, like many of the troops, had been living outside the fortress. The bulk of the enemy began digging in. Their field batteries began firing on the night of the 16th.

The first real assault came on the 17th. That morning, Stoffeln had withdrawn all his men within the outer lines, which were still under construction in places. 6,000 Janissaries, emerging from trenches

dug very close to the glacis, attacked two spots on the lines, one with 1,500 men and the other with the remainder. The Russians sallied against the smaller force with 400 men and two cannon under Brigadier Bratke, took the column in flank, and repulsed it. The Turks fled to join their other column, were pursued by the same 400 men, careened into their compatriots, and carried the lot off in headlong flight; the Russians chased them right up to the Turkish batteries. This action cost the Ottomans four standards, 400 men, and two barrels of powder.

*[Davies says the Russians pursued with 1,000 men and may have killed 2-3,000 Turks, losing 150 of their own. This likely combines the results of the action above with the one described next.]*

At 10pm the Turks tried again. A large body came up within musket shot and began a duel with the defenders. Under cover of this a smaller group got into one of the walled gardens, emplaced a cannon and mortar, and began to fire on the *fleche* of the barracks of the Preobrazhenski Regiment, which lay beyond the glacis. The Turks were not routed out until 2am.

On the 18th, the Ottomans unmasked their siege batteries. The next morning the commandant of Kinburun (a Colonel Wedel) brought over 800 men to aid the Russian defenders. He reported that the Tatars had appeared in front of his fort, but had attempted nothing (apparently the Khan boasted that his men would raze Kinburun, but lost his nerve).

The Turks made another assault that day, breaking through the so-called Ismailov Gate (the surrounding ditch had been partially filled due to 'bad weather' – it was pouring rain during most of the siege). They made it into the covered way of the fortress, but once again the garrison chased them back to their own entrenchments, killing 500 and taking three colours. This time the enemy brought up reserves to repulse the Russians in turn.

*[The accounts name a number of 'gates'. These should not be confused with the (inner) town gates, but were rather entry points set in the outer defences, either associated with a redoubt or with a regimental barracks, and secured by earthworks and chevaux-de-frise.]*

Later that day the Turks opened their third and largest battery, shelling the town with large mortars, and 18- and 24-lber cannon. All that night they worked on a new entrenchment, complete with redoubts, on a rise of ground opposite the Ismailov Gate. It was fully manned by morning on the 20th.

The 20th itself was spent in artillery duels, but in the evening the Russians sallied on the liman-side and cleared the enemy out of all the posts he had gained. 150 Turks were killed, four standards were taken, and six guns were spiked. But the affair cost the life of the sallying commander. The same night, a party of 50 snuck through the Turkish lines right into the enemy camp and began running through the tent lines killing anyone they found. Unfortunately, they stopped to plunder and only six men made it back.

The 21st of October saw more of the same. A small explosion within the fortress occurred when powder barrels were ignited by a shell, but the fire was contained (most of the combustible material having burned in the first siege). Two Turkish galleys tried to bombard the fort but suffered heavy damage from the fortress guns.

The 22nd and 23rd were much the same. A few men were killed, one or two explosions occurred, and Turkish galleys were sighted (7 on the 2nd) but did not approach. On the 24th, the enemy completed the greater part of their works, which included an entrenchment extending to the sea, a communication trench between the Gate of Preobrazhensky and their camp, and traverses in the ditch and covered way of the fortress.

Two hours before dawn on the 25th, the Turks intensified their fire, both cannon and musket, on the Ismailov Gate. At dawn, 6,000 men attacked the Russian redoubts nearest the sea. After an hour of stiff fighting the Turks took the redoubts and penetrated to the Kalantscha, a key position, not otherwise identified, but from the name, probably a tower that featured as part of the town walls.

Stoffeln sent in a 1,000-man counterattack supported by portable mortars (6-lbers) that chased the Turks all the way to their camp. This time, the panic became general; some Turks even fled their camp before their officers, by dint of killing deserters, managed to rally them and counterattack. At the end of it all, the Turks lost half their assault force – 3,000 men – and the Russians lost only 150.

For the next two days the Turks maintained a heavy bombardment, but since the town was already a shell and most of the defenders were on the walls or dug in along the lines, little damage was done. Nothing of note happened on the 28th. On the 29th, the Turks set off two mines under the Bastion of Löwendahl, but these did no damage. They were not deep enough – obviously the Turks were having as much fun with the rocky ground as the Russians had had.

The mine explosions occurred an hour before dawn. At dawn the besiegers opened up with all their guns and launched another assault. The column feinted against a redoubt above the liman, then wheeled right and tried to rush the Ismailov Gate. Involved were all the Turkish foot and 5,000 dismounted *sipahis* (which suggests the Turks had suffered heavy losses in infantry). 300 of the attackers got through the palisades and reached the gate, and another 100 penetrated to the Christoph Gate and a nearby water-gate.

Counterattacking furiously, the Russians, under the personal command of Stoffeln, inflicted 4,000 casualties, many of them killed when the defenders sprung two counter-mines. When those went up, an even greater number ran away, despite all their officers could do. The Russians took 'several' colours, four horse-tail standards, and a quantity of siege equipment. Manstein records the anachronistic use of pikes in this action: a small column of Russians flanked the attempt on the water-gate and fended the sabre-wielding attackers off by presenting pikes like a phalanx of old.

The 30th of October was the last day of the siege. Disheartened by the failure of their last assault, the besiegers' guns were quiet for the rest of the 29th. They resumed firing on the 30th, and the Turks made a great show of setting out fascines, scaling ladders, and the like, but three hours after sundown the guns stopped. Observers saw a number of fires in the camp, and reconnaissance parties reported that the enemy had decamped.

Stoffeln feared a trap, but on the 31st, a reconnaissance in force confirmed the departure of the Turks and their Tatar allies; they also reported that the enemy had abandoned a great deal of ammunition and all their siege equipment. A party of Zaporozhians who had gone to scout Bender turned up and reported seeing the enemy about 16 Km away from Oczakov on the other side of a river called the Berosuka (Bereskova). On November 1st the enemy was said to be 40 Km away; obviously they were not coming back. At that point Stoffeln ordered his men out and they began policing up the battlefield.

Their failed siege cost the Turks 20,000 men: 10,000 to illness and 10,000 in combat. Conditions for them cannot have been pleasant. The autumnal rains were extremely heavy and the area around Oczakov was still a 'desert' from the logistics point of view. Their galleys had to be very careful when attempting to resupply them (Manstein does not mention any such efforts, but they must have occurred – it would explain the presence of otherwise 'timid' Turkish ships up the coast.)

The indiscipline of their army probably had most to do with the failure. Unable to make headway against the Russians, the rank and file lost heart. Despite the usual stereotyping, Turkish leadership could be remarkably democratic (put another way, it could only be draconian if a majority approved). Apparently, after the last attack 10,000 men, undoubtedly Tatars, simply went home. Given the casualty rate, that left 10-20,000 still under arms. Some deserters were beheaded, but this gruesome example made no difference. Those who remained griped that their commanders were trying to kill them all, and murmured other things, like, 'what idiot started this siege so late in the season'. The 'idiot' being the *serasker*.

*[Davies notes all this but adds a suggestion that the serasker may have been ordered to retire because his men were needed on the Danube Front.]*

The defenders' own losses were not slight. Stoffeln lost 2,800 men – or 60% of his force (4,000 plus 800 reinforcements, with only 2,000 left standing at the end). Those who remained were emaciated from poor diet and lack of sleep.

*[Manstein reports only 2 Russian deserters. Although desertion to the Turks was not really an option anyway, the Russian Army in this period was remarkable for an extremely low percentage of desertions.]*

Stoffeln had not been hung out to dry, however. Shortly after the siege began, General Leontiev was on the march with 10,000 men, and several more regiments were dispatched after him. However, as they did not arrive until the siege was lifted, the glory was all Stoffeln's. He was rewarded by promotion to lieutenant-general, and a generous grant of lands in the Ukraine. Several other officers were promoted, and the whole garrison received a pay bonus.

### After Action Report

All in all, the year of 1737 went much better for Russia than 1736, though no grand strategic plan was fulfilled. Russian arms had made a good showing; it should not be forgotten that the summer of 1737 saw the Imperials and the Russians negotiating with the Ottomans at Nemirov, not so far to the north of where Münnich's army was hovering, and the loss of Oczakov had some bearing on the course of the discussions (though negated by the Imperials' end-of-season gaffes on the Danube).

*[Nemirov, which began as a tentative peace conference spawned after Russia's heavy losses in 1736, and encouraged by the Imperials as a means of discovering Russian intentions before joining them in the war (or not), became an exercise in futility after the mediators – the Imperials – invaded Bosnia.]*

On the credit side of the ledger, Münnich's reputation had reached a new high, and the mouth of the Dnieper had been secured. It was hoped that Oczakov could be made into a permanent Russian base, isolating the Crimea. The performance of Lacy and his men, too, was outstanding, and Stoffeln's stand at Oczakov was epic. The Generalissimo said of the Russian Soldier, 'I doubt whether there are in the whole world any other troops who could sustain such continuous fatigues with so much patience' (Bain p.261).

On the debit side, the Army of the Dnieper alone had lost 11,000 regulars, mainly to disease (and the ubiquitous fast-days), and 5,000 Cossacks. Perhaps double that number of non-combatants had been killed.

Münnich was accused, unfairly, of feeding his men sourdough instead of the proper ration of biscuit and oatcakes; he protested that his diet had been the same as his men's, but the Tsaritsa rapped his knuckles anyway. In the end, however, the originator of the rumour was discovered and severely punished. The noisome Hesse-Homburg was blamed for the loss, through ill-usage, of 15,000 yokes (pairs) of artillery oxen and an uncounted number of horses.

*[Hesse-Homburg's failure to provide replacement animals led to many of the teams being worked to death. Things got so bad that only a third of the artillery could be in motion at any one time; every few miles the surviving teams would be unyoked and sent back to haul up another third.]*

It should also be mentioned, in passing, that Don Duc Olmo and his Kalmyk horde played their part this year, and, that besides sending his son to serve in the Crimea, the Khan subjugated the remainder of the Kuban to the Tsaritsa's authority, with considerable gratuitous violence.

### Winter 1737-38

Wintertime. A crisp, 40°-below breeze (ahhh...brisk!) Stepping out, of a crystal morning, chipping the icicles from one's beard, to find the comrades from last night's guard duty frozen fast in the most amusing poses. The tinkle of sleigh bells announcing the arrival of fresh supplies of month-old bricks of frozen horsemeat. And in the

evening? A visit from the neighbours, those wild and crazy Tatars, a roaring fire, and the smell of burning serf.

Of course, that was just on the front lines. In St. Petersburg they were tossing lumps of bread out the palace windows for the sport of watching starving street-people fight over them, trying to find out how much Princess Hiltikov had spent on her new dress, and trading insults with the Habsburg envoy.

The Houses of Romanov and Habsburg were now allied, and already each suspected the other of seeking to renege on their new pact and make a separate peace. The Imperials also feared the Russians were going to make hay in the Balkans in a year or two, unless the Ottomans (the common enemy) did something about it. Much of the bad blood was personal. The Court of Vienna hated Münnich and he reciprocated. Thus, for the coming year, the two allies did no more than second officers to observe each other's activities.

*[They had done so in 1737, too, and the Austrian observer, colonel Barenklau, had made disparaging remarks, repeated by the Imperial envoy at St. Petersburg, in the hearing of the Generalissimo. Something to the effect that the Russian generals were only fit to be captains of grenadiers. The gaffe did not improve relations.]*

### Harvesting the Steppe: the Khan's Grand Raid, February 1738

The Tatars were nothing if not persistent (*man, these guys are like cockroaches*). They gave the Russian Army no peace. But there was really nothing else for them to do. Apart from avenging their honour, they had no homes any more, and precious little livestock. Their latest Khan feared – rightly – that his authority would be eroded if he could not provide some booty for his followers.

A number of small raids by individual Tatar bands occurred every year (in peace time, too), but February of 1738 witnessed the largest of the war, in which an estimated 40,000 Nogai, Krim, and Bujak Tatars took part, under the command of the Khan of the Crimea himself.

The Khan's first idea (or so it seemed from the Russian perspective) was to break through the Lines of the Ukraine, make a deep penetration, and destroy everything in their path. But when he approached the Lines, he feared that the Russian would cut off his escape route. This assessment was undoubtedly correct. Instead, he marched across the front of the Lines to Izyum. Here the Lines ended. Furthermore, the ground was flat and open for many miles.

Münnich had taken steps to meet such a raid. In winter quarters this year, the Army was dispersed along the entire 'front', from the Dnieper to the Don. Lacy's Army of the Don covered the section from that river north to Izyum, while his Kalmyk allies ranged the Kuban. The Grand Army covered the rest of the ground. The garrison of the Lines remained in its positions, augmented by additional militia forces, while the regulars acted as 'fire brigades' to counter any breakthroughs. Crucially, the hussars and Cossacks were deployed deep within Tatar territory to provide early warning. Leontiev (and then Keith) commanded the Don Army's section, and General Rumyantsev the remainder. The western end of the Lines was believed to be the most threatened, so here, the defence was composed of 'brigade groups' of all arms, led by general officers who were given discretionary powers. A strong reserve of cavalry was held, under Lowendahl, in Sloboda Ukraine.

Establishing a base on the Donets, the Tatars sent out strong flying columns to raid far and wide, but though these burned some villages and took some slaves, Rumyantsev and his *kampfgruppen* (under Philosov, Douglass, and the ubiquitous Spiegel) quickly repulsed them. Münnich, who had just returned from St. Petersburg, set out from Poltava and led a large portion of the army against the Khan. The latter withdrew in good time, but taken all together, the Russians succeeded in recovering the better part of the Tatars' booty. The rest of the winter was spent in preparing for the next campaign, due to open in April.



## 1738: Black Sea, Black Death

*[For the campaign of 1738 we are fortunate in not only having General Manstein's history, but the daily journal of the Earl of Crawford, who joined Münnich's forces as a volunteer before transferring to the Danube front for 1739. This permits a closer look at the routines of campaigning than the other sources allow. There are a few discrepancies with Manstein's account; Crawford has been followed here when possible, (though his journal is incorrectly titled '1739').]*

### Go Your Own Way

Bain describes the campaigns of 1738 as 'completely barren'. On closer examination they appear as an immediate victory for the Ottoman Empire and a period of fruitful education for the Russians.

During the course of 1737, Russian strategic direction made a shift. They now had an ally to deal with. The Imperials were reluctant participants. Their 'machine' was in the shop for repairs after the War of the Polish Succession. During the spring and early summer, they had even tried to negotiate peace between the Russians and the Ottomans, though this was at least partly an attempt to divine Russian intentions toward the Balkans. If the Imperials were to intervene, they wanted to be the senior partner in that theatre. But in the event, each ally did as it pleased.

The Imperials decided that it would be sufficient to take the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Serbia – part of which they already controlled, and establish a defensive line anchored on the fortresses of Nish (on the road to Sophia and Istanbul) and Vidin, which blocked the Danube. They took Nish by surprise but could not get to Vidin in time and settled for holding the Danube at their own fortress of Orsova.

But the Bosnians proved a tough nut, 20,000 militia throwing a slightly larger professional army right out of their province. This left Serbia open to an attack from the rear, and Nish was let go, though not by choice. By the winter of 1737-38, the Imperials were holding the line of the Sava-Danube and urgently requesting aid, preferably in the form of a Russian corps.

According to the 1726 defensive treaty between Russia and the House of Habsburg, each side was committed to send 30,000 men to support the other. But the wording was tricky. The corps would function as 'auxiliaries', which meant under the leadership of the dominant member of the alliance. The Imperials tried to argue that the dominant partner should be determined by theatre – the Imperials on the Danube and the Russians in the Ukraine. They needed the help and the Russians did not, so an auxiliary corps of Russians should be sent to them. The Russians took the view that the Imperials were a client state of Russia and that their whole offensive in the Balkans was in aid of Russian aims.

The Generalissimo opposed the Imperialists' scheme. It was not practical. Münnich's rational objections also masked the fact that he would be in a subordinate position if he went himself, that the Russians would be subordinate to the Imperials in any case (and probably wind up doing most of the fighting), and that if 30,000 men were sent away, he would be unable to conduct any operations of note on his own account. He also, as has been repeatedly stressed, hated Vienna. Such issues were 'taken as read' by all concerned. He had his way, of course, but promised to aid the Imperials by an invasion of Moldavia, which was the next item on the Russian checklist anyway.

*[Besides, the Imperials had 30,000 men of their own in Transylvania – but those men were needed to make sure the Russians did not try anything funny with 'Austria's sphere of influence'. Of course, when Münnich's army threatened to invade Moldavia, he pinned the Siebenburgen Korps as effectively as he pinned the Turks!]*

### Bender or Bust

The Ottoman fortress of Bender, or Bendery, was the target of choice. Taking this position, located on the middle Dniester, would cut the Bujak Horde off from their Turkish allies, and secure the previous year's gains. Münnich aimed to march west and strike the Dniester north of the fortress, near Rashkov (Rascov). The Grand Army would cross the river and then march south, rather than attempt a frontal attack against the fortress, which lay on the far bank. Arriving at the river at this point would also allow him the option of changing targets and marching north to the complementary fortress of Khotin, on the upper Dniester.

*[Khotin was also the target of choice if a link-up with the Imperials seemed likely. Though far to the north of current operations, in terms of march timetables it was the best spot. However, getting there by a direct route would also involve a significant violation of Polish territory. By marching on Raskov, the Russians would be about 100 Km from Khotin, and 130 Km from Bender.]*

As in 1737, the army was to concentrate at Perevolotschnia before crossing the Dnieper. The first general rendezvous would be made at a camp called Mischournoi Rog on the banks of the River Omelnick, near its confluence with the Dnieper, some 50 Km southwest of Poltava. From here, they would march west to the Bug. After the Bug there were no major rivers to cross before the Dniester, but the lands were desolate, and probably full of Tatars.

Much of this route was very close to the Polish border, and indeed, during the campaign the Muscovites would cross the border more than once, though officially their route led through a recognized 'demilitarized zone' that had originally belonged to the Zaporozhian Cossacks. On the one hand, the Tsaritsa wished to avoid antagonising the Poles, but on the other, it was felt that the Army was powerful enough and the border porous enough that the Poles would not interfere. Besides, the Russians could claim that the Tatars were a common enemy, since they had crossed the border several times last winter, and even plundered some Polish villages because they could not get booty from the Russians. The Russians also took the trouble to hunt bandits, for the benefit of the Polish peasantry.

*[The Army signed bonds with the Polish authorities promising they would not occupy the region. The Russians bore some responsibility for the bandits, since they appeared behind the army, and justified their banditry in the name of patriotism, even when they robbed Poles.]*

Münnich's subordinates included *General-anchef* Rummyantsev (a late arrival who had charge of a Grand Convoy of provisions, remounts, and recruits), lieutenant-generals Sagrafski (2nd Division), Karl Biron (3rd Division), Löwendahl (Artillery), and Adjutant-General Gustavus Biron (the Guards and 1st Division), and major-generals the Prince of Brunswick-Lüneburg (the Tsaritsa's husband), Lieven, Bouterlin, the Prince of Holstein-Beck, Keyserling (sent off to Oczakov, he rejoined the army later in the campaign), Fermor (QMG), Magnus Biron, Philosophov, Chrouzcheff, Stockman, and Prince Repnin, among others. Lieutenant-General Stoffeln continued in his command at Oczakov. The Commissariat-General of War remained Prince Troubetskoi. Hesse-Homburg would not be seen again – first, he had just got married, and second, his performance had been so dismal that no one wanted him back. General Keith was likewise out of the picture, in his case because of the wound he received at Oczakov, but he was promoted to *General-anchef* and given the governorship of Poltava, a critical post.

Break up from winter quarters was set for the 6th of April, after the ice on the rivers had melted. Münnich himself left Poltava and arrived at Perevolotschnia on the 4th. General Manstein records that the army assembled at Perevolotschnia during the remainder of April, and began crossing to the west bank on April 17th. Crawford's journal records a continual stream of regiments and commanders arriving at Perevolotschnia, crossing a bridge of 85 boats (which took five days to build) and entering camp at Mischournoi Rog, while flotillas of river craft, some of brigantine

size, passed down the Dnieper enroute to Oczakov and Kinburun. Vice Admiral Simiavin was in the process of assembling a substantial fleet, hoping to clear the western reaches of the Black Sea and support the Army on the Dniester.

Crawford reports that the Dnieper continued to rise throughout this period, facilitating the passage of the cataracts – a reversal of last year. The bridge could be swung open to allow the ships through. A waystation was established at the Isle of Malleschoffky, near Kazykerman, to support both the forts at the mouth of the Dnieper and to provide some contact with Field Marshal Lacy's army, which was to enter the Crimea once more.

Oczakov's garrison, brought to a low state by the winter siege and generally bad conditions, received 3,500 reinforcements but barely managed to retain its official strength of 5,000 even with further drafts of men. Their meagre artillery park was augmented by the discovery of five 6-lbers and some shot that the Turks had buried nearby. Supplies there remained low, because of the late break up of ice on the Dnieper.

While the army was assembling, reconnaissance parties of Cossacks, mostly Zaporozhians, but also the Tchougievski Cossacks (Kalmyk Christian converts) and some Malorussians, sought for news of the enemy. Reports were also received from the Zaporozhian Sich, and from Oczakov. Enemy contact was minimal, though the odd prisoner or escaped slave was taken and the occasional band of Tatars was chased off. Reports from envoys further afield came via Kiev.

It seemed that the enemy was not yet capable of offensive action. The Tatars were exhausted after their abortive Grand Raid of the past winter, with the Tatars of Bielgorod (Akkerman) reputedly (according to a Tatar caught with a Kalmyk woman and 16 horses) being stuck in the Crimea waiting for transports to take them home – they had lost most of their mounts during the raid.

The Turks were still mustering and the Grand Vizier had only just left Constantinople for Adrianople with about 2,000 Janissaries. It was unclear whether he would proceed against Russia or the Imperials, though the bridging of the Danube was to take place at the town of Tartakoi, which suggested an eastward march.

No large parties of either Turks or Tatars were otherwise reported outside the Crimea; behind the Dniester, Khotin and Bender apparently had strong garrisons, and a bridge was being thrown over that river at the latter place, presumably in anticipation of a general advance later on. But the enemy troops were reported to be mutinous and on edge: on the one hand, desertions were occurring on a daily basis, while on the other hand, a party of Tatars had massacred officials at the town of Doubasar (Dubasari) on the suspicion that they were in league with the Muscovites.

*[Tartakoi has changed its name and disappeared from the gazeteer. It was likely just downstream from Izmil. Doubasar is on the Dniester, 50 Km upstream from Bender.]*

Münnich himself entered the camp of Mischournoi Rog on the 16th of April. A constant stream of couriers passed up and down the Dnieper, but those from the Court always sounded the same refrain: hurry up and get on with it. Communication was opened, by means of a relay of officers, with the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Imperial Army; Lacy established his own, even longer line of communication with Belgrade. That was about all that could be done to facilitate a 'joint offensive'.

On the 18th, the Coronation of the Tsaritsa was celebrated with a dawn parade by the whole army outside the camp, and Divine Service by the chaplain of the Archangelgorodski Dragoons (who gave a 'learned discourse'). The ceremony ended with a triple discharge of musketry and cannon fire, followed by Dinner with the Generalissimo (for the Quality, that is – four tables of 80 'covers' each), royal healths drunk to the sound of cannon and trumpets, topped by a 'very satisfactory' ball.

On the 19th of April, a 'hurricane' out of the north brought several days of high winds, rain, and extreme cold, lasting until the 23rd. This delayed the arrival of a considerable body of recruits and remounts sent from Moscow. Also expected were Ataman Froloff and a body of 4,000 Don Cossacks; Froloff wrote to say not to wait, he would catch up. More Cossacks and detachments of Ukrainian *Landmiliz* (205 and 671 men respectively) were taking up posts all along the Dnieper. Prodded by St. Petersburg, Münnich began his advance the day after the storm – April 24th.

Already, a new camp on the River Omelnick had been established 9 Km from Mischournoi Rog, and on the 24th it was occupied by the 2nd division under Sagraiski. But it was not until the 30th that Münnich himself arrived, on the heels of yet more stores, pontoons, recruits, remounts, ammunition, Koscheroy Ataman Belitski and 1,200 Zaporozhians, an experimental bridge designed by General Fermor, and a mobile 'forgery'.

Basic rations were to last until November 1st, but the Zaporozhians were authorized to sell meat and fish to the army while it was in their territory, and sutlers, who had not been present in 1737, were permitted. The Commissariat was expanded.

On the 26th of April, the Tchougievski Cossacks had reported finding hundreds of Tatar tracks along the banks of the Tschernoy Toschlick stream. The next day came another prod from the Court; the Grand Vizier was said to be crossing the Danube with the goal of engaging the Russians (in fact he was still mustering his reluctant army, but four pashas had been sent to coordinate with local forces along the Dniester). Jentsch Ali Pasha, commander of the Sultan's cavalry corps, had been tasked with an offensive against Belgrade. The campaign against the Imperials in the Banat was under the authority of the Pasha of Vidin (later to be Grand Vizier, Hacı İvaz Mehmed Pasha), accompanied by the rebel Transylvanian prince Rákóczi. One Jossim Pasha was ordered to drive the Imperials out of Wallachia.

*[The use of Rákóczi had been suggested to the current Grand Vizier by the Comte de Bonneval. Unfortunately, this son of one of that province's great heroes was not a man the Romanians would rally around.]*

On the 29th, the 1st division marched into the camp at Omelnick. The army was then paid up to the end of April, 100,000 roubles having just arrived from Moscow. The day Münnich arrived in camp, the 30th, the Grand Vizier was reported to be at Ghilipoli (*not Gallipoli*), but his army was reputedly in sad shape. Word also came that Lacy had marched out of his winter quarters at Fort Bachmut on April 20th.

On the 1st of May, General Rumyantsev arrived on the Dnieper with the van of the Grand Convoy, and the 3rd division entered the camp at Omelnick. The 2nd division would move up on the 2nd, and the Train on the 4th. More forces continued to arrive: vast quantities of stores, pack animals, numbers of recruits, and several more regiments, including 3 battalions and 3 squadrons of the Guard, and 9 *Landmiliz* regiments. Apparently, there was a shortage of mounts, and the new recruit levy (of 1 in every 98 households) had brought in many undersized and under aged men, who had to be processed and exchanged with the qualified men in garrison.

Reconnaissance continued to be spotty but all signs pointed to an equally slow start by the Muslim powers.

### The March Begins

As of the 15th, Crawford reports the composition of the army on the ground to be:

- 3,158 Guards in 3 battalions (1 from each regiment).
- 3 squadrons of the Guard du Corps (*sic*: a similar formation).
- 600 cuirassiers (Münnich's and Brunswick's half-regiments).
- 25,850 dragoons in 18 dragoon.
- 50,580 foot in 24 regiments (2 battalions each).

- 9,683 Landmiliz in 9 regiments.
- 900 hussars in 2 (Hungarian and Serbian).
- Several hundred Wallachian and Moldavian volunteers under Prince. Cantemir's son, Constantin.
- 500 Chuguev (Tchougievski) Cossacks (baptised Kalmyks/Tatars).
- 1,000 'regular' Cossacks and 7,000 assorted Ukrainian Cossacks, being 2 regiments of Chompaneilschick Cossacks, 5 companies of Hobodes Cossacks and the Achtirk Cossacks, plus 4 regiments of Malorussian Cossacks.
- 1,826 Zaporozhian Cossacks.
- 4,000 Don Cossacks.
- 3,000 artillerists, engineers, and miners.
- 200 regimental guns, 63 field guns, 18 large siege guns and 80 mortars.
- 36 pontoons.

The Train consisted of:

- 50,439 draught horses and remounts, 16,201 pairs of bullocks, and 409 camels
- 60 cannon, 4 howitzers, and 10 mortars
- 178 cases of grenades and charges
- 14 cases of bombs
- 250 bombs loaded on wagons
- 144 ammunition wagons (fully loaded)
- 343 other wagons (including 53 wagon loads of bridging material)
- 36 pontoons
- 39,924 *boisseaux* of meal, 6,510 of biscuit, and 2,211 of grease
- 21,555 *quintals* of salt, 131 of oatmeal

To which were added 1,116 recruits and 270 remounts. In addition to the stores mentioned, every regiment had been ordered to start with two months internal supply.

*[According to Davies, a total of 135,000 men. Manstein estimated the army, including Cossacks and other detached parties, to be under 50,000 men.]*

Remaining as security for the Ukraine were 2 experimental cuirassier regiments (undermanned and poorly trained), 2 regular regiments, 6 *Landmiliz* regiments, some hussars, and 16,000 virtually worthless Ukrainian Cossacks.

With the arrival of the *Landmiliz* regiments, the Guard, and the Grand Convoy, there was no longer any excuse for delay, and the Army of the Dnieper (hereafter referred to as the Grand Army) set out, crossing the Omelnick River on the 18th of May. Once on the other side, it halted again and began constructing a redoubt. On the 20th, Münnich put the army through its paces, apparently to his satisfaction.

### Marching with Münnich

Over the coming days the army settled into its march routine. An advance guard, variously described as 5 or 7 foot regiments, plus bodies of irregulars, led by QMG Fermor and accompanied by the bridging train and the quartermasters, would march out early to identify defiles, locate and establish crossing points, mark out a camp, and dig wells. Later that day, or perhaps after a day's delay, depending on the situation, the main body would arrive and occupy the new camp.

When possible, marches were made from river to river, and the bridging train would start work at the new site. Sometimes camp had to be made on the near side of the river, sometimes the bridges

would be quickly set up and it could be made on the other side, sometimes a camp was laid out on both sides. 3-4 bridges was the norm, a mix of pontoons and empty water casks (that could then be filled when the bridges were taken up again). Both sides of the crossing would be fortified with a couple of redoubts containing grenadiers and artillery. Sometimes ramps had to be cut in the banks to facilitate the movement of heavily laden carts and the guns. When possible, the camp would be laid out near the confluence of two rivers, so that a) it would be less work to transport the bridges, and b) both flanks of the army were covered.

The army marched in columns, by division if the region was safe, but once on the steppe, or after enemy scouts had been reported, the divisions would march together in three squares, with each division's baggage in its center (or occasionally on the edges in order to form a 'wagonburg'). A screen of irregulars and grenadier companies covered the intervals between the divisions. The same order of march was observed each day; indeed, on their retreat later in the season, the army did not 'turn around', it merely reversed direction.

Usually, two divisions would follow the advance guard: the 3rd and then the 1st. The 2nd division would cover the old camp and the Army Train, and would be followed by the rearguard, which was often miles behind because the sutlers and their wagons straggled – and there were vast herds of cattle, too. Far out in front and on the flanks, the Cossacks roamed, searching for signs of the enemy.

*[On the retreat, it was the 2nd division, 1st division, and 3rd division. The advance guard became the rearguard. Crawford, by the way, was with the 3rd division, though he sometimes accompanied the advance/rearguards.]*

In secure, level regions, the army made an average of 16-20 Km per day – 4-5 hours on the march. If there were defiles to negotiate (ravines, wooded areas, small streams, swamps, etc.) the pace might be halved to 8-10 Km in the same amount of time. Anything over 30 Km in a day was a gruelling march – 8-10 hours on the road, which meant the advance guard started just after midnight and the rearguard might not make it into camp until the next day. Prolonged halts were sometimes necessary, especially in the retreat, to allow the rear to catch up, and then rest. Under enemy contact, the formations were so tight that the advance slowed to a crawl – no more than 4 Km per day. A normal four-hour march under these conditions might take 30 hours to complete. Sometimes the army had to camp within the radius of the previous camp's foraging circle, which meant the animals went short their rations.

These slow marches were due initially, of course, to the vast quantity of supplies that had to be brought along. There was 'not a sergeant in the Guards who did not have at least sixteen wagons in his train' (Bain p.264). Later, when the column of the sick straggled for miles, it was a case of providing security for them.

*[Münnich and the other commanders showed great proficiency in the conduct of the retreat from the Dniester. Not once did the formations break down, even under heavy enemy contact, though there were a few scary moments. The Tatars must have been very disappointed.]*

Sometimes the route took them through fertile regions, with lots of trees for wood and grass for fodder, and good water sources. Other times they were marching in the blazing heat through a blackened wasteland, praying someone would discover water at the new camp. Once or twice the army halted too soon and suffered, while off in the distance, beyond a cloud of Tatars, the silver gleams of a river could be descried.

When the enemy was encountered, the formations would be drawn in. If the enemy was very close, and there was no urgency to be up and gone, the Russians would await them in camp. The enemy would begin by cleverly wasting the country around them, but instead of sitting back and waiting for the Russians to starve, they would inevitably attack and be defeated. With the enemy scattered and disheartened, the Russians could begin to move again.

Later on, when the Tatars appeared in huge numbers and had Turkish support, their tactics improved. They no longer attacked

impetuously but waited for the Russians to break camp once the forage ran out. They tried to attack them while in the act of shuffling across the rivers, a process that in consequence sometimes took days. They went for the foraging parties, frequently disappearing for a while to lull the Russians' suspicions. Despite draconian orders from Münnich, the rank and file never learned, and most of the Russian combat losses were taken trying to rescue parties that had been cut off.

The Tatars also had it in for the Cossacks, and went after them whenever they were given the opportunity. Sometimes it was almost in the nature of a joust – old foes crossing swords once more. But there would have been serious consequences if the Russians had been deprived of their cavalry screen: their dragoons were useless in that role. Many stratagems were tried to inveigle small parties into a situation where they had to be rescued by the Cossacks, and the latter looked for ways to pinch out a squadron or two of Tatars during any attack on the main Russian position.

The Tatars never attacked the advance guard when it was off by itself, and they never succeeded in riding through the baggage train when it was strung out on the march. This was because both the advance guard and rearguard were picked troops, and because the army was never *that* dispersed when the enemy was near. There were instances, however, when the advance guard was ordered to advance straight into an enemy position, and there were times, usually while marching into camp, that the train was threatened, but in both cases, the bulk of the army was very close in support. There were a few sticky situations, however, as will be seen.

### Initial Stages

The dangerous part of the march began on the 22nd of May. There had been a number of delays – negotiations with the Zaporozhians over pay, the desire to collect just a few more recruits, and the need to thoroughly scout the region they would be marching through.

On the 21st, patrols reported no contact with the enemy within 50 Km of the far bank of the Ingulets River, the Don Cossack reinforcements were reported to have reached the Lines of the Ukraine near the River Borcyka, and the Wallachian prince, Antiochus Cantimir, arrived and was given command of the Wallachian troops. He would be a rallying figure once the army entered Moldavia.

The march of the 22nd took them toward the source of the Omelnick River. Cossack patrols reported a party of Tatars on the heights overlooking the Ingul River, but the enemy withdrew. According to reports from Kiev, the Imperials were only now mustering at Semlin, on the Danube just above Belgrade.

The next day a long march of 24 Km was made to occupy the high ground of Kuschnoy Bougerrick, dominating the intended crossing point on the River Kamenka. On the 25th, the Kamenka was crossed, and on the 27th a camp was established spanning both sides of the Ingulets (a fairly substantial river). The army remained here until the 31st. The region between the Kamenka and the Bug was aptly described as a 'desert', and they needed all their strength to cross it.

Parties of Cossacks would come and go continually, reporting on the enemy. On the 27th a captured spy brought in from the Bug said that Khotin had been reinforced by a large group of Turks, while at Bender there were, in addition to the regular garrison, 8,000 Janissaries and 7,000 *Sipahis* (heavy cavalry) and *Arnauts* (Albanian mercenaries). The combined Bujak and Bielgorod hordes were camped on the near bank of the Dniester some 8 Km from the fortress. The Dniester was now bridged by the Turks. Muslim morale was said to be good, as the men were fully paid up and well supplied. In all there were perhaps 30,000 Turks and 30,000 Tatars at Bender. On the 25th, word had come that the Sultan of Bielgorod (Akkerman), Islam Geraï, had been ordered to move up to the Bug with his Horde.

Crawford marked down the 31st as a special day. The army was enroute to the River Berschka when an earthquake struck, lasting about two minutes. Far from being dismayed, the troops, who had suffered no injuries, called it a good omen and were greatly heartened.

On the 3rd of June the River Kaminka (*with an 'i'*) was reached. Here, word was received of a party of Tatars in the army's rear, between the Ingulets and the Omelnick. Cossacks were detached to pursue them. More Tatars, already laden with booty, were reported near the Zaporozhian Sich, and on the Kadima (Kodima) River. On the same day, it was decided to deal with a fairly large nest of brigands in the vicinity. Bands of deserters and runaways, known as Hidamuks, they were a regular plague on the Polish borders.

Meanwhile, the advance guard went off to establish camp on the Ingul, which the army occupied on the 5th of June, bridging the river on the 6th and crossing on the 7th. Rumyantsev and the Grand Convoy were now on the Kaminka, the Don Cossacks had joined the Army of the Dnieper, and great news was received from the Kuban: the Tatars of that region had nearly all submitted to the Tsaritsa, or been destroyed.

*[This news was some months old.]*

On June 8th a report was received that Mahomet Pasha had arrived at Bender to coordinate his army's plans with *serasker* Numan Pasha; Mahomet Pasha was said to be keen to engage the Russians and wanted an immediate advance to the Bug. 1,500 Tatars of Bielgorod were actually on the Bug now, reconnoitring possible defensive positions.

The Ottomans were expecting a reinforcement of 12,000 *Arnauts* and Janissaries, and perhaps an equal number of 'Asiatic' troops (i.e. from Anatolia, Syria, etc.) They had established redoubts and a small naval base at the mouth of the Dniester to prevent the Russians using the river. In the Crimea, the Khan had been resupplied and told to round up the Nogais and begin raiding again.

The 12th of June saw the Grand Army at the River Berestovata. That day, more reports came in regarding the enemy. The Grand Vizier was still at Sophia. However, the Turks had shipped a large quantity of troops and supplies to the mouth of the Dniester, and most of these were now moving overland to Bender (a confirmation of earlier reports).

On the 13th and 14th a halt was made to enable General Rumyantsev's column of reinforcements to close the gap with the Army of the Dnieper. Don Cossack and Zaporozhian scouts were employed to see what the enemy was up to. During the march to the source of the Karabelnoy River late on the 17th, the scouts reported a number of Tatars bands in the vicinity. This region was still desert, and wells had to be dug at the new camp.

*[News was also received that the Imperials were in full march through the Banat to relieve the key fortress of Orsova on the Danube. This is why the Grand Vizier was hesitating at Sophia. According to Crawford, the Imperials intended to cross the Danube at Grocka, scene of the fight they would have with the Turks in 1739. However, their line of march actually took them directly toward Orsova. A crossing at Grocka would allow the Imperials to clear the southern bank of the Danube of the enemy batteries engaging that fort, so it was a plausible report.]*

The Grand Army arrived at the River Bok on the 19th by marching down the Karabelnoy, the only untoward incident being a couple of accidental fires in the camp, one of which burned the tent and baggage of one of the brigadiers. The Cossacks, meanwhile probed as far as the River Kodima.

A number of rivers cut across the steppe here, all of which had to be bridged before the army could advance: the Karabelnoy, the Bug itself, and an arm of the Taschlick (the Maloy Taschlick), which river had been crossed once already. These were the responsibility, as always, of Fermor and the advanced guard, which was doubled in size to 14 regiments and a large body of Cossacks. Ominously, Polish fishermen reported that a band of 50 Tatars had recently

camped at the very spot where the army intended to cross the Karabelnoy. They had taken some Poles as slaves.

The Grand Army reached the Bug, 20 Km from the Maloy Taschlick, on the 21st, having crossed all the intervening rivers without incident. They had another 70-80 Km to march before reaching Rashkov. Scouts on the far bank reported about 5,000 Tatars had retired before them when the advance guard came up, moving toward the Kodima. The Bug was still a big river, even this far from the sea, with steep, rocky banks. Three bridges were laid over it and redoubts constructed to cover them. 10 regiments and some artillery crossed on the 22nd. The 22nd was also a payday.

*[Manstein ignores all these minor contacts and states that no word of the enemy was received until the army reached the Bug 'on the 30th of June'.]*

On the 23rd the Generalissimo and his staff crossed the Bug with more of the army (his cuirassiers, 7 regiments, some hussars, the Don Cossacks, the Chompaneischick Cossacks – another ersatz band of mercenaries – and the rest of the artillery). Some of the Cossacks were sent on to the Kodima, where a party of Tatars was reported to be skulking on the far bank.

The 24th was the Feast of St. John. A day of rest, at which the field marshals entertained the generals. Rumyantsev and his grand convoy also arrived, augmenting the army by about 2,500 men.

Sagraïski's 2nd division and much of the baggage crossed the Bug the next day – Crawford writes 'incessantly, day and night'. The last elements crossed on the 26th, and the bridges were then removed. Münnich called a council of war to determine the army's next course of action (Crawford does not report the result).

On the 27th the army set out for the Kodima, a western tributary of the Bug which had its confluence quite close by. 10,000 Tatars screened the far bank of the Kodima, but withdrew on the advance guard's approach, burning the grass and removing or destroying anything that might be of use. The crossing of the Kodima took until the 30th. With a fair amount of the baggage and the rearguard still marching from the Bug, and only a few combat troops still camped on their side of the Kodima, there was some concern when a very large body of Tatars materialised. They withdrew at nightfall, but the Russians spent the whole night under arms, just in case.

*[Manstein gives this as the first instance of enemy contact. He also states that the army's ordering into three divisional squares was made at this time, and that the army, where possible, camped in the same formation, with light troops and picquets covering the intervals.]*

### **Battle on the Kodima: July 1st 1738**

Early on the 20th of June, the commander of the Don Cossacks, Ataman Froloff, reported that 10,000 Tatars had crossed the Kodima higher up and looked to be approaching the smaller Russian camp, between the Kodima and the Bug, which was only defended by elements of the 1st Division under General Rumyantsev. In front of the Grand Army, on both banks of the Kodima, an innumerable host of Tatars had now appeared some 10 or 12 Km away, advancing toward the camp on a front of about 'one German mile' (Crawford).

*[Manstein says the bulk of the Grand Army had already crossed the river, so Rumyantsev and G. Biron (the Guards) had to return to the other side with several regiments to screen the baggage, but that nothing happened and the whole was got over safely. The action commenced the next day (July 11th new style), with the enemy occupying the ground for a depth of about 2 Km all around.]*

At 7am the Russians began to form for battle. First contact was at 8am, when the picquets of Sagraïski's 2nd Division on the right fought a sharp skirmish. A little later the Tatars attacked the advance guard (Manstein says the camp of the Ukrainian Cossacks, who were the worst troops, was also attacked, without success) as was the left-center along the seam of the 3rd and 1st divisions. Some of the Russian picquets here were too far in advance of the artillery batteries and were nearly overrun.

Brigadier Schipov moved up the elements of the center that were under his command to support the advance guard, but went too far and was himself surrounded. He formed square and kept the enemy at bay with a couple of battalion guns until Münnich saved the situation by personally going to his assistance with a scratch force of cuirassiers (his escort), hussars, and Zaporozhians, supported by elements of Rumyantsev's 1st division.

*[Crawford states Münnich detached 4 regiments from the left to guard the bridge because there were still elements on the far side. This is contradicted by Manstein, who says the entire army was on the same side of the river.]*

All this time the Russians were still debouching from their camp. Eventually, the 3rd division on the left, under Gustav Biron (with the Guards) and Löwendahl, took the pressure off the center and Münnich was able to coordinate his manoeuvres.

Seeing *sipahis* among the Tatars' right flank, Münnich feared the Turks were reinforcing them in strength and ordered a general advance to take the high ground in front of the camp, so that he could see what was going on. Currently, the enemy commanders occupied that post. In order to effect the move, he ordered the first line of dragoons to dismount in the center, covered his flanks with infantry, and placed the Cossacks and hussars on the wings.

The action grew fiercest at midday. Swarms of the enemy penetrated at numerous points, or came in from the rear, and threatened to overrun the camp, but everywhere the artillery drove them off. Firing three cannon as the signal for the general advance, the regiments, with colours displayed and drums beating, marched forward steadily toward the high ground, halting from time to time to blow gaps in the Tatar ranks with artillery fire.

Setting fire to the grass, the enemy slowly retreated to the highest ground, crowned with an ancient *tumen*, where their leaders sat on horseback. Lieutenant-general Löwendahl ordered the position to be mortared and bombarded with direct fire, and suddenly the enemy had had enough. (Perhaps a near miss of the commander in chief had something to do with the sudden change of heart.) They dispersed in every direction.

By 2pm, after a five-hour fight in which the Russians seemed to be wading in a sea of Tatars, it was all over. Russian casualties came to 38 killed and 44 wounded, mostly cavalry. Tatar casualties were not known, because most of the bodies had been removed, but the enemy were reported to be most disheartened by the outcome.

*[Manstein gives an estimate of 200 enemy dead.]*

From prisoners it was learned that the enemy force had consisted of all the Tatars of Bielgorod and Bujak, and as many Nogai as could be collected (35-45,000 men in all), under command of the Sultan of Bujak, Allim Giraï, plus four other Tatar sultans, with the courageous Ottoman commander, Veli Pasha (of two tails), leading 5,000 Turks in support (other sources say 'several hundred' Turks). They had left the Dniester 8-10 days before with orders to do what they could to stop the Russians. Only a few had remained to guard their march camp some 30 Km away. The prisoners also confirmed the Turks already had 30,000 men at Bender under Numan Pasha (three tails) and were expecting 6,000 more. Apparently, news of the devastation of the Crimea had been suppressed and the talk in the camps was all of war.

*[Not mentioned by Crawford, but in Manstein's account, is a simultaneous attack on a convoy in the Russian rear. The enemy was seen a long way off and the commander formed a wagon laager, holding the Tatars off until relieved. It is curious, because Earl Crawford and several other volunteers were with this convoy. Perhaps Crawford omitted the event because his journal was intended to cover the Grand Army's exploits, which he had not yet joined. Crawford's knowledge of the first part of the campaign, though diligently collected, was at second-hand. This explains his somewhat confusing description of the battle, which Manstein clarifies.]*

## Action on the Savran, July 8th

*[Davies places this combat on the Molotschitzche (Molochishcha), which the Russians encountered on their final approach to the Dniester but then says the Russians did not approach the Dniester until late in July.]*

Having crossed the Kodima, the Grand Army continued along the Bug to the next major tributary, the Savran, which followed the Polish border. The terrain proved very difficult, with many defiles. Scouts reported some of the enemy hovering on the Kodima, but they were very flighty and no action occurred until the night of the 3rd of July, when a small party of Tatars tried to surprise a picquet of 45 Cossacks and failed.

*[Word came that the Imperials had raised the siege of Orsova (a temporary respite). Also, that the Turks had razed the suburbs of Bender in preparation for a siege.]*

The Generalissimo, learning that whether by accident or design the enemy were taking much the same route toward Poland, followed them. The 7th saw the Grand Army at the confluence of the Savran and the Bug, where it camped.

The Savran had been bridged at its confluence with the Bug by the advance guard and the pioneers, and the army was stationed on both banks: the 1st division, part of the 3rd division and the advance guard on the far bank and the remainder, covered by a screen of Cossacks, on the near bank waiting to cross.

That day, several thousand Tatars tried to rush the nearer (eastern) camp, only to be driven off by cannon fire and the Cossacks. However, on the morrow, a general attack was launched against the farther camp by both Turks and Tatars.

Around noon, word came from the Zaporozhians that the enemy was approaching. At 1pm a large body of Turks, some of whom had been under observation on a rise of ground for some time, suddenly charged. More rushed out of a wood nearby and all assaulted the Zaporozhian camp (of about 2,700 men) on the army's right flank. The Cossacks were able to take advantage of their wagon laager and hold the enemy until succoured by the Don Cossacks and the Wallachians, supported by elements of the 1st division (300 infantry and 2 battalion guns).

The enemy recoiled into the wood, rallied, and tried their luck again, this time against the centre of the screening forces, where Major General Shipov had unfortunately deployed his picquets too far from the main body. The picquets were lost, but a body of *Landmiliz* put up a stout defence until succoured by cavalry. So far, the main army had remained in camp. Now, while this fight still raged, Münnich brought up everyone on the near bank, less a small baggage guard, and formed line with his right flank on the Zaporozhian camp and his left on a deep ravine.

Undismayed, the enemy charged the 1st division several times, and also the left and right of the line, to no avail. Attempts to circle around and take the fortified baggage train were likewise fruitless.

By 4pm it seemed as if the enemy were retreating, and the Cossacks began to pursue, but at 5pm the Turks made a final charge. During a lull in the fighting, Münnich had sent a flanking force under Löwendahl, equipped with field guns and Coehorn mortars, to seize the high ground on the right flank, actually slightly behind the enemy in their wood; when these guns opened up, the Turks fled, through the wood, hotly pursued by the Cossacks. Russian losses were very slight, and Turkish losses were estimated at 1,000 dead (Crawford says there was no accurate count). No intelligence was gained as the Zaporozhians never took prisoners in the heat of action.

*[Davies credits Rumyantsev with the deployment of the artillery; the guns, at least, would have come from his division. Davies gives 38 KIA and 44 WIA for the Russians and 200 casualties for the Turks.]*

Now the Grand Army left the Bug, moving up the Savran, with the river between them and the enemy. On the 12th of July, Cossack scouts reported observing an immense enemy camp on the Kodima

40 Km away; it was said to be 12 Km long and contained 'many' Turkish tents. Further intelligence gave out that the enemy's main camp at Bender contained 60,000 Turks, many of them Asiatic, supported by 48,000 Bielgorod and Bujak Tatars, and 30,000 Nogais. Their commanders included *serasker* Numan Pasha, *serasker* Mahemet Pasha, Seneck Pasha 'of Natoli', Jekup Pasha, and Hiseloni Apté Pasha. Also present were the Moldavian Hospodar, Gregorius Jika, nine pashas of two tails and Mecheriff Effendi, the deputy of the Grand Vizier. With the Tatars were Veli Pasha, the sultan of Bielgorod, the Bujak Sultan, and several other Tatar sultans. The commander of the *Kapikulu Askerleri* had recently arrived with orders for the whole to march out and give battle wherever they encountered the Russians. A large artillery train had been scrounged from the fortress at Bender and other places.

*[Some of the leaders, notably Veli Pasha and the Sultan of Bielgorod, were with the forces engaging Münnich on the Savran. Ignoring the inevitable inflation of numbers, the list of forces at Bender undoubtedly included those in contact with the Russians.]*

Shadowed by the enemy, the Grand Army took several days to march a mere 19 Km. Crossing a minor river, called the Tschechalnick, the army camped with its flanks on that river and the Savran, on the 17th. Here it was accosted by a body of the enemy, without result. Given the situation, Münnich decided to spend some time in additional reconnaissance before moving on.

## Going Down to the River

Once the location of the Tatar camp was identified – now on the River Bielotschitzche (Bielochishcha), a tributary of the Dniester on the north side of Rashkov – the Grand Army set out again on the 19th. Camp was pitched at the head of the Savran. The news that day was mixed. The Tatars were operating in the rear of the army, which was bad; but on the other hand, a letter came reporting the Imperial victory at Kornia, in the Banat.

The 20th of July was passed in a grand review of the army, the singing of a Te Deum, a cannonade, and afterward, entertainment. The advance began again on the 21st, cautiously, because this region was well wooded and had many defiles. It began to rain.

Around midday, while the army was halted to allow the rearguard to catch up, a deputation of Poles arrived (probably to make sure the Cossacks kept their hands in their pockets). They reported the Sultan of Bielgorod and 60,000 Tatars, plus 18-20,000 Turks under his command, to be only 4 Km away, near the River Molotschitzche (Smoloschitzche or Molochishcha), another tributary of the Dniester, lying to the south of Rashkov. The enemy intended to attack the next day, when the head of the Grand Army exited the 'defile' in front of it – in this case a wood – and before the army could form up on the plain that lay beyond.

Once on this plain, Münnich would have a clear run down to the Dniester. The two aforementioned tributaries, were small, but deeply cut, affording flank protection. Rashkov, though an important regional trading post, was not militarily significant. The hope was that the army could cross the Dniester here, then march south to engage the main Ottoman army at Bender. True, the Tatars were apparently camped right in front of the Russians, but they would inevitably be displaced, like quicksilver.

Unfortunately, the Turks had a good picture of the Grand Army's movements; it was not merely the Tatar camp that lay opposite Rashkov, it was the combined Turkish-Tatar camp; the enemy had shifted his base.

*[As can be seen in the accompanying maps, the Bielochishcha is much larger than the Molochishcha, which is downstream from the former. Rashkov, which was split between two locations, is the 'abandoned village'. Rashkov was famous for a variety of edible mushroom.]*

The immediate problem remained defiling in the face of the enemy. A night march was thought of, but since the rearguard and the 2nd division had not yet caught up, it was decided to establish a camp instead. Münnich made skilful dispositions for the defence, pulling



in some of the more extended posts and reinforcing others (for example, moving one position that could be infiltrated from 'dead ground' to cover the same hollow). The heavy guns and the howitzers were emplaced on a number of knolls throughout the valley where the army was encamped. The Tatars conducted a reconnaissance, but did not attack.

On the 23rd, with the rear parties still coming in, the army set out once more. In front was the wood that had to be passed before the open country – and the enemy – could be reached. The advance guard cleared this wood, followed by the 3rd division. The Cossacks of the Don covered the flanks and rear of this force, and managed to surprise a party of Tatars having breakfast within the wood; 40 were killed and 8 prisoners were taken.

From the prisoners it was learned that Veli Pasha, after the action on the 30th of June, had received 8 'stands' (banners) of *sipahis* as reinforcements and had felt able to try a second encounter – that being the action on the Savran. It was also learned that the Tatars had refused to act unless accompanied by at least some Turks; Veli Pasha had thus gone with them, and had lost 400 men. If the action had gone very badly, it was said, the Tatars planned to submit themselves to Tsaritsa. Other items of note included the arrival of 9,000 Asiatic troops at Bender (or possibly at the new camp), and of the Hospodar of Wallachia, with his own little army, encamped on the Iasi River.

The Dniester was only 16-20 Km away from the Army of the Dnieper. The line of march was one that secured the army's flanks, with the Molochishcha on its left, and the Bielochishcha on its right. The 3rd division had halted to cover the exit of the rest of the army from the defile, but the advance guard had gone on well into the plain to stake out the camp, quite close to the Dniester. The enemy took advantage of this, manoeuvring behind a rise in the ground and suddenly appearing close to the advance guard. The latter consisted of 7 regiments of foot, plus light troops: a regiment of hussars, 2,000 Zaporozhians, and the Tchougievski Cossacks (a band of 500 conscripts and Orthodox Kalmyks). Accompanying them were the quartermasters and pioneer troops.

Münnich immediately rode forward to join them with his escort, ordering the force into square (normally it marched in a 'U' shape with the rear uncovered), and deploying the attached artillery under Löwendahl, which was considerable: 22 cannon and some mortars. The square was then ordered to advance toward a rise in the ground, where the enemy's motions would be visible from all directions. The Prince of Brunswick was also ordered up with 3 regiments of foot plus the dragoon grenadiers, and a company of Guards with 12 field pieces from the 3rd division. This he did with dispatch and he was given command of the whole.

Münnich held the advance guard as the left wing of his army's deployment and sent the rest of the 3rd division marching speedily to cover the right. Meanwhile, bodies of enemy horse milled about, some of them coming quite close to the left wing. Seeing them on his flanks, Münnich sent word to the 1st division, which was fast approaching, to take care, as they might try a flank attack. For the most part, however, the enemy remained in front of the Russians. Two columns of Tatars (about 40,000 men) advanced violently but could not penetrate the advance guard's square, which had by now been reinforced with a wagonburg. The Tatars broke off to reform, pursued by cannon and mortar fire.

A second furious charge was then made on Brunswick's men, those posted on the left of the original advance guard, but once again, though they inflicted some casualties among the irregulars and even amongst the ranks, the enemy could not break the square. This time the whole of the Russians' irregulars 'raised a great shout' and pursued them (Crawford p.166).

A general melee of light troops ensued, but the Russians received support from the regulars and the artillery every time they had to fly, while the Tatars had no reserves to fall back on. By 6pm, the Generalissimo judged the time was right for a general advance (with

drums beating and flags flying, naturally) in which even the baggage train joined. The light troops were still mixing it with the Tatars as the advance continued, but eventually the enemy's two columns split apart, one over the Molochishcha and the other over the Dniester. The Russians advanced, and, like quicksilver, the Tatars displaced, camp and all.

Taking possession of the high ground, the Russians saw they were only 8 Km from the Dniester; a vast Turkish camp was clearly visible on the other side of the river opposite the confluence of the Molochishcha, and the Tatars were flowing between the Dniester and the Russians, with their camp train in motion – which Crawford faults Münnich for not pursuing immediately.

The butcher's bill for this combat was 10 regulars and perhaps 10 Cossacks killed, and 16 wounded. Tatar casualties were not known, but were supposed to be considerable (Davies says about 1,000 men). There had been many Turkish troops present, some *Arnauts*, Asiatics, and even some Moors (the last most likely slaves).

The next day – the 24th – saw the Russian van encamped, with their right flank toward the Dniester and the two smaller rivers in front and behind (i.e. the army was going to remain in line of march in preparation for crossing). The 2nd division made it into camp this day. From prisoners taken when a body of about 600 Tatars attempted a raid, it was learned that the nomads were forbidden to cross back over the Dniester.

*[Crawford's journal and an inserted letter to the British PM of the day contain a slight discrepancy. In the journal he states the Tatars were to be relieved every so often by fresh troops; in the letter he implies they are forced to remain on the other bank.]*

### Crossing the Dniester?

Some historians question whether Münnich ever really intended crossing of the Dniester. But the High Command's planning sessions make it clear the taking of Bender was 'phase two' of the grand scheme to gain control of the Black Sea, and the camp talk recorded by Crawford confirms it. There were suggestions that the Dniester might be cleared of enemy positions right down to its mouth, which would allow the fleet to support the next year's campaign, perhaps to the Danube. But it was not to be.

On the 26th the army marched down to the Dniester. The camp of the Sultan of Bielgorod, augmented by several thousand Turks, was spotted on a knoll on the other side of the Molochishcha, just above its confluence. These troops rapidly advanced against the Russians' left, crossing the little river and posting themselves on a patch of high ground.

Since portions of the Grand Army were still in motion, and in particular, the rearguard of 4 regiments of foot under Major-General Philosov was far to the rear, covering the straggling baggage, Münnich ordered the van to halt and take up a defensive position. Rather than attack them, around 10am a large number of the enemy headed for the Russians' rear.

Shortly after noon, firing was heard from the rear of the column; the 3rd division, now the last (or left wing) division – the army had marched 'by the right and to the right', when ordered to hurry up – had widened the gap between it and the rearguard, which was now being swarmed by the enemy. Sagrański's 2nd division compounded the problem by not supporting the 3rd division, leaving the rescue of Philosov to the Don Cossacks, who took heavy casualties, though they inflicted about 2-300. At the same time, a demonstration was made to the Russians' front, but was soon dealt with. Münnich, taking personal command of the rear, sent in some of Rumyantsev's battalions and mounted grenadiers. The Cossacks rallied and the enemy was dispersed.

The foe reformed in three corps, waiting for another opportunity. Under the Generalissimo's direction, Major-General Philosov's formation broke the enemy up with artillery fire, and the whole of the Russian rear gradually inched back to the safety of the main

body. Münnich severely reprimanded Sagraïski for what could have been a disaster.

It was now 4pm. The enemy then:

'thought proper at last to retire which they did moving slowly up toward the same high Ground before mention'd returning as they had come in the morning, the body of Turks Seemingly most gaudily dres'd with a great Variety of flaggs and Horse tails, marching one way, and the Tatars with a great many red, and white flaggs, another. Tis incredible what number they were, and what a Noble Look they had marching along a rising Ground Sparsly Wooded with the Sun Shining upon it.' (Crawford p.175)

Some of these strutting troops tried to tackle the Cossack screen of the Left, on the way back to their own camp. A string of flanking battalions now covered the Russian train, and the enemy were again repulsed without doing any damage. They tried setting fire to the grass but it would not burn because of the rain of the last few days. The end of the day saw the last of the Grand Army entering the camp above the Dniester, almost within cannon shot of the Turkish camp.

On the 27th Münnich held a council of war. It was resolved that the army would after all not cross the Dniester, at least here. Although not explicitly stated in the accounts, Münnich had presumably relied on finding a quantity of boats at Rashkov – since it was a well known trading post – but naturally the Turks had removed them, and perhaps had moved the locals to safety as well, since the place was 'abandoned'. The only other option was a bridge.

Preliminary reconnaissance had shown the banks were far too steep and rocky, and not only was the Turkish camp fortified, with 60,000 men, 60 cannon, and 15 mortars already emplaced, on 'eminences' above the river, but the Tatars, perhaps as many as 78,000, remained on the Army of the Dnieper's left flank, and constantly harassed them. They could do little damage if the Russians remained stationary, but might have ruined any attempt to bridge the river under enemy fire.

*[The practicality of bridging the Dniester at any given point was something that could not be determined except through reconnaissance, and the reconnaissance being completed, it was determined to be impractical in the face of the enemy.]*

Instead, the Russians would make a demonstration by erecting a battery that night, and commencing a bombardment of the Turkish camp. Unfortunately, in the dark the engineers sited the battery improperly. It was on a precipice overlooking the opposing shore, but too exposed to enemy fire; in the morning, Münnich ordered it dismantled. Fortunately the Turks failed to notice all the activity.

During the day the Zaporozhians went down to the river and peppered the Turks with their light cannon, receiving heavier shot in return, which they collected for sale. In their turn, the Janissaries in small groups crossed the river on rafts to snipe at the Russians.

Crawford dates the beginning of the sufferings of the Grand Army from the 28th of July:

'during the night, very little dew had fallen, and the Day proved most Scorching hot, with a high drying Wind which join'd to the additional inconveniency of allmost all Our Cattles being obliged to be kept within the Lines, render'd all Our whole Camp nothing but Dust, to the great Detriment of Men, and Beasts.' (p.181)

Sagraïski's 2nd division was still giving Münnich a headache. Poor dispositions threatened an invitation to attack, so the Generalissimo tightened up the camp into a compact formation, covering each divisional square with flanking artillery. In the night, the Russians tried building a battery above the river again, in the middle of a thunderstorm.

*[The Don Cossacks kept the enemy at bay during the day, and one of them scored 'the finest Saber Damaske of any that had been got though out the whole Campaign' (Crawford p.182).]*

The battery emplaced, the two sides commenced an artillery duel at 11pm. The Russians were at the edge of the Ottoman's range, while their own shot could pass beyond the enemy batteries, but could not reach the center of their camp. Meanwhile, the Tatars rode around the circuit of the Russian camp, looking for gaps, a sheet of flame following as the various batteries and regiments opened up on them. The Russians heard later that a large body of Janissaries was to have crossed the river as well but for some reason the attempt was abandoned. The Tatars failed to find a way to cut the shore battery off and returned to their camp.

*[Davies notes that Turkish snipers infiltrated the Russian camp.]*

### Fall Back

On the 29th of July, the Russians began their withdrawal. Crawford supposes the other generals opposed Münnich's desire to remain, because the Russian battery could easily have destroyed the Turks' own, and he thought there was a very good staging point for boats at the bottom of the bank. In addition, it would have put the noisome Tatars on the wrong side of a major river.

Manstein makes it clear that the retreat had already been decided upon. The army arrived on the river short of forage, and as noted, getting water there was a risky business. Plague was reported in the lands across the river. Furthermore, the bombardment was *not* effective (though it discomfited the enemy temporarily) and the river was *not* easy to cross. The army would not return to the Ukraine immediately, however, but proceed up the Dniester at some distance from it, gradually edging toward the Kaminka River. It might be possible to get the jump on the Turks and cross higher up. The bombardment was probably made with the intention of pretending a crossing to pin the enemy, though neither Manstein nor Crawford makes that clear.

The battery was packed up, and the army marched off 'by the left and on the left', so that the advance guard was now the rearguard. All day, as the army filed out of camp, the Tatars and Turkish cavalry skirmished with them, but without effect. The Turks had crossed the river in large numbers (Manstein says half their army, or 30,000 men), and threatened the rearguard, until some well-placed mortar bombs made them change their mind. They then rode up the Molochishcha to where the Tatars had their camp.

All around were parties of the enemy, skulking in the woods, or posted on the 'kurgans' or tumens that dotted the landscape, but no major attack came that day. In the night the Grand Army camped in one of its old positions, where there was no forage, except for the Don Cossacks and part of the advance guard, who bridged the Bielochishcha and camped in relative plenty on the other side. During the night the enemy made several attacks.

*[Crawford says Bielochishcha, Manstein says the Molochishcha, but the former makes more sense, since the army was heading upriver. Crawford's maps show them crossing the Bielochishcha.]*

In the morning the Russians were in the act of crossing the Bielochishcha when masses of the enemy welled up from the Dniester. More or less surrounded, Münnich ordered the crossing to continue while the light troops skirmished, and moved the rearguard up with the 3rd division. Fortified with *chevaux-de-frise* and protected by artillery, they kept the Janissaries and *sipahis* at bay.

At one point on the line, some Janissaries managed to approach near to a detachment of grenadiers under cover of rocky ground, but were repulsed with vigour – the detachment pursued them on foot. A body of Cossacks and hussars, with some mounted dragoons, attempted to intercept the Janissaries, but only managed to acquire some heads. The banks of the Bielochishcha were thick with Turks.

*[Münnich paid a rouble each for heads.]*

The Generalissimo eventually ordered the rearguard to proceed to the crossing, with caution. Every so often, they stopped, set up their defensive barrier, and fired a volley. The enemy continued to skirmish with fresh bodies of 2,000 men at a time.

The stickiest point was when the Russians had to abandon the high ground; the enemy formed up behind it and sent riflemen over the brim to pick the Russians off at long range. So Gustav Biron was ordered to clear the hill with companies of grenadiers (accompanied by Münnich, his staff, and the volunteer, Crawford). The command party soon rejoined the column, leaving a token guard on the hill until the last minute.

*[Crawford explains that picquets of volunteers were nearly always stationed at about 100 paces from the main body, all around, in order to break up any attack; they could be supported or retired as necessary.]*

Scarcely had the picquets fallen in:

'before the Enemy again took possession of the before mention'd high, the first that arrived dismounting, and clapping his hand on His Bum to Us, However, for their comfort, We left a few of their friends heads, which We Observed them considering' (Crawford, p.186).

Because the banks were so steep and the water so low, the Russians could not get all their army across the Bielochishcha that day. They were forced to camp with the 3rd division and part of the 1st division on the enemy's side, and the rest on the other side. It would have been difficult for one side to support the other. Luckily, the enemy only probed them. In all, according to Crawford, the Russians lost 7 dead and 21 wounded (Manstein says 300 men); Crawford says the enemy were presumed to have lost several hundred, while Manstein says 2,000 (1,000 in one edition of his book).

*[Despite the consistent success the Russians had in defending themselves, and the lopsided casualty rate, this running fight with the Turks and Tatars was very serious. At best the Russians had 50,000 men when they started the campaign. Already, 10,000 were ill. They faced upwards of 60,000 men, mostly mounted. What prevented the Russians from suffering the same fate as Crassus' Roman army in Mesopotamia was a) the artillery, b) the Cossack and other irregular forces, and c) the indiscipline of the enemy. In Crawford's observation, the enemy was always on the watch for the slightest mistake, the slightest sign of disorder. However, they did not coordinate their efforts. Instead, one of their number would see an advantage, and calling to his comrades, immediately rush in. This might turn into a full-scale assault, or it might not. So long as discipline was maintained by the Russians, there was little danger. The enemy never stood against an attack by disciplined troops, and never risked attacking them, unless there was some way of cutting off a small number. They gladly mixed it with the irregulars, though.]*

The whole of the 31st of July was needed to complete the crossing. The enemy attacked several times on both sides of the Bielochishcha, but did not press home.

*[They were perhaps trying to keep the Russians pinned; there was very little forage there and with a delay of any length they would have at least have had to drop some of their baggage.]*

### A Mutiny

Two Wallachian deserters were captured who reported on a mutiny in the Ottoman camp. The *serasker*, Sherif-efendi Pasha, had initially decided not to pursue the Russians and was now hiding from his Janissaries, who wanted to execute him as a traitor! A letter from a spy that was received a few days later explained that the bombardment had led the Janissaries to expect an attack; when they saw the enemy retreating, they shouted 'we've won!' and expected an immediate pursuit, crowding around the *serasker's* tent loudly demanding the same. When he and his staff refused, out of caution, they abused them, calling them '*giaours*, heathens, and traitors'. The *serasker's* refusal to construct a bridge over the Dniester, which he had promised to do earlier in the campaign, was recalled and held against him. It was supposed the *serasker* had been bribed not to (a definite possibility, though not likely in this instance).

The Janissaries fired on the commander's tent and rushed it, so that he was forced to flee to the safest place in camp: the powder magazine. Fortunately, the Aga of the Janissaries was also in the camp and skilfully quieted his charges. Eventually the *serasker* was calmed, too, and he instantly ordered the building of '10' pontoon bridges so that 'all might go who pleased, in pursuit of the Russian Army' (Crawford p.195).

*['All might go who pleased'. An insight into the command structure of the Ottoman Army. No reason is given for the serasker's original decision, which probably stemmed from a number of causes. He had rather too large an army to manoeuvre with, and his supplies were running out. It would make more sense to follow the Russians up or down the Dniester and prevent their crossing, while harassing them with the Tatars (who, as noted, asked for Turkish support, probably because they felt they were taking all the risks). In the end, this is what he did do, though the mutiny forced him to detach about half his own force in direct pursuit. But they were unable to do more than the 30,000 Tatars would have done on their own – make things uncomfortable for the Russians.]*

About 20-30,000 Janissaries and *sipahis* then passed the Dniester; it was they who had attacked the Russians, along with the Tatars, all under command of sultans Algin Geraï and Islam Geraï (who had been enroute to Vidin with 8,000 of his men but for some reason had been recalled).

*[Manstein says the Tatars' overall commander was the Sultan of Bielgorod (Islam Geraï).]*

August 1st. The Army of the Dnieper, reunited, remained encamped. Münnich and his quartermasters were scrounging transport animals from wherever they could find them – so many had already died from lack of forage. In the morning, too, the Tatars made a bold attack on the foraging parties, which had been deployed too far away (2.5 Km) with an escort of only 1,000 men. Once again, the 2nd division was to blame. As quick as they could, the Don Cossacks rode out to save the foragers, who were trying to form square on a hill in view of the camp. What saved them, so Crawford says, was the Tatar habit of stopping to take heads.

'It is impossible to describe the confusion there was when the Cossacks, Tatars, Callmucks, and Foragers were all mixt some Screaming for fear, the others as they allways do when they attack made a most extraordinary Noise which join'd with the other concurring circumstances on those occasions made Such a Scene as I shall not venture to describe, So shall leave it to be imagined' (Crawford, p.213 letter to the Duke of Newcastle).

The Russians came off very badly in this encounter, with the Tatars riding off in leisurely form, displaying their spoils to one another. Between 4-500 foragers were lost. The Russians estimated they had killed 60-70 Tatars. The Generalissimo was by now fed up with Sagraïski and placed him under arrest.

The 2nd of August was a rotten day, according to Crawford. No sign of the enemy, and the country was well provided, but the Generalissimo kept the whole army together, which made for a slow march, with frequent halts, and they did not set out until 10am, passing by Rashkov (on their left).

The spy's letter alluded to above explains why the enemy was not around. The Janissaries had returned to camp, somewhat chastened, and decided to blame Sherif-efendi again because he had not sent artillery with them. A second mutiny was avoided when a Russian grenadier prisoner told them Münnich intended to cross the Dniester at Soroka (which might have been true). This gave the *serasker* the excuse to break camp, which would keep the men occupied, but in the night, 4,000 Janissaries deserted, and more were expected to do so. The spy reported the Janissaries were 'skrimped' for supplies of all kinds. (When the Russians first appeared, the Turks had consumed what they could in the neighbourhood, and destroyed the rest.)

Crawford's grumbling continues into the 3rd of August. The rearguard did not get in until morning; another late start, meaning

they will not reach water that day. Why, he wonders, do they not march at night, when it is cooler, and the enemy is sleeping (the Ottomans and Tatars rarely attacked at night). The problem was the rearguard, or more properly, the train. The transport animals were dropping like flies. Along their route they found dead Turks and dead Tatars, presumably strays killed by the Cossacks, though they may have been plague victims. The enemy was still about – a courier had a narrow escape in a nearby wood, and late in the day the Tatars were observed to be hovering around the rearguard.

*[In describing the marches, however, Crawford implies the army was navigating off terrain features, which would have been hard to see at night – shades of the Western Desert.]*

The retreat continued under contact for the rest of the day, with both sides exchanging shots, but no large attacks. The army had been slowed so much, however, that Münnich decided to encamp early, to allow the rearguard to disengage. This region had been burnt out by the Tatars. Unknown to the army, the River Kaminka was only 6 Km further on; they were forced to dig wells instead.

The 4th was spent in camp because the train could not be moved. Münnich was forced to send QMG Fermor with a column of 6,000 men to escort all those who wanted to go to the river – a large proportion of the army, as can be imagined. The thing was done in relays. Russian discipline discouraged the Tatars from taking advantage of the situation, but there was still some disorder: many of the cattle were allowed to drink 'until they swelled like tuns' (Crawford p.199).

The transport problem was surmounted by burying some of the ammunition and burning some of the other supplies (Manstein says, 'a great part of the [ammunition]'). Münnich also dismounted many of the dragoons. Spent horses and oxen were given to the Cossacks in exchange for fresh ones; the Cossacks treated them better, so that many recovered.

On the 5th the army was still watering. Being lulled by a quiet day, many of the men did not wait for the escort but started back from the river on their own, while the escort had to remain to cover those who were idling. 5,000 of the best mounted Tatars and a detachment of Turks intended to attack the straggling column. Fortunately, the enemy was spotted rounding the lines of the camp; also fortunately, the Generalissimo happened to be on the spot, midway between the camp and the river (without escort) and was able to organise a defence. The Russians may also have inadvertently captured the Turkish officer who was to have coordinated the attack.

*[Some of the cuirassiers formed square on horseback.]*

As it was, the tables were turned, with the Tatars caught between the escort detachment and a relieving force, but the Don Cossacks for once let the army down, failing to pursue vigorously enough, and the whole escaped.

That day the army moved to the Kaminka and camped at a deserted village and along the banks. Since the banks were steep, the advance guard was sent across to secure the other side. Lieutenant-General Löwendahl took over the rearguard from Karl Biron, who was pretty much burned out; the troops did not reach the new camp until the 6th, attended by their Tatar friends.

*[The curious French ambassador, Baron Tott, who left his own memoirs of life in this part of the world, now made an appearance and accompanied the army.]*

## Give It Up

The 8th of August saw a council of war – of which Crawford, who was not invited, learned nothing, but at which it was probably decided that, as the Turks were keeping pace with them behind the Dniester, and also harassing them constantly with their mobile forces, the campaign might as well be given up entirely.

*[This council of war was probably the one at which the fate of Sagraïski and his subordinates was decided, after their outstandingly poor performance on August 1st. Münnich punished not only the general, who was degraded to a*

*private of dragoons, but the brigadier of the day and the major of the covering party, who suffered the same fate (though the major only for a few months; the others were degraded for life – commuted after the war). The colonel commanding the covering party was court-martialled and executed.]*

While the generals were conferring, a serious attack was made by the Tatars on the camp of the Ukrainian Cossacks. This was, as usual, driven off. The Cossacks then pursued them into a wood, where they found even more Tatars and were in turn chased back to the camp. Münnich tried to trap the Tatars by sending his foot into the woods, but the men were spotted in time and the nomads vanished.

*[Both sides controlled the fight in the woods by beating drums or playing music to let the men know where the rally points were.]*

The march continued on the 9th – 5 Km in all, along the Kaminka, through wooded ground, with the open steppe on the army's right on the other side of the river. There were no contacts. At last they were in a region of good forage, with fine timber and grass 'up to the horses' bellies'.

On the 10th the army made its last camp on the Kaminka, about 30 Km from the Dniester. It was now plain to all that they were returning to the Ukraine. That morning, a body of 400 Turkish volunteers attacked the Don Cossacks, hoping to lure them down-river to where a large force of Tatars waited. They botched the attack and the Cossacks earned another 120 roubles for their heads. Prisoners affirmed the Tatars had only two weeks of provisions and that Turks on the Dniester were in even worse plight.

On the 11th, Münnich was waiting on intelligence about the country ahead of him. Once again, overconfidence stemming from the day before led to the loss of some foragers to a band of 1,000 Tatars.

On the 12th of August, the Grand Army headed for the Bug, supposed to be 6-7 marches away. The beginning was not smooth. Orders were given for one last watering; after the van had got in motion; it had to be stopped to wait for the divisions. This region was heavily wooded, and deadfalls had to be cleared for the carriages. They marched all of 8 Km before camping for the night, and had to dig wells again, being 6 Km from the river.

The Grand Army marched 10 Km on the 13th, and a similar distance on the 14th. This was Polish territory, though infested with bandits, and about 90 Km south of Nemirov. Peasants informed them that a body of 25,000 Turks was on the move 6-7 Km off the army's left rear; they were plundering villages, supposing the peasants were responsible for their attempt on the Cossacks (on the 10th) having been spotted too soon.

The 15th was a rest day. Soon, the Tatars began to appear, small parties like the first drops of rain, swelling into a downpour. But their slow appearance gave the army time to go on alert, and the close terrain made them fear a Cossack ambush, so after some minor skirmishing, they withdrew.

Arriving in front of a morass on the 16th, and it being the Duke of Brunswick's and the Tsaritsa's birthdays on the 17th, the Grand Army made a proper halt to deal with both issues. The army's position was favourable, being located in a valley, and covered by the morass on one flank, but the woods all around approached the lines, and during the celebrations the Tatars attacked.

They had cunningly placed a small herd of sheep in a field near the woodline. A party of 20-30 Guardsmen had left the lines to try and steal the sheep when they were pounced on by the Tatars. The artillery gave the alarm, and the Generalissimo immediately rushed to counter the threat.

The situation was a dangerous one. The woods were full of Tatars – the entire corps that had been dogging the Russians for the past two weeks – and they had laid their trap at a place where the woods closed in on either side; the 1st division was camped in a clearing on one side of the defile, and the rest of the army in the valley on the

other side. Now the enemy poured into the gap and threatened to isolate the 1st division.

Münnich had only a few troops, mostly irregulars, on the spot, but these did what they could, and as more came up, began to countercharge the Tatars. Meanwhile the Generalissimo and his 'fire brigade' of escort and picquets formed up across the width of the gap and advanced. Simultaneously, more troops began to clearing the wood line on both sides, while the artillery and mortars bombarded the woods with 'an extream odd effect' (Crawford p. 235). The enemy commander gave the signal for withdrawal, reluctantly obeyed by the Tatars, and the enemy vanished. No bodies were recovered. Russian losses were slight.

*[Crawford relates the arrival of letters, whose contents were not divulged, but he supposed them to be news of the Imperial withdrawal to Belgrade. Even at the time it was recognised that a) for either ally to withdraw while the other had not would have made a bad impression, and b) notwithstanding that both sides had in fact withdrawn, at the time those decisions were made, a 'bad impression' was exactly the impression that could have been expected by the decision-takers.]*

The 18th and 19th were taken up with crossing the morass on bridges – there were too few to do it in one day. The Grand Army was still 8 Km from the Bug. Münnich fretted. He was concerned that the Ukraine, with most of the Russian 'Mobile Army' still on campaign, was wide open for some great raid. Lacy had not yet returned from the Crimea.

The local peasants said the enemy was waiting at the Bug to dispute the crossing, that they had been augmented by Polish troops (the Russian marches through Poland had generated a stiff official protest), and that 10,000 Turks had crossed the Bug 50 Km below the Grand Army's intended crossing point and were coming to join the others.

*[Crawford calls the river the 'Bok' at first, and then switches to the 'Bug'. It is clear he means the Bug throughout – the Bok is a different river that would be crossed after the Bug.]*

The Grand Army reached the Bug on the 20th of August, in dread of finding the crossing opposed. Although much narrower at that point, it was still a substantial river. The place was deserted. Four bridges were begun (2 on pontoons and 2 on barrels) and a party of grenadiers and artillery rafted across to cover the far bank. The bridges were ready the next morning. The banks had had to be cut due to their steepness. Four more bridges were also built a little higher up the river.

*[General Fermor is credited with the use of water barrels for bridging; after the army had crossed they could be filled with water again. Russian bridging drills were extremely professional.]*

The crossing of the Bug took until the 23rd. The only alarm had come when Fermor's escort of Zaporozhians was momentarily taken for Tatars. The absence of the enemy, however, made the Generalissimo worry that they had designs of the Ukraine instead. Or, they might have got wind of the intended destruction of Oczakov (unfit for habitation) and decided to chase down the garrison as it withdrew. He considered detaching a large portion of the cavalry and sending it on ahead.

Rublink was reached on the 26th, after a last march of 15 Km, the longest in some time, and with not a word from the enemy.

*[Crawford left the army, building yet more bridges, on the 27th of August. He crossed Poland with only a servant or two, enroute to the Danube Front, where the belated arrival of a Bavarian auxiliary corps suggested more action. He mentions that Polish regiments were mustering and drilling in many places near the border.]*

For the rest of the campaign we have only Manstein's account, which is very brief. The country they had to pass through east of the Bug was devastated, but since the enemy seemed to be elsewhere, the Grand Army divided into columns, both to aid foraging and to quicken the pace. A letter from Court contained orders to turn around and try again (Vienna was pulling all the levers) but all the

generals agreed the idea was ludicrous – the army had already broken up for the year. Manstein concludes by saying they went into quarters in the Ukraine about the end of September. Münnich himself went to Kiev (prior to reporting to St. Petersburg).

### The Further Adventures of Marshal Lacy

*[Dates here are Manstein's new style; those coming from Lacy's letters recorded by Crawford have been converted.]*

Marshal Lacy's somewhat smaller Army of the Don, 30-35,000 strong, was expected to reduce Kaffa, the last enemy post of any importance in the Crimean peninsula, and free the thousands of slaves being held there awaiting purchase, besides wrecking the Turks' naval base. His own orders, however, were simply to engage the Tatars in battle, and his troops were primarily mounted forces. This was to be a swift operation.

Facing him was the latest Khan of the Crimea, Mengli Geraï, with 30-40,000 men and more on the way, behind a new and improved set of Lines that the salesman had assured him was absolutely, but absolutely, impregnable. A Turkish garrison held the Lines, and a new fort at Czivas-Coula (Chivaskul) had been constructed at their eastern terminus, to cover a possible 'end run'. Lacy took them from the rear by crossing the Sivash dry-shod.

*[Crawford, quoting Lacy's letter to Münnich, says prisoners gave an estimate of 25-30,000 men.]*

The army marched out from Vol'chye Vody, arriving at Berda on May 19th. Bredal and 100 ships of the Don flotilla were waiting, along with 4,000 Don Cossacks; more Cossacks arrived with their own little fleet on the 23rd. On the same day, the Russians set out for Molochnye Vody, which they reached two or three days later. Here they rested and built a depot and some fortifications.

The summer heat had dried up much of the swampy salt sea, and the wind in those parts can actually keep the flood back; this wind started blowing on the 26th of June, and Lacy having camped near the shore of the Sivash opposite the Odipa River, crossed immediately, by drawing up his army in a single line along the shore and having them run across! A few carriages were lost when the wind died, but not a single man. The rearguard followed in the night, and did get a little wet.

Once on the other side the Russians quickly took Czivas-Coula (Chivaskul – Crawford calls it 'Siwashkull'), and set out to deal with the Khan. It proved an easy job. Bands of Cossacks and Kalmyks were diverting the Turks with a demonstration against the Lines from the north. Most of the Tatars were camped a few kilometres south of the Lines. The Kalga Sultan's corps was camped near the little fort. They panicked when they saw the Russians approaching from their flank. They were pursued and 12 prisoners taken. Lacy had more trouble from the rain, which began to fall heavily in the night.

Camp was made 7 Km from Perekop. The security parties that always scoured the area before settling in killed 50 Tatars and took 3 more POWs. On the morning of the 27th, the army was halfway to Perekop. The Turks stood to their posts and the place was soon under siege. Trenches were opened and batteries emplaced, and the Turkish commandant, Eubeker Pasha (of 2-tails), who had just arrived two days before with a reinforcement of 500 Janissaries, quickly sued for terms after an intense bombardment seconded by an attack north of the Lines by the Russian diversionary force. The garrison became POWs at 9pm on the 29th of June. Taken were:

Eubeker Pasha  
Aga Mahomet  
10 other officers  
33 'Sergeidetscheschi' Janissaries (the mounted death-or-glory types)  
900 Janissaries  
35 gunners  
117 Debeschi (Derbents – local fortress 'housekeeping' troops)  
103 Tatars

33 servants  
 12 slaves recovered  
 83 metal cannon  
 2 iron 3-lbers  
 1x 35-lber how  
 1x 38-lber how  
 3x 8.5in mortars  
 2x 9.5in mortars  
 37 colours  
 plus the magazine

Casualties were:

100 Janissaries  
 15 gunners  
 13 Debeschi

*[Manstein gives the garrison as 2,000 Janissaries, but the above figures are from Lacy's own letter.]*

There was much ammunition, but little bread. This was a problem, as the area around Perekop had become a desert. The marshal advanced into the Crimea, leaving a garrison of ten grenadier companies under de Brigny, but found conditions even worse. The Russians' two previous visits, and the Tatars' own scorched earth policy, left very little to be gleaned.

On the 3rd of July, while the Russians were still near Perekop, an approaching army was reported. The next day the enemy cavalry appeared, and Lacy sent out his light troops to skirmish while he put his own army in battle order. The enemy withdrew at that time, and the pursuit discovered a camp full of Turks some 10 Km away.

On the 5th, the Russians heard cannon fire – some signal, probably, or some important arrival at the camp – but there was no attack. That came the next day, when a cavalry corps including many *sipahis* attacked both wings of the army (Don Cossacks on the right and Malorussian Cossacks on the left) simultaneously and drove the irregulars back. Coming into range of the main line, however, the enemy took heavy casualties from cannon fire, and withdrew, pursued by the Cossacks, who took two colours.

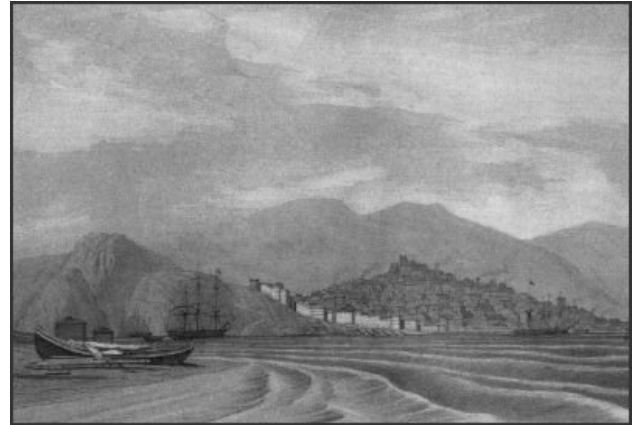
On the 7th, Lacy demolished the Lines and withdrew. There was no subsistence to be had; Kaffa could not be reached. The Azov flotilla might have helped, but it was dispersed by a storm and suffered heavy damage; the Dnieper flotilla was at this time blockaded in that river's liman.

The Russian army marched 8 Km toward the Dnieper, to a spot where there were 'a number of wells' (probably Tatars' Wells). On the 8th the Russians were attacked here by a vast host of Tatars and *sipahis*, who first lured the irregulars on the wings forward, then drove them back. This time, the assault was so furious that the Russian left wing cavalry was broken, but the timely arrival of more dragoons and Cossacks reversed the situation and the enemy fled after suffering about 3,000 dead and losing 8 pairs of colours – one pair belonging to the Khan and another to the Kalga Sultan. The Russian infantry had no chance to join the fray. Russian casualties were 559 dead and 482 wounded.

*[Manstein states that only one battle was fought against the Tatars in this campaign, some distance into the Crimea. But it is clear from Lacy's letter that there were two encounters, and that the one described by Manstein is that which took place north of the Lines. According to him, on the 20th, the Tatars suddenly appeared and furiously attacked the Russians with 20,000 men, routing the Ukrainian Cossacks who composed the rearguard, and nearly routing the Azovski Dragoons who came to the rescue. But Lieutenant-General Spiegel engaged with 4 dragoon regiments and the Cossacks of the Don (elements of this Host were with both Russian armies), first stopping the rout, and then attacking the enemy. They chased them off, but had only just reordered their lines when the enemy came back and charged them as hard as before. The Tatars were finally kicked off by the advance of the foot regiments. Losses were 2,000 Tatars (1,000 in one edition of Manstein's book) and 6-700 Russians. General Spiegel took a sabre cut to the face.]*

The 9th saw the army marching for the Dnieper as fast as their legs would carry them: there was precious little water or forage anywhere, it seemed. Moreover, Lacy shared Münnich's concern that a Turko-Tatar corps might be headed for the Ukraine.

Disheartened by the failure of his campaign, Lacy offered to resign, but the Tsaritsa persuaded him to retain his command. At least his butcher's bill was far less than Münnich's.



*Kaffa*

### The Black Death

Throughout his journal in Russia, Crawford makes only one reference to the plague. Manstein mentions it as one of Münnich's justifications to Vienna for not reinforcing their own failure on the Danube, but at first says it was 'rife' only in Moldavia (the epicentre) and Wallachia. Describing Lacy's campaign he mentions it had got into Oczakov and Kinburun. The two forts were like sieves: 'hardly had [recruits] arrived there, when they died like rotten sheep' (Manstein p. 216) – and those were the conditions *before* the plague arrived. Imperial sources indicate it had spread to Transylvania and the Banat before the end of the campaigning season.

The only notice in Crawford of the outbreak is in a copy of a letter from Marshal Lacy, in which, according to reports sent to him, 'the infecting sickness' had visited Oczakov, Fort Alexander, and the Andriewska Redoubt, had diminished, but was now replaced with a sort of scurvy. The Zaporozhians also reported it was 'dying down'. Clearly the disease had spread east as well (it had also reached Constantinople, where it carried off thousands, and would eventually reach the Volga).

The euphemistic language of Lacy's letter suggests the high command was either suppressing the nature of the disease for fear of spreading panic, or did not understand what it was until later. Crawford also mentions a camp rumour that Oczakov was to be abandoned and razed; this was in fact done because of the plague – the Russians eventually lost a total of 20,000 men there. Kinburun, too, was levelled.

*[According to Davies, medicinal ingredients transported by the Dnieper flotilla included horseradish and pinecones.]*

According to Bain, the Army of the Dnieper was riddled with it:

'We are told that the sick were thrown together, in batches of five and six, into little carts scarcely large enough to hold two men, and driven by miserable wretches shivering with ague, and more resembling corpses than living beings' (pp.246-247).

But of this Crawford says nothing, except that the rearguard was always late because the baggage train was so slow – he puts that down to the loss of transport animals, which was also true. Possibly the closed councils of war decided not to share the nature of the disease. When the disease reached the Ukraine (probably via the army) it was contained and only eradicated a few towns.



From other sources it appears that Münnich was aware of the outbreak even before his army crossed the Bug on its outward journey. The Grand Army was placed under 'moving quarantine', in Davies' words. Incoming letters and orders were fumigated and soaked three times in vinegar, and it was forbidden to step more than 50 paces away from the column (though obviously this did not apply to foraging parties and scouts, so that this particular order may have been instituted on the return march). If more than ten men from the same unit became sick at the same time, they and their baggage were sent into quarantine in Zaporohian territory.

### Naval Matters

Not much can be gleaned about operations on the Black Sea for 1738. A report to Lacy that was passed on merely says the Turks 'continue in their situation much as before'. From other sources it becomes clear that the Ottomans gained a moderate triumph.

Vice Admiral Bredal had been given the job of supporting Lacy's advance and especially with preventing the Ottomans from outflanking the Russians. The Don flotilla, consisting of over 100 sloops and longboats, was to station itself at Yenitchi Strait. But, enroute they were blockaded for six days (May 25th through May 30th) at Cape Visarionov by Turkish galleys and ships of the line. Bredal decoyed the enemy away by sending out three sloops that broke through the ring.

The Turks succeeded in corralling the Russians again off Cape Fedotov between June 6th and June 15th. This time, the Vice Admiral repeated his ploy of the year before and erected a 28-gun battery on the heights above his anchorage. He then beached his ships and dragged them across the spit, under heavy enemy fire, into the shallow bay on the western side, which the Turks, with their deeper draught vessels, could not enter.

On the 16th, the Turks found Bredal again off Yenitchi Strait. They had 7 ships of the line, 1 frigate, 3 large galleys, and 109 light vessels. Bredal had 119 sloops and Cossack longboats. Deciding they were outgunned, the Russians unloaded everything, set up a strong defensive position at the village of Yenitchi on the northern shore of the strait, and burnt their fleet. The enemy tried several times to silence the Russian batteries but refused to close the range, eventually departing on June 19th. Though the Sivash crossing points were secured for Lacy, Bredal's action (for which he was later court martialled) prevented the Navy from supporting the former and contributed to his early retirement from the Crimea.

*[Examining a map of the Sea of Azov, the reader will note a succession of spits along the north shore, growing progressively longer as one travels west. That of Fedotov is the most westerly before reaching the Crimea; that of Visarionov is the next in line eastward. Bredal died of natural causes a few years after the war, before he could be brought to trial; it seems no one was anxious to press the prosecution of Russia's ablest naval commander.]*

The Dnieper flotilla, under Vice Admiral Simiavin, was also confined to the liman on its own river. One reason for this was the plague, which decimated the crews. Simiavin himself, and his successor, both died of the plague. The plague pursued Bredal's sailors, too. One reason the Russians were so willing to scrap their 'Black Sea Fleet' as a condition of the peace treaty in 1739 was the fact they had no crews to man any such thing.

### Summary

In retrospect, 1738 was a good year for the Ottomans. In the Balkans, they took the key Imperial fort of Orsova, defeated a relief attempt against it, and began to ooze into the Banat. Next year they would lay siege to Belgrade.

In Moldavia they had not, it is true, beaten the Russian Army, but they had successfully denied it a victory and compelled it to retreat in a battered state. The Ottomans' own losses might have been kept slight, if only the leadership could have restrained the rank and file. Instead, their army wound up in a rather poor state, too.

In the Crimea, Marshal Lacy's third campaign stalled though his own prior successes: there were absolutely no resources left on the peninsula that could be used to prosecute the war, and therefore Kaffa could not be reduced. The Ottoman fleet scored a major success in eliminating its opposite number.

Finally, the forts of Oczakov and Kinburun had had to be destroyed. Münnich had provisionally decided to abandon the mouth of the Dnieper as early as May, but could not get authorisation. On August 14th (NS) the commandant, Stoffeln, held a council of war and chose to evacuate on his own account starting August 31st. Luckily for him, St. Petersburg sent authorization on September 7th. The evacuation also meant the destruction of the Dnieper flotilla – over 1,000 vessels were broken up, burnt, or scuttled.

While the plague was perhaps not the one decisive factor that Münnich claimed it to be, it had an important effect, draining garrisons, crippling the navy, and weakening the armies. The plague's effects on the Ottoman army in Moldavia are not documented, but it is likely another reason why the Turkish commander felt he was too weak to cross the Dniester and engage in a set-piece battle, despite having more men than his compatriots on the Danube.

### 1739: Marche Slav

The winter of 1738-39 was as bad as ever: break ice, chase Tatars, break ice, chase Tatars. Plus cordon duty to prevent the plague from spreading (though the weather was a help here).

Münnich improved on the previous winter's organisation, sending standing patrols into the steppe as far as the Ingul and Kuban Rivers, and augmenting the Lines of the Ukraine with new regiments and a series of advance posts a few kilometres apart all along the Lines; winter quarters for the regulars were also placed closer to the frontier. At the more open eastern end, the Don Cossacks were charged with providing additional security.

The Tatars made one last big raid during the month of March, 1739. A few villages were sacked, but the Russian response was so quick and savage they rode off to pillage Poland instead. It was the last time they tried raiding the Russian Ukraine.

*[This was the winter that a pretender Tsarevich appeared, claiming to be the son of Peter I, although only the son of a peasant. He declared himself to three soldiers, and got one village to follow him, but they were all arrested by the Cossacks. Conveyed to St. Petersburg for trial, they were returned to the Ukraine for punishment, where Major-General Shipov had charge of carrying out the sentences. The 'prince' was impaled, and the priest who had supported him, and the three soldiers (who ought to have arrested him) also executed, variously. The peasants were pardoned but their village was razed.]*

### High Politics

On March 1st, 1739, an extraordinary Cabinet meeting was called at St. Petersburg, presided over by the Tsaritsa, with Münnich as her chief advisor. Vienna had grown positively irate over the Generalissimo's failure to 'save' the Imperial Army in 1738, blaming him for all their defeats. The marshal used the Plague as his excuse, but pointed out the Russians had kept a large enemy army occupied – over half the Turkish field forces and most of the Tatars – all season.

The Tsaritsa and the Cabinet stood by her marshal, partly because the Austrian ambassador, Count Ostein, was such an uncultured lout. He and Anna's favourite, Biron, bandied high words. Ostein groused that Vienna was carrying the burden of the war with no help from the ally who had got her into it. Biron insinuated that Imperial generals only knew how to surrender. 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 (the Austrians were more anti-Semitic than the Russians). Ostein was recalled and replaced by an even worse choice (Botta d'Adorno; but he was seen as an improvement at the time).

Such affairs changed nothing. Vienna needed peace and after the last campaign even St. Petersburg was interested; the Ottomans were also hurting, though they did not let on, while the Tatars were on their last legs. The final clause to the settlement of the Polish Succession had been hammered out, and now France stood forth as a peacemaker, hoping to drive a wedge between the Habsburgs and the Romanovs – who had just concluded a marriage alliance. The Russian Foreign Minister, Count Ostermann, sensed the French were plotting to overthrow the 'German party' at St. Petersburg.

*[The regime change occurred in 1741.]*

Russia began to moderate her demands. The Ottomans, no longer threatened by Nadr Shah, however – he was off to Delhi to seize the Peacock Throne and the Kohinoor – suddenly stiffened; a last campaign would be needed to make them see reason, much as the Imperials wanted to get off the ride.

The Tsaritsa, seconded by Ostermann, whose fears of a separate Habsburg peace grew stronger by the day, insisted that Vienna must be helped (much to Vienna's surprise when they finally heard about it). The Generalissimo refused to send an auxiliary corps, but did promise positive aid. He would come himself.

### Strategy

The Russian campaign of 1739 is best described as a 'workmanlike job'. Nothing went wrong. Step by step Münnich's forces followed drills honed over the previous three years. Every move was meticulously carried out. Risks were taken, but they were calculated, and paid off. The enemy was forced to dance to the Russians' tune. The Army was in some tight spots, but in retrospect the outcome seems inevitable.

Münnich's plan was to invade Moldavia from the north, first investing the powerful fortress of Khotin on the Dniester, and then moving to capture the capital, Iasi, and Bender if there was time. Moldavia would be the only theatre of importance for the Russians this year. The Kuban was under their thumb, and the Crimea had been stripped bare.

To save time and resources, the campaign would be launched from Kiev, and take a route through Polish Podolia, roughly by way of the road from Kiev toward Lviv. The lands here were rich; there would be no difficulty about forage. To save more time, the army would only take rations for three months, and buy the rest from the Poles. There would be no contact with the Dnieper magazines, nor would they construct any enroute.

The Turks would be unlikely to enter Poland, meaning the army could disperse and travel even faster. Just to make sure, bands of Cossacks would conduct a deep penetration toward Bender, and the army would start its march in a southwesterly direction; it would be given out that lack of forage and river transport (true) necessitated a short march through Poland. The army would not be told its real destination until well away from the spies that infested Kiev.

### Count Andrei Ivanovich (Heinrich Johann Friedrich) Ostermann (1686-1747)

Born in Bochum, Germany, the son of a pastor. Studied for the law at Jena, but was forced to flee to Holland after a duel; joined the Russian Navy in 1704. Although he adopted Russian ways, he remained a Protestant. One of Peter I's better picks for the diplomatic service. Served the Court of Russia for decades, always avoiding the pitfalls of regime change. One of those most responsible for Russia's leap onto the European stage. Involved with the Treaty of the Prût (1711). Made Baron for negotiating the Treaty of Nystad (1721) – he bluffed the Swedes into giving away more than they had to. 1723 made vice-president of the Foreign Ministry as a reward for obtaining a favourable commercial treaty with Persia. Advised the Tsar on many things, such as the Table of Ranks.

Served Catherine I, and Peter II, and Anna Ivanova as Foreign Minister. Also held the posts of Minister of Commerce and Postmaster-General. Governor to the young Peter II. Backed Anna's assumption of power against various members of the nobility who wanted to limit her authority (he did so by a diplomatic illness). Under Anna, introduced the Cabinet system to Russian government. Made many useful reforms during the 1730s. Negotiated end to both the War of the Polish Succession and the Russo-Turkish War of 1735-39. Under Anna Leopoldovna's short reign (1740-41) he was virtually Tsar. Out of favour at last with the accession of Elisabeth (1741) because he preferred continuing ties with Austria and had guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction (that was the official reason – the real reason was because he had 'neglected' her). The French were against him and it was they who fomented the revolution that overthrew Anna. Sentenced to death by breaking on the wheel and beheading; commuted to exile in Siberia.



Count Ostermann

The first major obstacle was the upper Bug. Here, either the Ottomans or the Poles might try to block the Russians. Once past the Bug, the Dniester would have to be crossed. As will be seen, Münnich planned a feint against Khotin with the bulk of his army, which would pin the Turks while he and flying column crossed the river farther upstream. The rest of the army would rejoin him, and the whole would approach Khotin from the west.

It was known that the Moldavians and Wallachians in the Ottoman Army were disaffected. Khotin's fall would be the signal for those well disposed to Russia to reveal their true colours. Remembering the troubles Peter the Great had with his similar campaign in 1711, Münnich would take no chances and did not make an insurrection the key to his operations.

The Generalissimo's plan had one important stumbling block: Poland was neutral. Not a much of a moral dilemma for a Russian army, except that they had spent a couple of years stamping out revolts on behalf of King Augustus III and the Tsaritsa had sworn her armies would not reenter the country. Ostermann and Münnich deemed the risk acceptable. The Poles were too weak to resist, and anyway, the Tsaritsa was one of King Augustus' sponsors.

The excuse would be that the Poles had permitted the Tatars to attack the Left Bank Ukraine from their lands; ignoring the fact the Poles were too weak to do anything about it. (*We're Russians and right, you're Poles and wrong; get used to it.*) The Saxon representative for Poland, one Suhm, lodged an official protest, and that was that.

*[The Poles assembled 18,000 men in the Kiev Palatinate to dispute the entry of the expected 20-30,000-man Russian 'auxiliary corps' promised to the Imperials, but the Grand Army was a different kettle of fish.]*

For their part, the Imperials were expected to launch their own offensive on the Danube and to send a column via Transylvania to link up with the Russians. More importantly, they were to establish magazines on the Moldavian border so that the Russians could replenish themselves and arm the Moldavians. Again, Münnich did not rely on the Austrians actually carrying out this part of the program.

### Ottoman Preparations

Of the Turks, news was that they were confident the Russians would not repeat their 'folly' and had therefore concentrated their strength against the Imperials. This was only partly true. Bender and Khotin were receiving reinforcements, but slowly.

10,000 Krim Tatars were stationed at Soroka on the Dniester to give early warning. Should the Poles mobilise (and there was rumour of cavalry being assembled at Nemirov under the Grand Crown Hetman – the Polish Cossack leader, Potocki, who hated the Russians) the Tatars could perhaps join with them. But Tatar strength overall was relatively low. The Kuban had submitted, while the Bielogorod and Bujak Hordes were at daggers drawn over grazing rights and could not be expected to muster at all.

The Crimea was not neglected. The Lines of Perekop were repaired and strengthened, and additional Ottoman troops dispatched thither; the squadron escorting them redeployed to the Sea of Azov to thwart any Russian naval landings. A sizeable portion of the Krim Horde likewise remained at home to deal with the threat of an attack. The Kuban was left to its own devices.

### Russian Preparations

Münnich arrived in the Ukraine at the end of March and called for a general muster at Kiev on the 26th of April, but this proved too optimistic. Some of the regiments, dispersed over the winter to combat Tatar raids, had 800 Km to march before they got there. Furthermore, the Dnieper overflowed its banks and flooded the country for 8 Km either side. Amazingly, under the conditions, a bridge of boats was finished by the 8th of May, but it took until June 4th to assemble the regiments, the artillery, and the supply train on the western bank.

This year, Münnich's Grand Army was roughly 60-65,000 men:

- 49 battalions of foot (including a battalion of foot guards from each of the three regiments).
- 3 squadrons of Horse Guards, 100 squadrons of dragoons.
- 16 squadrons of hussars (10 of these were semi-irregular – 6 of 'Wallachians' and 4 of 'Georgians'), plus 13,000 Cossacks of all kinds.
- The train included 62 'battering' pieces, 11 mortars, 16 howitzers, and 176 field guns (including regimental guns), served by 3,000 cannoners. Plus Fermor's 36-pontoon bridge.

*[For artillery, Davies lists 167 regimental guns, 240 regimental mortars, 63 field guns, 32 field mortars, 22 large siege guns, and 80 siege mortars. This required the use of nearly 9,500 horses and oxen.]*

Compared to 1738, the army was a third smaller, but about 80% were regulars, and about 60% were mounted. The artillery train was larger, but the commissariat much reduced.

*[Officers were not allowed to bring their wives to the assembly point (or have more personal transport than that needed for rations. (They were also forbidden to use recruits as servants.) 15,500 two-wheeled carts were deemed necessary for supplies – and this was a significant reduction. Buying locally from Jews was permitted, but only where the populace would not be incited to violence!]*

Staff included General Rumyantsev, lieutenant-generals Karl Biron, Löwendahl (Artillery), and Gustav Biron, and major-generals the Prince of Holstein, Chroustcheff, Philosopov, Prince Repnin, Bachmetev, Keyserling, Fermor, Schipov, Stockman, and Apraxin.

*[Davies details the recruiting drive for this campaign, which netted 32,745 recruits out of a projected 40,000. The southern frontier was spared, but the 'Old Believers' (heretics who held to an older but unorthodox Orthodoxy) were taxed heavily. Most of the men went to the Grand Army. Still, there was a shortfall, and Münnich had to requisition garrison troops and several regiments from the Army of the Don.]*

### First Stages

*[At the time, the Russian army marched through Russian, Polish, and Turkish (Moldavian) territory to accomplish its aim. The entire route, from Kiev to Khotin, now lies completely within the Ukraine.]*

The Grand Army began crossing the Dnieper on April 23rd. This operation took until May 13th, due to a swollen river and heavy rain. The army camped first on the Lybeda, a small tributary. The next camp (May 17th) was 25 Km away, at the town of Levy.

*[These locations are now within Kiev's bounds; the Lybeda runs through the Solomyanskyi district.]*

After a council of war, at which Münnich revealed the army's destination, and a week's respite, the Russians made a second march, southwest to the small fortress of Wasilikow (Vasilkov or Vasylikiv, now a feeder town of Kiev). This lay by the Stunga (Stuhna) River, another tributary of the Dnieper, which ran along the Polish border. After a four-day rest, they crossed the Stuhna and entered Poland.

*[At this time, Kiev was a Russian enclave on the west bank of the Dnieper, surrounded by Polish territory.]*

Up until now, the army had marched in a single column of four divisions (1st, Rumyantsev; 2nd, Karl von Biron; 3rd, Löwendahl; 4th, Gustav Biron). Again, Fermor commanded the advance guard, at this point primarily composed of logistics troops – pioneers and pontooneers – escorted by the Wallachians and two regiments of Ukrainian volunteers. The (Kalmyk) Tchougievski Cossacks formed Münnich's personal bodyguard.

For the march to the Bug, the divisions marched separately, on a 40 Km front, hoping to make better time, by way of Sokolnitsy and Pavoloch, and Skivira (Skvyra).

*[These three locations lie on a line running southeast from Zhytomyr. In clarification it should be stated that these were not passed through in*

*succession, but serve as guideposts for the left, right, and center. As a whole, the army was headed west by southwest.]*

They were two weeks behind schedule, and the weather continued poor. The advance guard led, followed by the 1st Division, deployed for reconnaissance. The others marched in compact formations. One day's march, of 15-20 Km, was followed by one day's rest. Even with these halts they made better time, and few men were lost to straggling or sickness. It also allowed a number of reinforcements to catch up, giving Münnich 68,000 men (58,000 fit for battle).

Shadowing them were the cavalry of the Grand Hetman, but he only wished to prevent depredations on the part of foragers – in which he had only moderate success. The Russians had been ordered to buy exclusively from authorised dealers, but five-fingered discounts were a hard habit to break. Polish units were also mustering in the neighbourhood of Nemirov, on their left flank, and Kamianets (Kam'yanets'-Podil's'kyi) on their forward right.

Prior to the Grand Army entering Poland, a strong body of Cossacks made the planned raid on Moldavia, crossing the Dniester midway between Khotin and Bender, with the object of spreading rumours that they were the cavalry screen of the Grand Army, whose target was supposed to be the Bielogorod Horde. This news caused the main body of Ottoman reinforcements, who were marching up from Bulgaria, to pause at Bender for fifteen days. The Cossacks ravaged the country beyond the Dniester to a depth of 60 Km; they burned the towns of Soroka and Mohilew (Mogliiev or Mohyliv), and took 18 prisoners and 400 horses (mostly stolen from the Poles on the way).

### **A Russian Army in Poland**

Davies provides additional details on Russian-Polish-Cossack-Tatar relationships. King August III was not a threat. But Grand Hetman Potocki was. One of the great magnates, he especially represented the Polish Cossack society of southeastern Poland, and had a particular dislike of Russians.

Hitherto, the Russians had bought him off with subsidies; he also faced personal rivals among the high Polish nobility, who would be happy to veto funds and men just to watch him fail. However, the French were stirring up trouble in Sweden, and might think to outbid the Russians in order to bring Poland into a coalition.

Also, there were the *haidamaks*. Davies calls these people 'social bandits'. Essentially, the Right Bank Ukraine had become a no-mans-land since the Great Northern War. The peasantry had gone back to a 'freer' existence as independent Cossacks. Though the Russians were not regarded as an enemy by these bands – the Zaporozhians sometimes gave them aid – the army's passage was likely to stir things up, and this could lead to a mass rising or pogroms against the Jews. One such rising had occurred in 1734 and had tied down much of the Russian Mobile Army for over a year.

The Zaporozhians were also a risk. Münnich feared they might revolt. Indeed, they nearly did go over to the enemy before the campaign opened. A much-liked hetman, Pylyp Orlik, deposed by the Russians before the war, was inciting them to seek guarantees of liberty from the Turks and actively aid the latter by cooperating with the Tatars. Münnich attempted to bribe the current leadership to ensure their loyalty, only to have the plan blow up in his face when the facts leaked out. Fortunately, the elected replacement hetman was loyal to Russia – the Cossacks did not object to pro-Russian leaders, only to dishonest ones.

### **Over the Bug**

Around the middle of June, the Russians arrived at the Bug, at an unspecified location (likely somewhere between Khmil'nyk and Vinnytsia). Finding the banks unsuitable for crossing, they shifted farther upstream, eventually crossing it simultaneously at Latizchew (Lelitka, a western hamlet of Khmil'nyk), Constantinow (Novokostyantyniv), and Mentzibosh (Medzhybizh), between the dates of June 22nd and 24th. The army reunited at Letichev

(Letychiv, east of Khmelnytskyi and southwest of Khmilnyk), and the march resumed, after a second council of war, on the 26th.

The Poles continued to screen the Russians. At one point, a corps commanded by one Malinowski, had seemed ready to interpose itself between the army and the Bug, but they had drawn off.

It was rumoured that the garrison of Khotin had themselves entered Poland with 60,000 men to dispute the passage, but they had been too slow, and had returned to base upon learning the Russians were already across. The Tatars were no closer than the Kodima River. The Porte had sent orders to the Wallachians and Moldavians to muster, and to begin setting up magazines, but they were very tardy.

*[The fact that the main Turkish army was at Bender makes it unlikely that the forces at Khotin were really 60,000 strong, but it did have a very large garrison.]*

The Grand Army now marched in a single column, along one road, with about an hour's march separating each division. On the 4th of July, the Don Cossacks arrived, while the army was camped by the Bobonsta Creek. The Cossacks brought extra horses, which were very welcome. The march recommenced on the 8th; on the 17th they approached the Sbroutsch (Smotrych) River, a tributary of the Dneister whose confluence is just downstream from Khotin; it runs through Kamianets.

The army's progress had slowed considerably. The Tatars had at last appeared, and the army marched in a square, with its left toward the Dniester and its right screened by a screen of Cossacks. They had to skirt the Nedoborschetz (Nedoborg) Mountains, and avoid Kamianets itself, due to reports of Plague in the town.

The day before – the 16th – Münnich initiated his feint-and-hook operation. General Rummyantsev marched up to the Sbroutsch, in full view of the enemy, who were now on the near bank of the Dniester. They moved to block his passage of the Sbroutsch.

*[Khotin, though it is on high ground with respect to the Dniester itself, is dominated by the plateau beyond the north bank.]*

Since the Sbroutsch has very steep banks, and the Russians were on the far side, the Turks expected to defend it easily. But their foes drew off; if the Ottomans pursued, they would have been pinned against the river, so they did not pursue. They still anticipated the Russians would try the river at some point. But that was not the Generalissimo's plan. In order to complete his designs in safety, Münnich now had to act quickly.

After examining Khotin at a distance, the Generalissimo detached a flying column of 20,000 men, a large quantity of field artillery, and six days' rations, led it 80 Km west, arriving on the Dniester the evening of the 17th, after placing the Nichlava River between them and any enemy foray.

*[Davies says Münnich took heavy guns with him, which seems counterintuitive, but Rummyantsev retained the baggage train and the 'battering pieces', which was the slowest element. Davies probably means the field pieces as opposed to the regimental guns.]*

Bridges were quickly thrown across the Dniester at the small village of Sinkovitsa, about 50 Km upstream from Khotin. The Russians were all on the south bank by the 19th. The Turks were still waiting at the Sbroutsch. Meanwhile, Rummyantsev, eluding them, marched by easy stages toward a rendezvous scheduled for the 22nd.

*[The location of Sinkovitsa/Sinkowtza is hard to pinpoint. The best choice is Sin'kiv. Manstein only names Sinkowtza as a Polish village. Davies only says the column went to 'Nichlava to cross the Dneistr above Khotin' P.235), but Nichlava is not a town, it is a tributary of the Dniester. There is no location with a name like Sinkovitsa near that river's confluence, although confusingly, there is a Shyshkivtsi on the Nicklava which might serve as a place to cross that river! At Sin'kiv the banks are low and the region is open.]*

## Across the Dniester at Last!

The Russians would now be operating in constricted terrain. The Prût River lay not that far away to the south, running on a line parallel to the Dniester. The land between was partly under cultivation and partly wooded, but in all places east of their current position cut by numerous streams, and very hilly. However, this could work to the Russians' advantage. If the enemy attempted to shift his base, Münnich would have time to prepare. And, the terrain was unsuitable for large bodies of cavalry.

Meanwhile, more bridges were constructed, to accommodate the rest of the army, redoubts were constructed, and small columns of raiders were sent out, some as far afield as the Prût and Cheremaska Rivers. Numbers of Wallachian and Moldavian volunteers began to arrive – deserters from the Turkish camp.

It started to rain heavily and kept raining for several days. It rained so hard, in fact, that the bridges were washed away and it took a deal of effort to recover and reposition them – they were washed down nearly to Khotin (let the reader imagine the difficulties involved in recovering them from that location). But it was not such a disaster because Rummyantsev was stuck in the mud. His command arrived piecemeal between July 23rd and 26th. The Russian flying columns were forced to hunker down behind the camp redoubts until the weather cleared.

Around July 20th, the Ottomans finally twigged to what was going on. On the evening of the 21st, Sultan Islam Geraï and 12,000 Tatars of Bujak conducted a reconnaissance in force. Islam Geraï was accompanied by the governor of Khotin, Aali Kaltzchak (Iliash Colceag) Pasha and 6,000 *Serdengestis*, or mounted Janissaries, who called themselves the Janissaries of No Quarter. They pitched into a band of Russian foragers, but the escorting dragoon regiment – Tobolski – formed square and held them off until a fire brigade of irregulars arrived.

The latter were taken from the Cossack camp on the left of the Russian lines; to cover the gap created, Münnich extended his remaining units of the left, and Islam Geraï pounced. Heavy fighting all down the left flank forced the Generalissimo to dispatch several infantry regiments, plus mounted grenadiers and a battalion of Guards. By forming a large square, these reinforcements at last succeeded in driving off the enemy. 600 Turks and Tatars were killed. The Muslims withdrew to observe.

*[Manstein reports that one of the Russian dead was a German officer seconded from the Polish-Saxon Court. Davies says the Russian casualties were 39 KIA, 97 WIA, and 62 MIA. Münnich lacked enough light horsemen to pursue.]*

The bridges again removed (by choice this time), the reassembled Grand Army marched forth on the 26th, following the Dniester up-stream. With a tangle of low, wooded hills to the east, running in a line to the southwest, Münnich aimed to find a better route.

On the 29th they reached Doroshevitsa (Doroshivtsi). Here they made an extended camp and reorganised again. Now, the emphasis was on battle, not logistics. Rummyantsev was put in charge of a *corps de bataille* – a strike force, otherwise the Center division – while Karl von Biron commanded the Right Flank division, Löwendahl the Left Flank division, and Fermor a Vanguard of engineers and picked troops.

*[The village lies in the bottomland beside the river, but the high ground south of it is an eminently suitable position for a camp, protected on the south and west by ravines.]*

On July 31st, the Russians heard the fortress guns of Khotin saluting the arrival of *serasker* Veli Pasha and his reinforcing army, some of whom had marched all the way from the Danube. The next day the Tatars tried to redeem their honour. 1,500 daredevils worked their way close to the Doroshevitsa camp along a ravine, but they were spotted by the Cossacks, who pursued them for some 10 Km and took a few prisoners.

*[According to Davies, 'a few thousand' Tatars of Bujak and Bielogrod, pursued by 2,500 Cossacks. The Russians lost 7 KIA and 16 WIA. Veli Pasha was this year Governor of Bender. He had taken charge of the forces sent from Bulgaria, added them to the best of his own troops, and, once the direction of the enemy march was ascertained, rushed north as quickly as he could.]*

On the 2nd of August, the Russians broke camp and made a short march (though it took two days), arriving at Zastavna, on the 4th. The enemy was believed to be within a day's march, so the train made a circuit to the west to keep it between the army and the Sovitsa (Sovytsya) River. The left of the army was screened by irregulars, and the main body carried their pikes and *chevaux-de-frise* at the ready.

Zastavna was fortified and raiders were sent out. Another council of war was held. As was their wont, the Ottomans appeared to be using their irregulars to scout, lay waste, and generally harass the enemy, while the artillery, infantry, and picked cavalry remained in front of Khotin. Possibly, they were still getting organised, but they may – since the Russians' goal was obvious – have been plotting to lure them on for a climatic battle of encirclement.

From Zastavna, the Russians had two choices: take the direct road, which ran through the wooded hills, or make a detour toward the Prût and take a road that connected to Khotin from the southwest. The forest road was shorter, but the hills become progressively steeper and higher between Zastavna and Khotin, there were numerous positions for the Turks to hold, and there was not much to eat. The other road meant a longer march, but it was more open and there was believed to be abundant forage. There was one caveat. To take to the longer road meant traversing the 6 Km-long Perekop Pass (or Passes of Tschernantz – really a series of defiles), lying along the north bank of the Prût, and which had a Turkish fort (the Okop'e) at its far end.

*[This pass was famous in Polish history; it was the location where Jan Sobieski defeated the Tatars and Moldavians. Tschernantz = Chernivisti.]*

It was resolved to try this route nonetheless. The enemy would never expect it. The baggage and siege train would remain at Zastavna, which was to be garrisoned by 20,000 men; it would be brought up once the pass had been exited safely.

Again, the Generalissimo's astounding luck held. The Pass, though it appears wide enough in satellite images, was a horrible place to try and penetrate if properly defended. But it was not even watched. Deserters reported the most important section had been completely abandoned, and the Russians pressed on to seize it.

The army marched in three divisional squares at all times. There were a number of terrain obstacles to deal with, any one of which could have granted success to an enemy attack. First, the army moved down to the Prût, resting its right flank on that river, and keeping the 'Waletzka' (Shubranets) on its left. Then, the Shubranets was bridged; 25 bridges erected on the night of the 6th of August, followed by a march to the Stanigora River. The entrance to the Passes lay on its far bank.

*[The Stanigora is probably the Moshkiv, the most substantial river east of the Shubranets. Near the Prût, both these rivers as well as two or three others converge. 'Stanigora' is probably a reference to the hill complex from which the Moshkiv flows, and which forms the northern flank of the Passes.]*

A mixed force of 3,000 mounted troops scouted the entire length of the Passes, and reported the enemy had set up camp some kilometres beyond the Okop'e. Still, Münnich was taking no chances. Fermor's engineers erected a fascine barrier along the entire length of the road to give protection from cannon fire, should the Turks have any on the heights, and the entire army was funnelled through in under 12 hours.

On the 7th, the Russians set up camp on the banks of the Dolgaia stream which lay in the plain at the far end of the pass, with the hills still on their left and the Prût still on their right. Only small parties of the enemy skirmished with the Russian outposts. It was later

determined they were trying to ambush the Cossacks by luring them into another defile, but failed to do so.

*[Supposedly the Russians could see Khotin from their camp, at a lower elevation. This does not seem possible given the lie of the land and assuming the army camped by the Prût – there is rising ground behind the fortress; even the outer entrenchments have no view of the Prût.]*

Münnich remained where he was on the 8th, waiting on the Train. Most of the baggage was still in the rear, but he did have some heavy guns. This day the enemy appeared in force with 20,000 mounted men. They were driven off with artillery fire, and chased back to their own camp, which lay on the far side of the next stream, called the Houka (Gukovaia or Khukiv). Münnich planned to assault this camp the next day.

Leaving their baggage under guard, the Russians formed into their three squares and headed for the Houka. The Ottomans seemed reluctant to cross the river, so Münnich attacked them. While his Left rested on a ravine, 12 grenadier companies of the Right stormed across the river, followed by the rest of the division. Two ‘brigades’ of field artillery provided fire support. Having driven the enemy up into the surrounding hills, the rest of the army bridged the river and crossed themselves.

*[Manstein says when the Russians formed on the plain and advanced, the enemy simply abandoned their camp and dispersed, after setting fire to a few hamlets.]*

*[Davies says the Russian right attacked the Ottoman right.]*

*[Russian losses in the first attack were 16 KIA, 30 WIA and 2 MIA; in the second attack, 4 wounded. Enemy losses are unreported.]*

The 10th and 11th saw light action while the Russians were camped on the Houka; the 11th somewhat heavier than the first day. Generally, only the Cossacks and Wallachians/Moldavians were engaged, supported by the army’s picquets as needed. Major General Stockmann was taken prisoner when he attempted to travel from the camp with a minimal escort. He was recovered after Khotin was taken.

The next two days were much the same, but as the last of the baggage train arrived, the enemy, with a new camp only 12-16 Km away, infiltrated the country on all sides. Small groups were plainly visible all around, some coming within a few hundred yards to observe the Russians.

The last of the baggage made it safely into camp on the 13th of August. At this, the Generalissimo ordered a fresh advance for the 14th. An enemy camp lay across the Ratkitnia (Rakytno or Rokyne) River, only 3-4 Km away. They had chosen to base in the hills, rather than meet the Russians on a plain, forcing their enemy to abandon the river.

Once again, the baggage was left behind and Münnich advanced with only five days’ rations. He wanted to gain the enemy position before the bulk of the Turkish army, rumoured to be in motion, linked up with its screening forces. Word also came that other advance columns, of Tatars and Ottomans, were closing in from all sides.

The enemy once again abandoned their camp; a grand raid on the Russian train by some of the displaced cavalry was foiled by the Don and Tchougievski Cossacks at a cost of 7 KIA and 7 WIA. With the Russians now on the banks of the ‘Sinkovitsa’ (Rynhach) and it was decided to immediately bring up the train, rather than risk a second attack. Khotin was ahead of them, but there were three large bodies of enemy mounted troops in the hills and valleys all around: Aali Kaltzchak (Iliash Colgeag) and his mounted Janissaries to the Russians’ left, Islam Geraï and his Tatars behind them, and Jentsch Ali Pasha with the Ottoman *sipahis* on their right.

The protagonists were coming to grips at last. The main enemy camp, heavily fortified, was only 13 Km southwest of Khotin, and a little more than that from the Russians, on the far bank of the Schoulanetz/Shulanets (Cherlena).

## The Battle of Stavutschina (Stavchany: August 17th, 1739)

No further action occurred until the Russians reached the Shulanets, on the 16th. Here they found the Ottoman host waiting for them, under command of Veli Pasha:

- 20,000 Janissaries under Mustapha Agha. (The 6,000 *Serdengestis* should probably be added to this total, although they were with the flanking forces.)
- 20,000 *sipahis*, *cebecis*, and *arnauts*.
- 40-50,000 Tatars.
- 70 guns and mortars.

Although it is ‘in the hills’, the battlefield is quite open, with undulating ground rising steadily from the Prût. In the wider view, the ground slopes down to the Prût on the south and continues to rise on the north. The Ottomans were deployed at an angle, northwest-southeast, across this ‘macro’ slope. The high ground behind them was more or less the crest of the land; beyond, to the northeast the ground sloped slowly but steadily down to Khotin. Though parts of the rolling ground were moderately steep, there were many places suitable for cavalry action and artillery fire, while there was plenty of dead ground to conceal formations in – in other words, it was a typical 18th Century battlefield, and one particularly suited to an Ottoman army.

The Turks occupied the significant high ground. Their camp was not on the crest of the plateau, but partway up the last slopes. The Shulanets and various rivulets, dotted with pools and small lakes, and with marshy banks, ran through a valley in front of them. Other slopes encompassed this valley, particularly on the north, but also slightly on the south, forming a natural amphitheatre.

The Ottoman deployment followed the book. Veli Pasha’s command post was in the centre. Lower than his camp, and partly concealed by declivities in the ground, were three rows of trenches, still under construction, occupied by the 20,000 foot soldiers. More earthworks marked the location of 11 artillery batteries.

*[The accompanying map, copied by Paul Dangel from an original now in the Hessisches Staatsarchiv, shows only 9 batteries, but two more were set up during the battle. Note also that only two gun positions are on the left flank.]*

Most of the works appeared to be on the Ottoman right, which was secured on the upper hamlet of Nadobaevtsy (Nedoboivtsi). There was a defile here, and a stream, and beyond lay woodland.

Their left was, notionally, on the lower hamlet of Stavutschina, but Veli Pasha did not have enough foot soldiers to cover the distance, so he refused his flank somewhat, and deployed his men thinly on this side. This was primarily because the course of the Shulanets ran through Stavutschina before bending in front of the Turkish position, creating, as they thought, an impracticable approach on that side.

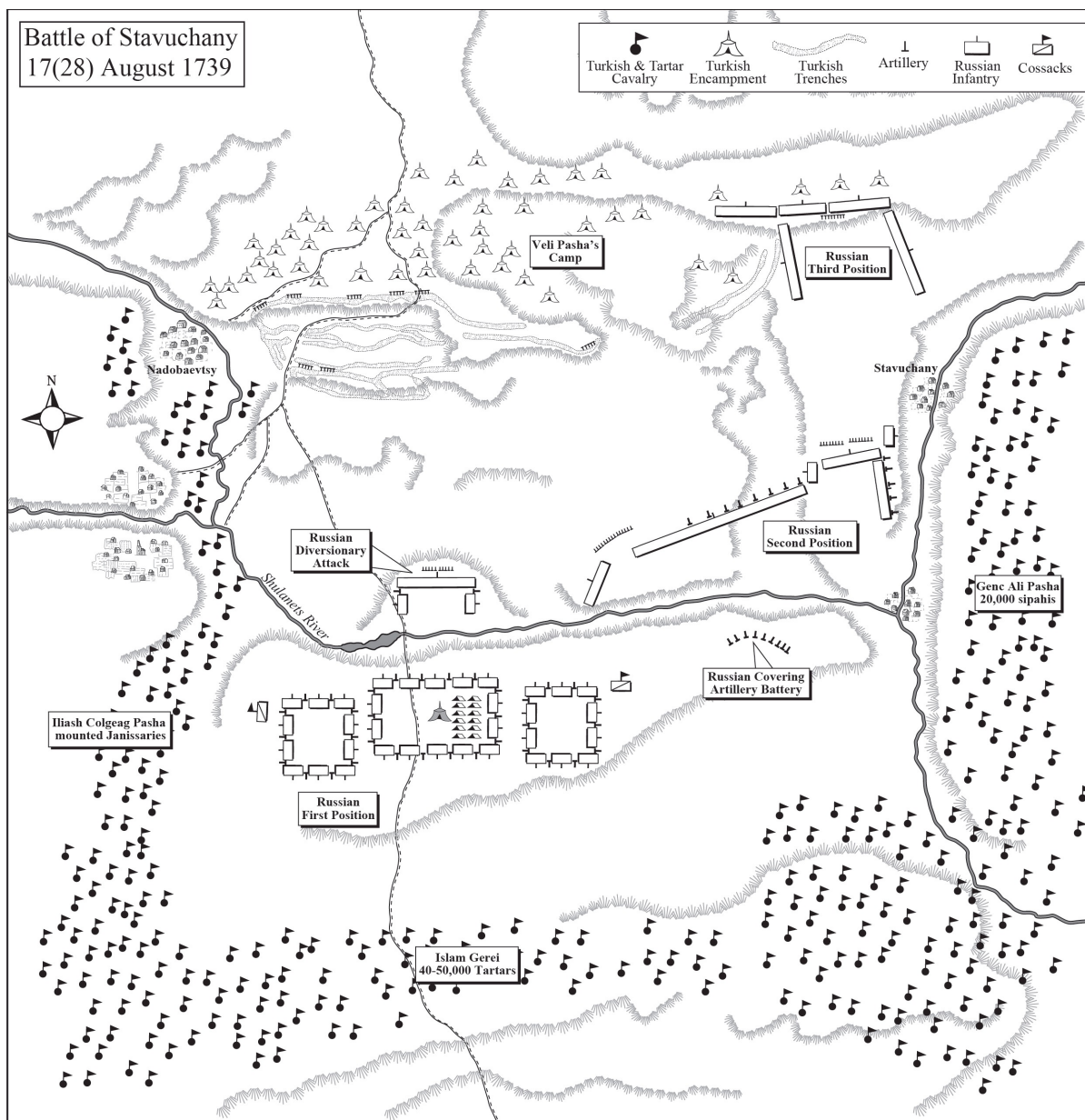
*[With reference to the map, it is not clear if the other waterway on that side is a branch of the Shulanets or a tributary stream; the area has numerous interlocking streams.]*

The rest of the army was composed of cavalry, deployed all around the Russians, in the bodies described early. Though no details are given, the mass probably remained concealed in dead ground, with only a screen visible to watch, and intimidate, the Russians.

As the Grand Army advanced into the valley, the Tatars under Islam Geraï began to harry them behind. It looked to be a rather sticky affair. The Ottoman generals were cock-a-hoop. Now, surely, they could reap a second Surrender-on-the-Prût. But, the Russians calmly made camp, and Münnich unhesitatingly ordered an assault for the following day. Though he had left a strong guard (under Khrushev) far behind him with the baggage train, he still had about 48,000 men – and more importantly, 250 guns.

The Russians sat out the night as best they could in the valley bottom, on the west side of the Shulanets. Fortunately, they were at





extreme range for artillery fire – even for ‘plunging fire’. At dawn, the army solemnly formed up.

Löwendahl and Gustav Biron were directed to take the pick of the Left division and Vanguard (3 battalions of Guards, 3 battalions of regulars, 2 dragoon regiments, and 400 assorted picquets), and cross the Shulanets in front of the Russian center-left. They took with them 30 siege guns and 4 mortars. Both sides then bombarded each other until midday, with almost no effect (the Turks managed to fire 100 rounds and kill 1 horse).

*[The map shows the guns in front of Biron's formation, but the howitzers were in the middle, firing over the soldiers' heads.]*

But this was only a feint. The object of the demonstration was to distract the Turks' attention from the motion of the Russians onto the enemy's weak left; the demonstration might also weaken it further by diverting enemy units to that flank, or pinning them in place. The trick succeeded. Two new enemy batteries were set up opposite the demonstrating wing, while the work languished on the soon to be threatened side.

Meanwhile the remainder of the Grand Army stood to arms in their squares, with the Cossacks and other mobile forces interspersed

among them for mutual support. Except for a limited attack by Aali Kaltzchak's mounted Janissaries which routed some Don Cossacks, most of the army had no fighting to do all morning. However, they were making preparations.

Gustav Biron was withdrawn around noon. This motion was even more effective than the actual demonstration. Apparently, Veli Pasha assumed this was the beginning of a general retreat; he dispatched a courier to Khotin, announcing Victory! But Münnich was merely reforming his army for a general assault.

The Ottoman left were confident no-one could get at them because of a branch of the Shulanets that ran down into a marsh via Stavutschina. What was their astonishment when they saw the Russians throwing masses of fascines into the marsh!

As soon as Gustav Biron's men rejoined the main body, the whole began to cross the river, led by Karl Biron and the Right division. They still marched in square, covered by intense fire from a massed battery on the rising ground behind them. The fascines, with wooden planks overlaid, formed 27 bridges, suitable even for light artillery. Once the Right division was deployed, the *Corps de Bataille* and the Left followed.

The Russians now marched, slowly and steadily, directly on Stavutschina. Two hours later they were at the foot of the hill upon which lay the Janissary camp. Stavutschina also was still some distance away, upslope.

*[The map shows the Russians deployed in line, with refused flanks. Manstein's account suggests they marched in square the whole way. The best interpretation is that they marched in a single oblong, open at the rear, as was often the case.]*

Once the Russians reached the bottom of the hill, the enemy cavalry rushed them from every side. Charge after charge was repulsed, the Russians moving steadily up the slope, manhandling their *chevaux-de-frise* and regimental guns, through a sea of milling horsemen, pausing every so often to blast away with musket volleys and canister. Veli Pasha, realising the enemy were not in retreat, was trying to buy time to shift his Janissaries and cannon from his other flank.

*[Veli Pasha must have assumed the move toward Stavutschina was in the nature of an escape attempt.]*

Finally, he amassed 12-13,000 men, and at 5pm, sword-wielding Janissaries poured out of their trenches. Pounded by artillery, raked by musket fire, and countercharged by fresh Cossacks, only about 3,000 had the will to make it to the barriers. They could not penetrate the *chevaux-de-frise*, and left a thousand dead in front of the Russian lines.

Veli Pasha, his reserves spent and his allied troops already leaving the field, felt he had no choice but to retire, covered by a final cavalry charge by Jentsch Ali Pasha's *sipahis*. At 7pm the Russians crested the hill to find the enemy camp burning and abandoned, and the Turks and their Tatar allies flying in all directions.

*[Bain reports the Janissaries did break into the square at one point.]*

Veli Pasha had no army left. He had ordered a general retirement on Khotin, but the Tatars fled all the way to the lands of the Bujak Horde, and in fact, when it became obvious no-one was listening to him, he and Jentsch Ali Pasha took most of the Ottoman troops back to Bender, without making a stop at Khotin. Only Aali Kaltzchak and his 6,000 mounted 'wild-man' Janissaries retreated to the fortress – he was the Governor, after all. There, he found most of the 10,000-man garrison had bolted.

The Russians reportedly counted 1,000 enemy dead on the field. There must have been more, since these were undoubtedly the Janissaries who died in the last assault. The pursuit caught only a few, however. Their own casualties, after 12 hours of fighting, were 13 KIA and 54 WIA, including 6 officers.

The booty included 1,000 tents, still standing, 42 brass cannon (some abandoned in flight), 6 mortars, and an uncountable amount of supplies of all kinds. It was a complete debacle for the Turks, the reverse of what they had just done to the Imperials a month before on the Danube, at Grocka. (And in fact worse, since at Grocka the Imperial Army remained intact, and even held the field, though its morale was shattered.) It was also payback for the last time the Russians had been encircled on the Prût.

The next day – the 18th – Münnich advanced on Khotin with 30,000 men and his siege train. Despite the victory (along the route they found all the signs of a routed army) the situation was still believed to be touch and go. Khotin had a nasty reputation. The Poles under Chodkiewicz had held off '500,000' Turks with only 60,000 men, and that was before the Turks had captured it and employed French engineers to improve it. It contained 157 cannon and 22 mortars. But, Breda or Maastricht it was not. According to the observer Baron Tott, any army with a decent siege train could take the place in three days. It was dominated by the surrounding hills. In the event, Münnich never even turned a spade. The pitifully small garrison remaining (763 men) surrendered at the first summons on the 19th.

Kaltzchak Pasha asked for honours of war but was refused, and he and his few stalwarts became prisoners of war. The best deal they could get was to not have their baggage plundered on-site. Also taken was the Aga of the Janissaries (though this might refer to a local *aga* of the garrison's Janissary contingent).

It was learned from Kaltzchak Pasha that Veli Pasha was held responsible for the defeat; it was he who had counselled they should let the Russians 'expose themselves' without opposition so that the could be completely destroyed after being attrited away – a classic Ottoman tactic. Problem was, European armies no longer disintegrated like feudal hosts. And they had evolved into machines for dispensing slaughter. After Stavutschina, Kaltzchak Pasha lived in awe of Russian firepower.

*[Manstein says of the unfortunate Veli Pasha that he had been in hiding in the small village of Bogdan, near the Prût, for two days because his Janissaries wanted to murder him.]*

*[The greatest effect the taking of Khotin had on history was not on the war, or on Eastern European politics, but on poetry. The poet-scientist Mikhail Lomonosov composed an ode on the subject that revolutionised Russian belles lettres – it is arguably the origin of modern Russian poetry.]*



Khotin

## The Submission of Moldavia

The advance did not resume until the 24th of August. First, bridges had to be built over the Dniester, then the prisoners disposed of (under escort of the Guards and some dragoon regiments), then a Russian garrison quartered, and so on. The next step on the journey was Jassy (Iasi), capital of Moldavia. Bender should have been the target, but Münnich felt he would have to leave it for next year. It required – or should have required – a siege, and he lacked transport. Instead, northern Moldavia would be sacked, or inspired to rise against the Turks.

No danger was apprehended; indeed, the march soon turned into a triumphal progress, headed by the Moldavian Prince Cantemir (a Russian subject with lands in the Ukraine who was given charge of the rapidly swelling Moldavian-Wallachian contingent). He had only a small column – 3,000 hussars, Wallachians, dragoons, and mounted grenadiers, plus 12 guns – but it was enough.

The Prût was bridged on the 28th. Unusually for the season, the river was shallow enough for the cavalry to ford, even though it was 150' wide. A fort and some redoubts were constructed to cover the bridges. On the 31st, the Russians began to approach the capital of Moldavia, meeting only light opposition from the forces of the Ottoman-appointed Hospodar, Gregorius Jika (Grigore II Ghica). The Estates sent out a joyous welcome (*safer to make it a joyous one: big smile, everyone, it's the Russians*) and a formal submission, even offering to foot the bill for 20,000 Russian troops (rather than have them take what they wanted). The Hospodar had hightailed it for the Danube and his Turkish masters.

*[The Hospodar actually only went as far as Falci, on the lower Prût.]*

Prince Cantemir entered Iasi on September 1st. On September 3rd, Marshal Burkhardt Christoph von Münnich, Generalissimo of Her Imperial Majesty's Army, entered Iasi, escorted by 300 mounted grenadiers and 300 Cossacks of the Don. On the 8th, the Principality

formally surrendered. Fort St. Ioann received a garrison of 2,388 men. And the Russians finally established a supply line (buying what they needed from the Poles).

*[Terms of the treaty included the aforementioned garrison of 20,000 men, plus logistical requirements, the use of Moldavians as labourers, and a 'gift' for the Generalissimo of 12,000 gold pieces (chervontsy, the local currency) plus an additional monthly 'maintenance' of 1,500 gold pieces. Who says victory is barren?]*

On the 12th, while holding a general parade, the Generalissimo received a letter from Prinz von Lobkowitz, the Imperial Governor of Transylvania. Peace had broken out. Rather than let the Imperials, who, bluffed by the Grand Vizier, had just surrendered Belgrade, jewel of the Balkans, make a separate peace, the Russian representative in the Turkish camp on the Danube had also signed – praying he would not be sent to Siberia in consequence.

### The End of Glory

Manstein quotes Münnich's letter in reply to Lobkowitz in full. In part (pp.272-273 from Bain):

'What has become of the sworn alliance between the two Courts? Whilst the Russians are taking fortresses, the Imperialists are demolishing and ceding them to the enemy! While the Russians are acquiring principalities, the Imperialists are surrendering kingdoms! The Russians reduce the enemy to extremities, the Imperialists allow him everything that can flatter or augment his pride!... May I ask what has become of our indissoluble alliance? I venture to assure your Excellency that even if the army of the Emperor had been at the last gasp, the Court of Vienna, with the assistance of my Imperial Mistress, would have undoubtedly have obtained from the Turks a far more honourable peace than the one they have just procured'.

Still steamed, the marshal wrote to St. Petersburg offering to fight on, but his request was turned down. He had already dispatched 4-5,000 Cossacks of the Don toward the Danube before receiving Lobkowitz' note. These men reached the river but were isolated by a large Turkish force and had to cut their way through to Transylvania. At least in those days, one was not sent to Siberia for visiting a Western country. No, instead, one was interned by the Western country, treated as prisoners of war, pillaged by their hosts, slaughtered if they fell out of the column... The Cossacks lost 200 men and all their equipment to their Austrian 'allies' before they made Poland. And yet the Imperials had been screeching for help for two years...

*[In fairness to the Austrians, the Russians were Cossacks, and Orthodox (worse than the Turks!), and they probably looked like they were carrying the plague. Oh, and they were Cossacks.]*

Münnich made as if to march toward Bessarabia (Bujak), sending emissaries ahead in hopes of detaching the Bujak Horde from the Porte (they had periodically, in the past, been Russian clients) but time was running out. The field peace signed at Belgrade was to be ratified in Paris and at Istanbul. So, since the season was advanced, he withdrew his army into winter quarters in Moldavia and repaired himself to the Ukraine.

### And Marshal Lacy?

The reader must now take his mind back to the spring of 1739. The Army of the Don would not be idle this year, merely ineffective. Stripped to augment the Grand Army, there were only 39,412 regular troops and 15,000 irregulars available to Marshal Lacy:

- 6 dragoon regiments, 4 Sloboda Cossack regiments
- 8 regular foot regiments, 3 Landmiliz regiments.

*[More Ukrainian troops could not be used since Lacy was short of horses. Labourers were drafted from the Lines to fill out the regiments, but many ran away.]*

St. Petersburg had insisted on another advance into the Crimea. The Marshal's own plans, which were rejected, called for supporting the Kalmyks in the Kuban (including shipping artillery to them by sea), but otherwise remaining on the defensive. By holding the line of the Don, the Kuban and Nogai Tatars would be unable to join forces and would perforce remain quiet.

In the event, Lacy's campaign was anticlimactic. The opening moves were a repeat of 1738, complete with a rebuilt Azov flotilla and a planned crossing at Yenitchi Strait. Stoffeln's corps, under Lacy's command since the winter but based on the Dnieper, was supposed to feint toward Oczakov, while 10,000 Kalmyks conducted a grand raid through the Kuban.

The march to the Crimea started from Izyum on May 10th. They crossed the Torets River on May 13th. The army marched in two columns, under General Eropkin and Lieutenant-General Spiegel. At the Bolshie Ialoy River (July 6th), some Don and Ukrainian Cossacks met them with news. Further news was brought up from the rear.

General Levachev, stationed at Azov, was supposed to rendezvous with Lacy, bringing 5 more foot regiments. He had set out, but on May 4th was forced to halt on the Mius due to an epidemic. The same sickness prevented Vice Admiral Bredal from making use of the Azov flotilla, which in any case was considerably smaller this year. He was unable to challenge the Turks, and in consequence, the latter were able to station a fleet off the mouth of the Kal'mius. The news got worse.

Five days later, Lacy learned the Lines of Perekop had been strengthened, and that 20,000 Tatars awaited him, supported by a large contingent of Turks, both at Koslov and Kaffa. Levachev, meanwhile, had turned back to Azov; the arsenal there had been severely damaged by fire. Stoffeln's probe against the mouth of the Dnieper was half-hearted, no more than a naval reconnaissance, and not timed to coincide with the advance of the Army of the Don.

Lacy decided to establish a screen against possible raids by the Nogai with a portion of his forces, but to continue the advance, more as a probe of the enemy defences. On the 15th it was learned Turks had blockaded the strait of Yenitchi with a significant force (5 frigates, 7 galleys, 25 half-galleys, and 29 small boats). This did not deter the Russians too much, but they learned the Crimea was still desolate; since they were already suffering considerable attrition, Lacy called a full halt and pulled back to a line along the Utlug and Molochyne Vody Rivers.

He was still under orders to enter the Crimea, however, and resolved to try the Lines of Perekop; if he failed to break in, he would have made an adequate attempt to fulfil his orders. The march, by 12,000 regulars and 5,850 Cossacks, commenced on August 15th. They halted some 80 Km short of the Lines to await the results of a two-day reconnaissance. Apparently the Lines were not as well guarded as expected, but there was absolutely no fodder for the horses – the Tatars had burned the grass in a wide swath north of their fortifications. At this, Lacy chose to close the campaign, reaching the Lines of Ukraine (at Fort St Andrei) on August 24th.

*[The Kalmyk raid on the Kuban had some success, and at least Lacy had prevented additional forces being sent against Münnich, which to his mind was the point of the exercise, rather than the campaign of conquest envisioned by St. Petersburg.]*

## The Heart of the Matter

Russia ratified the peace on September 19th, 1739. On the 23rd, Münnich was formally ordered out of Moldavia. The final terms were nailed down on February 14th, 1740. Not much of a war, really. Moldavia was handed back to Istanbul. Kabardia, the Circassian principality centred on Ossetia, that, thanks to a shared bloodline with the Tsars, supported St. Petersburg, had its borders expanded into the Kuban, to act as a buffer state between the Russian and Ottoman spheres of influence. This was the sole gain of any immediate consequence.

Russia picked up Azov, though the forts had to be demolished, and they got the Turks' acquiescence in building a new Cossack base at Cherkassk. Oczakov and Kinburun had to be given back, but they were razed, as a biohazard. Taganrog was not to be rebuilt, and the Ottoman Fleet was the only one permitted on the Black Sea (but the Russian Fleet was dead of the plague, anyway). The Porte still refused to call Anna Ivanova 'empress'. No, not much of a war.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1735-39 cost the Russians an estimated 100,000 dead, and millions of roubles. Add a low estimate of 22,400 battle casualties for the Imperials (never mind the malaria, dysentery, heat exhaustion, starvation, and the plague). Add 50,000 or more dead Tatars. Not even the Turks know how many their army lost. It begins to approach the War of the Austrian Succession (500,000 lives), though not perhaps the Seven Years War (1.3 million). But few people have even heard of it. Admittedly, not many people know about the other wars either. But this war presaged the rise of Russia onto the world stage.

In the aftermath of the war, the Serbs were once again forced to flee their homeland, many of them settling in the Ukrainian lands now emptied of their Tatar inhabitants, or under intolerant Habsburg rule north of the Danube. Tatars and Wallachians fled to Istanbul, to the Dobruja, to Anatolia. They were the lucky ones. The Tatar people living in the Kuban were exterminated or enslaved.

The Imperial House of Habsburg lost the provinces of Oltania ('Little' or upper Wallachia) and the Banat – the privy garden of the Emperors. Worse, they lost Belgrade, the key to the Balkans, whose reclamation from the Infidel had been the crowning glory of the great Prince Eugene of Savoy and the drain of ever so many millions of *thalers*. Now the Imperial Army was crippled, the Imperial Treasury was bankrupt, and the Emperor was dead of a heart attack in consequence. His heir was a twenty-something girl and her feckless young husband. In less than two years the House of Habsburg would be under attack from France, Spain, Bavaria, Saxony, and Prussia; and Russia would not lift a finger to help until the protagonists were ready to sign the peace treaty. Then the Tsaritsa wanted her cut.

The Turks rejoiced at their good fortune, for a little while. Then the bills came due. Women wailed their dead. Plague victims clogged the sewers. Banditry in the countryside increased. The capital was rocked by revolt. And the Sick Man of Europe began to cough.

The Tatars had another 30 years. Then they would be gone. By the decree of Catherine the Great, Tatary was made a client of Imperial Russia, 'for the protection of its inhabitants', since the Ottomans were such a bad influence on them. When the Tatars continued to play hooky, Tatary was annexed outright and settled by Slavs. The Tatars became good Russians or went 'on the reservation', until Josef Stalin decided they were Enemies of the Revolution and applied 'administrative measures' against them. Muscovy stood sole Heir to the Golden Horde.

## Powers and Principalities

### The Muscovites

### The Czarist State in the 1730s

*'the Russians...grow in their knowledge and experience of military and international affairs, and actually surpass many other nations in slyness and dissimulation'.*

von Bulow

#### Introduction

Russian history is as vast as the country itself, but a brief background sketch can be made. Modern Russia developed out of the Slavic Principalities of Novgorod and Muscovy, which were only two of several Slavic principalities (each centred on a regional capital) in European Russia. Both were located in the northern boreal region. Earlier on, Kiev had been the dominant principality, but the Mongols obliterated it. Protected by their relative isolation, Novgorod and Moscow survived; though they paid tribute to the Khans they suffered less from the depredations of Tatar slave raiders. Moscow had the edge over Novgorod because of its river trade.

The Russian hero Alexander Nevsky, besides fighting the Swedes and the Teutonic Knights, was made Grand Prince of Vladimir and deputed to be the Russian peoples' representative to their 'overlords', the Khanate of the Golden Horde. The Khanate found dealing with one man preferable to dealing with each principality separately, and the office became hereditary. The Grand Princes benefited too; their word carried weight with both parties.

The most important of the Grand Princes was Ivan I of Moscow (1328-1341). Ivan felt strong enough to form a coalition of the other principalities and to place them under his rule. This took some fast talking. To the Russians he declaimed to desire the overthrow of Tatar domination. But he was not above asking the Tatars for military aid, arguing that those who opposed him were really opposing the paying of taxes to the Golden Horde. Part of the process also involved an alliance with the Orthodox Church, in the form of the wealthy Metropolitan of the Moscow See (the Church was exempt from Tatar tribute), a man who was only too happy to promote Slavic Unity; in return, Ivan made the Moscow Metropolitan head of the national Church.

In 1380 Grand Prince Dmitri of the Don (1359-1389) made the first attempt to cast off the Tatar Yoke. A coalition army fought the Battle of the Khalka in that year, and though the Russians were ultimately unsuccessful, it took the Tatars three years to suppress their client state. This battle had great importance as a focus for national unity.

One might have expected the Tatars to do away with such a powerful appointment as the Grand Prince, but they were suffering internal troubles of their own, and when those had been resolved, the Horde found itself co-opted by Tamerlane, who was more interested in carving out a kingdom in Transoxania. Muscovy was left in peace.

One hundred years later, in 1480, the Russians finally repudiated Tatar overlordship. By then, the Khanate was too weak to prevent them. But now there were other challenges: the squabbling of the boyars (nobles) and the rise of what would become the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was not until the 16th Century and the reign of Ivan III, first Autocrat of All the Russias, that a centralised monarchy was developed.

Interestingly, Russian and Tatar society had become intertwined to such an extent that the Tsars used Genghis Khan as a symbol of legitimacy. Culturally, Tatar domination left a deep and lasting impression, and great honour was paid to any who could claim Genghisid descent, or simply had a name of Tatar origin.

Not only were the trappings of royalty derived from Tatar forms (designed, paradoxically, by Orthodox churchmen), but the Tsars successfully denied Asian imperial legitimacy to their neighbours, while claiming it for themselves. They also involved themselves heavily in the internal and intra-tribal politics of the various steppe peoples, to the point that the Grand Prince of Moscow and the Khan of the Crimea once competed for control of the Kazan Khanate.

### The Old and the New Russia

European Russia begins with Peter the Great, aided by his immediate forebears. 'Old Russia' was decidedly Asian in outlook – as witnessed by their honouring of Genghis Khan rather than Charlemagne.

Old Russia was a deeply religious land, a land really of the spirit, rather than the body, whose people obeyed every order handed down by the Orthodox Church, yet clung fiercely to their cherished folk beliefs. In one instance, a noted ecclesiastical reformer suffered persecution not for promulgating radical new ideas, but for attempting to restore Church ritual to the 'pure' (and thoroughly systematised) form it had enjoyed in Byzantine times. That would have meant pruning away a mass of superstition and doing away with many of the household ikons that the people paid homage to.

The peasantry, at least, believed that fairyland was all around them, just out of the tail of the eye, so to speak. And the Devil was real – and as easy to deal with as the local mob boss. It would not be unusual for someone lighting a candle for St. George to light one for the Dragon as well. Just in case, you know...

Society was patriarchal. The Tsar was the father of his country, and the entire country was his to dispose of as he chose. A noble was the father of his free tenants, his retainers, his artisans, his serfs, and his slaves, and they were all his to dispose of (the serfs and slaves in particular) as he chose. A man, likewise, as head of the household, had absolute authority. The boss of a factory had a father's authority over his employees. And so on.

At all levels of society, the treatment of women matched anything to be found in the creeds of Islamic Fundamentalism. For example, they were not permitted out of the house except for certain reasons. If they had to go out, they went heavily veiled, the rich riding in closed palanquins or carriages (a truly conservative Grand Dame of the Old Russia would use a palanquin). When visitors came to the house, they were expected to put on their best dress, often an heirloom of great value, wait on the menfolk, and then withdraw. In some Cossack societies, men and women occupied separate quarters. If a Cossack married, he was downgraded to the status of a farmer-militiaman. Even with restrictions such as these, however, the women, as always, found ways to make their influence felt.

Beyond the Tsar, power rested with the *boyars*, the great nobles. All Russians resisted reform, but the boyars had the power to obstruct in a meaningful way. The middle class was tiny, a handful of merchants and artisans, and while some peasants lived in relative freedom as *odnovorstiy* (of free or noble origin), or as 'crown peasants' belonging to the Tsar directly, the bulk were serfs – slaves of the boyars in everything but name.

Peter's reforms did not do away with Old Russia. They modified Old Russia to suit his purposes, and they created a parallel New Russia. In government, the Tsar increased his authority by applying Western methods without altering the fundamental nature of the regime. Economically as well as politically, the State was centralised with advice from foreign experts, whom Peter and his father imported in large numbers.

For example, the old hearth tax became a head tax. Nominally, this 'freed' the serf from being tied to a specific location, but as his noble owner was entrusted with the collection of the money, the serf was forced to remain where he was. Such measures, however, did lead to an increase in runaways, who might make it to a 'free town' or to a Cossack band, or who might simply cross the frontier and carve their own farms out of the wilderness.

The importation of foreign experts led to a general influx of foreigners. Orthodox refugees and German settlers came in droves, by invitation. But anyone (more or less) could visit Russia, and set up a business, engage in trade, buy property, or enter state service. Foreigners could marry Russians, and even retain their own modes of worship. A person could leave the empire at any time by paying a tenth of their goods.

This foreign influx coincided with a revision of the status of nobility. Nobility and service to the State became equated by means of the Table of Ranks, which laid down the grades, duties, and perquisites of every civil, ecclesiastical, and military appointment. Every noble was a state servant, or he lost his patent of nobility. Any foreigner (or native Russian, assuming he was socially eligible to do so) who entered the service of the Tsar became a gentleman. In an economic sense, this did away with the division of property between fiefs and allods; all property was held as a fief of the Tsar, who demanded military service in exchange. Civil servants were exclusively military men.

Not all Peter's reforms took hold. He tried to impose Germanic inheritance laws, awarding property to the eldest son; Russian laws insisted on an equal division. Peter's law was quietly dropped after his death.

His fight for 'women's rights' had mixed success. Devoted to all things European, Peter rejected the 'Asiatic' treatment of women, and banned veils, closed litters, and the practice of locking women up. Engaged couples were (*oh, shameful!*) permitted to see one another before the marriage ceremony, while fathers and guardians were forbidden to make forced marriages; the same applied to nobles with regard to their serfs. Women were encouraged to 'leave the cloister for the salon'. Perversely, but quite naturally, many women preferred to live with their old, familiar customs.

*[At the court of Anna Ivanova, one of her 'Old Russian' nobles was subjected to a forced marriage, but this was a jest, and a deliberate dig at the old customs.]*

European customs – at least those of a visual nature, or that might be of service to the State – were encouraged, such as house parties where people wore European clothes (Old Russia wore the robes of Asia), mingled in talk, danced the latest minuets, and learned manners from Swedish prisoners of war. Carnivals, masquerades, and fêtes were instituted (on top of the plethora of religious festivals already on the calendar). As may be imagined, such activities were at first merely a parody of the West, rejected by any respectable family sufficiently removed from the Tsar's presence to avoid punishment.

On *that* score, Peter did away with the old customs of prostration and servile forms of address – taught his subjects to think of themselves as free men, by blows of his cane, if necessary, as one chronicler put it. Corporal punishment for all kinds of crime, however, was intensified and rigorously enforced.

Peter's reforms of government and the military were the most effective. His military reforms are covered later. Politically, he replaced the Duma, or parliament, with a nine-man Senate, which, at least initially, only functioned in his absence. This body, expanded, became the supreme high council, committee of finance, and court of justice.

*[Peter often had difficulty with the members: they were forbidden to abuse each other, either verbally or physically.]*

Each department of state was given a 'college' on the French model: finance, war, foreign affairs, etc. Their functioning was derived from Swedish law, and for a long time they were heavily weighted with foreign staff (a department might even be run by a Swedish POW).

Old Russia's provincial governments were hopelessly muddled. Peter rationalised them along German lines, but he also militarised them by assigning regiments to each and appointing generals as governors. Towns were ruled by elected burgomasters and a mayor,



and each had its own regiment of *landmiliz*. In the countryside, however, the old forms, patriarchal and socialist, were retained.

*[Communes and soviets are not inventions of the Communists. They simply idealised the 'good old days'.]*

Municipal works were begun by decree (and, of course, St. Petersburg – in those days simply 'Peterburg' – was built). Policing was systematised and the criminal laws enforced. Banditry, which was rife in the provinces, was suppressed by the formation of an internal garrison army as large as the regular army.

The Church was also placed on a collegial system (the Patriarch, who opposed Peter, having died). The Patriarchate was abolished in favour of a Holy Synod. This made Peter sole ruler over the whole empire; previously the Tsars had had to share power, in a sense, with the Metropolitans of Moscow. The Holy Synod was given the chore of reforming the Church to a purer Orthodoxy (and at the same time of refuting charges that Peter was the Antichrist). Peter debated whether to expropriate the monasteries as Henry VIII had done, but decided against it; since, however, the monks opposed his reforms, they were severely regulated and 'made to lead useful lives' instead of skulking in their cells writing polemics against the Tsar.

*[Peter was superstitiously Orthodox himself, but practised toleration of other beliefs, so long as they did not pose a political threat. Thus he allowed foreigners to worship as they chose, and protected various spiritualistic sects, but expelled the Jesuits because of their incessant propaganda.]*

These are only a small sample of the reforms instituted by Peter. At every step he met with opposition: through silent obstruction, graffiti, cabals. The women wore Western dress in his presence and went back to robes and veils in private. Bandit gangs were led by nobles who fought pitched battles with the Tsar's forces. Cossack Hosts allied with the Swedes, or the Tatars. Corruption and incompetence existed at every level and in every department, including those run by foreigners (who were often only chosen because they *were* foreigners, not for any real ability).

In consequence, life became even more precarious for the Tsar's subjects. He instituted a secret inquisition (known, naturally, as the 'Bureau of Reformation'), in front of which anyone could accuse anyone else of any sort of crime with a reasonable chance of being believed. Taxes were increased dramatically – famously, a tax on beards. Because most of his reign was spent at war, everything was subordinated to the Struggle, even beards.

#### **Anna Ivanova Romanova (b.1693-d.1740, r.1730-40)**

After his death in 1725, Peter's work was continued by the men whom he had appointed to run the country. Men such as General Münnich, Count Ostermann, and native aristocrats like the Dolgorukis. The years from 1726 to 1730 were taken up with the ephemeral rules of Peter's wife, Catherine I, and her grandson, Peter II. The death of the last named was unexpected, and provoked a crisis.

The choices for the succession were a daughter or grandson of Peter the Great, or one of two daughters belonging to his brother. One of the Dolgorukis also put up his own daughter as the fiancée of the late Peter II, but with no success.

The Secret High Council, as the senate was called, was composed mainly of the old nobility. The most influential 'new man' was the German-born Foreign Minister, Count Ostermann, who prudently came down with an illness. In his absence the Council conceived the idea of instituting a republic on the Polish model. The direct heirs of Peter would doubtless oppose this idea, so the Council approached one of the nieces, Anna Ivanova, then Duchess of Courland. Russia was to become an oligarchy, with a constitutional monarch.

*[Courland was not part of Russia, but most decidedly under its influence.]*

Anna accepted. Even a constitutional monarchy was better than she could have expected. Besides, she had no choice. A request from Moscow was an order to be obeyed. The majority of the boyars and notable people acquiesced, even though the new regime would be

completely dominated by the reactionary Dolgoruki and Galitsyn families. The new Tsaritsa made her triumphal entrance into Moscow – not St. Petersburg – under the watchful eye of 'republican' security men.

The republic was not to last very long. The People opposed it. The Church opposed it. The majority of the Boyars, excluded from participation in it, opposed it. Anna was secretly informed of this, and, since she too opposed it, a drama was arranged. The Council was suddenly summoned to attend the Tsaritsa. They found an assembly of 800 people petitioning Anna for a restoration of absolute rule. Ominously, the guards officers at the far end of the chamber 'spontaneously' called out in support of the measure. Anna pretended surprise that the new constitution she had agreed to was not the will of the whole people. She had been deceived!

In time-honoured fashion, the Dolgorukis and Galitsyns were gradually banished to their estates, then sent to Siberia, then one by one recalled and executed. Behind the scenes were Count Ostermann, the other foreign disciples of Peter the Great, and Anna's lover, the Courlander, Ernst Biron. But Anna pulled many of the strings herself.

Anna Ivanova came to the throne at the age of 35 after a semi-exile at the court of Mittau, capital of Courland. She was Duchess of Courland from 1711-1730. Her husband the Duke died in 1712 and she never remarried. Of a 'severe countenance', taller by a head than most men, deep voiced and masculine in bearing, she was cruel and cold – capable of terrifying.

Buffeted by the designs of Prussia, Sweden, and Russia (letters from the court at Moscow generally included peremptory orders, abuse, or both), she quickly learned to dissemble her true thoughts. She also came to despise the Russians. Her rule would institute the 'Germanification period' of Russia. It was known as the *Bironovchtchina*, and would last a decade.

Foreigners (with the odd 'loyal' Russian) held all the chief posts; most of them were Germans, because Anna preferred Germans. Even her chosen heir was taken from a German court: Anna Leopoldovna, Princess of Mecklenburg. Ernst Johann Biron, the son, reputedly, of a groom, was made Duke of Courland and became the most influential (and hated) man in Russia; probably the wealthiest, too. *Bironovchtchina* was a play on the old *Tatarchtchina*, the rule of the Tatars.

The coming of the *Bironovchtchina* was sanctified in blood. Thousands of people 'harbouring anti-German sentiments' were executed or banished, and taxation was applied with ruthless German efficiency – at least the new German ruling class made the machine function as it was supposed to. The old High Council of the Senate was supplanted by a Cabinet presided over by the Tsaritsa; its members included the usual suspects. The Inquisition was given a new name: the Secret Court of Chancery. (The name suggests it applied extortion as a function of internal security, or perhaps the reverse.) The Guards were expanded by the addition of a third infantry regiment and a regiment of horse guards. They were the only element of the military to be completely relied upon – yet ironically the most unstable.

Once secure, however, Anna gave herself over to what she imagined were the pleasures of a progressive Western court. Plenty of jesters, dwarves, and assorted buffoons. Members of the old nobility were obliged to take on these roles, too. As noted earlier, she arranged the marriage of the old Prince Galitsyn with one of her elderly Kalmyk maids (he had previously married a Catholic, which displeased the Tsaritsa). Dressed as clowns during the day, they were made to spend their wedding night naked in an ice palace.

Life at Court became one long masquerade party. The nobility impoverished itself buying the latest Paris fashions, or as many bits of the latest outfit as it could afford:

'the most gorgeous coat was often accompanied by an ill-combed wig; a beautiful piece of stuff was spoilt by a

clumsy tailor; or, if the dress chanced to be successful, the equipages were defective; a superbly dressed man would arrive in a shabby old vehicle drawn by two screws' (Manstein p.254).

Biron did not like dull clothing, so visitors to Court had to dress up in striking colours, like parrots. And so it went. Anna's own tastes were for low comedy; she liked Italian and German shows because people were always being beaten in them. One noble made her laugh by showing up drunk and insulting Ostermann in public. The Russian Court was still rooted in Central Asia, though coated in a veneer of German kitsch.

Anna supported Peter the Great's reforms. Under her rule, Russia emerged as a great European power: 'this Court begins to have a great deal to say in the affairs of Europe' (Bain p.276, quoting Ambassador Rondeau). Russian diplomats were perceived as 'almost' the equals of the British or the French. Everyone wanted to strike a deal with the new kid on the block.

Anna's own reign ended in 1740. She died of natural causes. With her death the *Bironovchtchina* also ended, in another purge. Most of the players in the wars of the 1730s disappeared. But Peter's vision could not be erased. The new Russia was here to stay.

## Anna Ivanova's Army

*'Taken as individuals, the Russians are gentle, even timorous. But massed in battalions they manifest a herd-like cohesion which makes them redoubtable, and sometimes unbeatable.'*

Masson

The army with which the Russians went to war in the 1730s was a relatively new construct. Russia missed out on the 16th and came late to the 17th Century modernisation drive. More than any other army in the Age of Absolutism, its creation can be said to be the will of a single man – Peter the Great. Despite the many deep-rooted socio-economic problems his efforts spawned, it was a remarkable achievement, during a time of turmoil and war, and against the will of most of his countrymen.

Peter's desire to bring Russia into the mainstream of modern Europe, by force if necessary, is well known. Of all the spheres that needed 'upgrading' – social, religious, economic – the one he had the most success with was the military. Indeed, so focussed was the Tsar on this particular sphere that the other spheres became bent and twisted the better to serve it. Serfdom, to take a prime example, became strengthened and institutionalised at a time when other countries were beginning to free their peasantry, because of the Army's need of a large pool of manpower; serfdom was also seen as a means of strengthening the economy and the aristocracy, which again benefited the Army.

### Early Days

Peter's own military experience began, famously, with his 'toy' army, the *Poteshnyi*. In 1682, when he was ten, Peter's mother had him moved to the royal Preobrazhenskoe lodge, safely away from the intrigues of the Kremlin. Here Peter 'amused' – the root word behind *Poteshnyi* – himself in the military arts with an army comprised of his peers, retainers, and volunteers. The First Soldier of the new Russian Army, Sergei Bukhvostov, was one of Peter's grooms. The first 100 volunteers were organised into a company called The Bombardiers, of which Peter was enrolled as the First Bombardier (only many years later was he persuaded to take on a more 'prestigious' title). As Peter grew older, they began training with real weapons, including cannon, and, driven to excel by the young prince, it was not unusual for the men to suffer casualties (Peter himself was injured by a grenade) during the very realistic wargames they put on.

By 1685 the corps was 300-strong and lived in specially constructed barracks at Preobrazhenskoe; further expansion necessitated the formation of another unit at the nearby village of Semyenovskoe. Peter also expanded his artillery train, had a fort built to test it on,

and because of all the technical knowledge this required, received foreign instructors. When Peter became Tsar, these men became the kernel of his officer corps.

By 1687, volunteers from the *Streletsi* (the old musketeer corps) were being enrolled into the *Poteshnyi*, which was now formally organised as the *Preobrazhenski* and *Semenovski* Companies (at this time, units of all-arms). In 1689, Peter's mother attempted to extend the powers of her Regency and exclude Peter from the throne. Fortunately, the '*streletsi* and *boyars*' (that is, the foreign officer corps and the native Russian nobility) stood for Peter.

Now Tsar, Peter, though he left actual rule to his mother for a time, was finally able to tap into the unlimited resources of his realm. Five more years were spent wargaming, culminating, in 1694, in a massive month-long campaign involving 15,000 men – a competition between elements of the 'old' and 'new' armies, which proved the latter's worth. In 1695, Peter quit playing.

### The Old Army

Actually, much of the groundwork for the Army's modernisation was laid by Peter's father, Alexis Michaelovich, abetted by the foreign advisors he had imported, chief of whom was a Scotsman by the name of Alexander Gordon. When Peter came to the throne in 1689, his army consisted of 63 'foreign' regiments (mercenary formations, or units organised on European lines with native troops, or a mixture of both), 44 *Streletsi* (musketeer) regiments, at least 11,000 noble horsemen cast in the feudal mould, 2,000 specialists (artillerists and engineers), and 10,000 Cossacks – a total of 150,000 men. In 1689, this force, commanded by one of the Old Nobility, Prince Golitsyn, was utterly routed by the Tatars. Peter later said in disgust, 'the army proved incapable of standing not just against civilised nations, but even against barbarians'. Something would have to change.

The break with the past was not a clean one. Elements of the old Russian military survived for some time, particularly the *Streletsi* who lasted until 1698, and the Cossacks, who lasted, and in fact expanded their role dramatically, until after the Revolution of 1917.

The *Streletsi* were late-Renaissance musketeers, the corps founded in 1550. They were much like those found in other countries – France's *compagnies d'ordonnance*, for example – during the same period, though, as might be expected with Russia, there were a lot of them – 45,000 men in 22 regiments, later expanded to 44. They were modelled on the Ottoman Janissaries, and came to resemble them in ways other than the bearing of gunpowder weapons. Like the Janissaries, their military effectiveness dropped as they focussed more on cabals and agitation, and on pursuing secondary civilian trades (not only were the men insufficiently paid, the colonel of a regiment could turn it into a factory and line his own pockets). A second mark against them, in Peter's eyes, was their resistance to innovation.

As with the Janissaries, the *Streletsi* were composed of natives and led by the Old Nobility, highly conservative in outlook. In 1698 they revolted en masse and were disbanded en masse. Six regiments that were based outside of Moscow, since they were less tainted, fought in the Great Northern War, but the most reliable elements of the rest were divided up among the new Petrine regiments being formed.

By the time Peter came to power, another element of the Old Army had virtually disappeared. These were the 'foreign regiments'. 80,000-strong under Tsar Alexis, they proved themselves a worthless rabble and were disbanded during the 1680s and 1690s. Only two regiments remained intact to serve with the new army: *Francis Lefort's Regiment of Foot*, and *Patrick Gordon's Regiment of Foot* (*First Moscow* and *Boutyrski*, respectively).

Although each regiment's colonel was given a lot of organisational leeway, a standard foreign regiment could be said to comprise 1,200 men divided into 8 companies of 150 men each. Pikes were greatly in evidence, the ratio being 1 pikeman for every 3 musketeers. This,

because of a chronic shortage of cavalry. The *Streletsi* were organised in similar fashion, but averaged 2,000 men in 10 companies of 200.

Of the 100,000-plus irregulars that could be raised from time to time, it need only be said that they were not rated as highly as the foreign regiments. All the same, the division between foreign regulars and militia did lead to the more effective division of the Petrine Army into its Mobile and Garrison components.

As to cavalry, the Old Army was chronically short of it. The non-Cossack element was almost entirely composed of feudal hosts, and proved useless against the Tatars. Peter continued to use them initially (he had 10,000 at Narva out of 11,533 in all), but they did not improve, even when reorganised.

The bulk of the noble cavalry were of the minor nobility (in Russia, often quite poor people) led by the powerful boyar class. Patents of nobility were awarded for wounds and POW status, greatly augmenting the lower orders of nobility without guaranteeing military quality. The wealthy were accompanied by armed serfs from their estates, and often replaced themselves with paid substitutes.

The Moscow nobility were seen as the elite of the army; the remainder, or 'provincial' horse, was divided into two divisions: *Smolensk* and *Novgorod*. At Narva, this force fled before the Swedes were even engaged; Peter soon broke the corps up and used the raw material to form his new dragoon regiments.

### The Guards

The Russian Imperial Guard dates its foundation to April 25th, 1695, with the establishment of the *Preobrazhenski* and *Semenovski* Life Guard Regiments. (The designation 'Imperial Guard' was awarded in 1721). Each regiment consisted of 12 companies of 100 men, in 3 battalions. A Bombardier Company was added to *Preobrazhenski* in 1697; mainly comprised of members of the original elite company, it had 6 mortars and 4 field pieces. In 1700 the regiments were reorganised. *Preobrazhenski* was given another battalion, and both regiments had battalions of 4 companies, each of 100 men, excluding officers, NCOs, and supernumeraries. Grenadier companies were added in 1704. Unusually, these were never brigaded with other grenadier formations.

The *Lieb Garde* or *Garde du Corps* was a palace formation, a sinecure for young aristocrats, but also a training and indoctrination machine. In the event that they ever did go into combat, they were taught to operate as conventional cavalry. The unit had 2 squadrons, numbering 220 men.

Following the practice in the rest of the army, promotion was to be based on merit, and, to begin with, many of the officers were foreign-born. However, Peter always saw the political value of the Guard, and made sure that loyal members of the native nobility were given choice commands. Indeed, the Guard soon became the preserve of the Russian social elite, with even the common soldiers being members of the nobility, if not the high aristocracy, and holding commissioned-rank-equivalents in their dealings with the Line. Yet at the same time the Guard was made the breeding ground for reform. An officer cadet school was even developed for sons of the nobility.

Unlike the *Streletsi*, from the first, the Guard demonstrated its prowess against both external and internal enemies. Its first campaign was in 1695-96 against the Turks at Azov; two years later it put down the *Streletsi* Revolt. In the Great Northern War the Guard was used as a strategic reserve and security force, only taking the field three times.

As the century wore on, though, the political aspects of their role became more important (especially given that even the rank and file were noblemen's sons); in the 1730s only a battalion from each regiment fought in the Ukraine. After the Russo-Swedish War of the 1740s, the Guard saw no field service for a generation.

As early as the last years of Peter's life, the Guard and the associated units around St. Petersburg had become a danger to the regime. The capital was defended by 30,000 men (2 Guards regiments, the Lieb Cavalry, all 4 of the 3-battalion regiments (most had only 2 battalions), plus 4 militia regiments, 2 dragoon regiments – *Belozerski* and *Narvski*), and a mounted company of *Drabants* (elite guards copied from the Swedes). Their proximity to power led them to take liberties, and their commander, Prince Menshikov, eventually suffered the fate of all over-mighty subjects of the Tsar – exile to Siberia. The danger was so acute, in fact, that when Peter II moved the capital back to Moscow he left the Guards behind.

As noted earlier, on the accession of Anna Ivanovna in 1730 the Government attempted to make her the figurehead of a republican constitutional monarchy, but with the help of the Guards the 'plot' was foiled. Large numbers of the Russian aristocracy were exiled and Army control passed even further into German hands – this was the beginning of the Army's 'Germanification period'. To further consolidate her rule, Anna rewarded every member of the *Preobrazhenski* grenadier company with enrolment in the aristocracy, and raised a third, German-officered Guards regiment, *Ismailovski*, and a regiment (actually a squadron) of guard cavalry.

### The Infantry of the Line

The Petrine Army's foundation (ignoring its older elements) can be dated to 1699, when a general call for recruits went out. Voluntary enlistment was encouraged by generous (to a Russian peasant) bounties that were primarily intended to found the regiments being created at the capital, Moscow. But the bulk of the levies were obtained by conscription, with each parish or landowner being required to provide 25-50 men. By the spring of 1700, the Army was 32,000-strong and had already begun training. 27 regiments were formed, ranging from 953 to 1,322 men each (in either 2 or 3 battalions).

The whole body of regiments (at least in 1700) was divided into three *divisions* to provide flexibility of deployment. Two were based on Moscow, and the third on the lower Volga. This divisional structure was an expedient. In common with other European armies of the period, there was no permanent command structure above the regimental level. Regiments would be brigaded in groups of 3-4 as required; a division was just a grouping of brigades. All-arms 'flying columns' were also employed, as well as similarly composed groupings of 'advance guards' and 'rearguards' – usually a brigade of infantry with cannon, supported by irregular horsemen.

The new army's Military Articles also dated from 1700. A Military Code established in 1716 remained in force until 1900. Training by foreign officers, mostly German, with a leaven of Scots-Irish and French, led to the adoption of an Austrian style of drill. Western rank structures were introduced. But the use of foreigners was not the key to victory. Language barriers, Russian xenophobia, and the presence of a great number of talentless adventurers, were problems that remained with the Army for years.

Initially, performance was mixed. Through the trials of the Great Northern War – the disgraceful rout at Narva, the heroic stand at Poltava, the humiliating surrender on the Prut – lessons were absorbed and much of the dead wood pruned. Charles XII's decision to turn away from his 'defeated' foe and campaign against the Saxons after Narva gave Peter a six-year breathing space. By mid-war, the Russian Army had regained its confidence and had more than doubled in size – 47 regiments of foot, 5 of Grenadiers (plus the Guard), 33 regiments of dragoons, plus the Artillery and large numbers of Cossacks. This did not prevent its defeat by the Turks, but the loss was not as destructive to morale as the initial defeat at Narva so many years before. By the 1730s, the Army would be burning for revenge against the Infidel.

By the Regulations of 1698 (introduced by a German, Adam Weide), a normal foot regiment, or *polk*, was of 2 battalions, each of 5 companies. Apart from the Guard, four other regiments had an additional battalion: *Second Moscow*, *Kiev*, *Narva*, and

*Ingermanland*. Every regiment had a battery of two 3-lbers. As in the West, the regiment and its first battalion were commanded by a colonel, and the remaining battalions by lieutenant colonels.

In 1704 one company in each battalion became a grenadier company. In 1708, the Tsar ordered the abandonment of the practice of naming units by their colonel in favour of naming them after their depôts; this was intended to heighten unit pride. In the same year, most of the grenadier companies were stripped from their parent units and used to create 5 grenadier regiments. In 1712 regimental organisation was again altered, this time to increase firepower by the addition of extra artillery: 2 battalions of 4 fusilier companies, each with a battery of 2 guns. Such measures usually indicate a lack of manpower, and this was the mid-war period. But, regimental strength was increased to 1,487. Peter's last reform was that of 1716, when his Military Code laid down a regimental strength of 2 battalions, except for the Guard and *Ingermanland* – 35 regiments of foot in all. (There is strong evidence that the other 3-battalion regiments in fact retained their organisation.) The number of servants per regiment was reduced from 86 to 54.

At the time of Peter's death, the Army consisted of 49 regiments of foot, 49 (later 75) corresponding garrison regiments, 30 dragoon regiments and 4 garrison dragoon regiments, a large artillery train, and further assets in the form of large Cossack bands and various tribal levies. In all, the Army may have had 240,000 men, before adding in the 100,000 or so irregular forces.

In 1734, 3 Marine regiments were raised for Baltic service. Each consisted of a single battalion of 4 companies, of 145 men. These disappeared into the Navy after the War of the Austrian Succession.

Marshal Münnich was one of Peter's German imports, and a faithful disciple. Upon his appointment as President of the War College (Army C-in-C) by Anna Ivanova in 1730, he attempted several further reforms. Some proved effective, while others did not. All the infantry regiments were given an extra battalion, nominally structured the same as the others. However, these were depôt units, not field formations, used to collect and train recruits, and to provide regimental continuity. (They were not part of the Garrison Army.) All battalions were composed of 4 companies of 150 men, with the first two battalions having in addition a grenadier company of 144 men; official battalion strength (for the depôt battalions also) was 744. The grenadier regiments were disbanded, but one company of grenadiers was frequently detached and brigaded with others on an *ad hoc* basis, in the usual Western manner.

### The Cavalry

Münnich (and Peter) had high hopes for the cavalry arm, but circumstances were against them. The mounts available, bought in bulk from the steppes of Central Asia (tens of thousands came through the markets of the Nogai Tatars every year), were hardy, but small and light, little more than ponies. They were good for frontier skirmishing, which is what the cavalry spent most of its time doing, but they could not stand up to Western cavalry regiments. In consequence, nearly all the mounted regiments were dragoons – real dragoons, trained to fight on foot and use their horses for mobility.

In peacetime, regiments were divided up and parcelled out among the outposts of Siberia, meaning they had little opportunity to train for large-scale actions. Peter saw no opportunity to address these issues beyond ordering that the cavalry avoid contact with Swedish formations (!) but Münnich later raised 3 cuirassier regiments by converting 3 dragoon regiments. Tsar Peter had opposed this concept, saying that dragoons were the best option. He was probably right. But Münnich hoped they would prove effective against the Turks. A fourth regiment was converted in 1740 and the senior regiment (*Lieb*) was made into a Garde-du-Corps, but not until 1742.

The Saxon cuirassier model was used with regard to the organisation and equipment of Münnich's babies, but even cuirassiers were expected to train for and engage in dismounted combat! The

shortage of suitable mounts was acute, and only half-regiments participated in the Russo-Turkish War, mainly as HQ escorts. Generally the cuirassiers remained in barracks: training good heavy horse units takes time. Their coming-out party was held during the Seven Years War, but they made a poor showing. A cuirassier regiment consisted of 4 squadrons (or 5) of 2 troops ('companies') of 125 men. Some sources say the cuirassiers had smaller companies than the dragoons; perhaps this was so in practice. Paper strength was 1,000 men per regiment.

The first dragoons gave as poor a showing as the old noble cavalry, but this was mainly due to lack of experience. Peter solved the problem by a program of massive expansion, overwhelming potential enemies by weight of numbers. By 1725 there were 30 regiments.

The dragoons had an infantry-style organisation: 4 squadrons (or 5) of 2 companies of 115 men. In common with the infantry, they went about with permanently fixed bayonets! (Which could be reversed to prevent them poking their horses in the wrong spot.) Dragoon regiments also had a company of mounted grenadiers that could be brigaded into larger *ad hoc* horse grenadier squadrons. (Originally, the horse grenadiers were, like their infantry counterparts, massed into 3 permanent grenadier regiments.)

Quality was never that good, in contrast to the infantry, which steadily improved. Units were often badly led, and the problem of decent mounts was universal. This led to their employment as mounted infantry: dismounted, they stood some chance of repelling Swedish cuirassiers and Tatar tribesmen.

Experimental hussar formations were also tried. Peter raised the *Serbian Hussars* out of refugees from the fighting in the Balkans that took place in 1716-18. In the 1730s, Münnich raised a further 2 regiments: the *Hungarian* and the *Georgian*, supplemented during the War by a body of Vlachs that later became another hussar regiment. All three units were officered (at least initially) by men from the regions named, but most of the rank and file were Cossacks and vagrants. They were poorly regarded – you could get the same dubious quality from a plain old Cossack regiment, and at half the price.

The main function of the hussars seems to have been to present a striking appearance in their brightly coloured uniforms and thus improve the irregular cavalry's overall cohesion. Also, they were not prone to revolt. Organised in *khorigvi* or 'banners', they acted as frontier garrison troops facing Turkish Wallachia and in war were intended to deal with opposing irregular horsemen. Strength during the Russo-Turkish War was, as with the Cossack formations, fairly fluid but officially a hussar regiment comprised 4 squadrons (or, again 5) of 2 companies of 99 men each – though hussar companies were to be larger than those of other cavalry regiments.

To reiterate, mounts were a problem for every branch of the cavalry. During the Russo-Turkish War, local sources ran completely dry. Münnich's solution was to import large quantities of horses from the Imperials. After the war the problem abated as domestic stables were established; also, the Tatar markets were reopened.

### The Guns

The Artillery Regiment was founded in 1716 by General Bruce, yet another Scotsman in Russian service. It was an elite formation whose personnel enjoyed a reputation for dedication.

From an early date, the Muscovites specialised in heavy guns. Siege warfare was seen as their primary venue. Most guns were produced at Tula, but in Peter's day the Ukrainian Cossacks had their own foundry, at Kiev. Acquiring Western technology, bronze was supplemented by iron, and new foundries opened in the Urals. Water transport was used to move the completed gun barrels; carriages were constructed at the destination, and could be pretty crude. Since this method of transshipment proved to have limits, further foundries were established in European Russia; state powder factories were

also established. As early as the 1720s, the Russian armaments industry had a surplus for export.

Peter lost his original train at the Battle of Narva. The guns were too heavy, the carriages badly made, ammunition and powder unreliable. Everything was lost. This forced the Russians to rethink the role of the arm, and to redesign their equipment from scratch.

Bruce's reforms led to the separation of guns into field, fortress, and siege batteries. The Siege Train was divided into three parks, at St. Petersburg, Kiev, and Belgorod. By the 1750s the whole consisted of 120 heavy guns and 340 mortars. Regimental artillery was separate again, with each regiment having two, and later four, 3-lbers; *Preobrazenski* had 4 cannon and 6 mortars; *Semenovski* (and later *Ismailovski*) 6 cannon.

Calibres ranged from 2-lber horse artillery (an experiment that had been abandoned by the 1730s) to 12-lber field pieces, 18- and 24-lber siege guns, 20- and 40-lb mortars, and a variety of coehorns (light mortars). Bruce also standardised the ratio of weight to size for ammunition and managed to reduce average gun weight by a quarter; carriages were also lightened. In fact, Bruce created one of the earliest 'artillery systems' in Europe.

Since Münnich himself was a gunner, the arm did well during his time. The Artillery Regiment's personnel were organised into 1 bombardier & 6 gunner companies for the field and heavier 'positional' guns, while the Siege Corps had its own bombardier company, plus 3 gunner companies.

Münnich emphasised the regimental guns and strove for professionalism. Every infantry battalion was given 4-8 light coehorn mortars (6-lbers) in addition to its direct fire weapons. To serve the battalion artillery, 1 NCO, 5 bombardiers, and 15 gunners were seconded to each battalion. Each infantry regiment had an artillery lieutenant, and each brigade a captain. Additional crew was taken from the battalions. At the end of the 'period of Germanification' in the early 1740s, the Artillery Regiment had 2,100 men and included a fusilier regiment to protect the ammunition train.

*[Fusils were safer to use around gunpowder.]*

Engineer and other technical branches, however, were almost nonexistent, depending mainly on the individual expertise of ordinary field officers (which in some cases was very professional). Labour was provided by the infantry.

*[At some point prior to the Seven Years War, the Engineers were given their own Regiment, within the Artillery branch. It consisted of a company of miners, a company of pioneers, and a company of skilled labourers, each of 250 men. Their primary role was that of constructing field fortifications. Common soldiers were still employed for menial tasks.]*

An exception was the Pontooneer company, which was regularly equipped with something like 90 wooden pontoons. Its personnel were sailors, commanded by a naval lieutenant. The bridge they built across the Dnieper in 1737 comprised 128 pontoons and was capable of being swung to allow river traffic to pass. General Fermor developed the method of using empty water casks to build supplementary bridges and his 'patented' 32-pontoon train was used in the 1738 and 1739 campaigns; the casks could be refilled after the bridge was taken up.

### The Nizovoi Corps

In 1722, Peter attempted the conquest of the Caspian side of the Caucasus. The object was to gain control over a lucrative silk route and the caviar trade. Persia was very weak at this time, so there was a power vacuum in the region. 18 line and 2 grenadier regiments contributed to the initial invasion. This campaign, which lasted until the Russians evacuated the area in 1734-35, was the largest single drain on the Russian Army in the 18th Century. Some 135,000 men are estimated to have perished there from disease alone (compared to 100,000 combat and attritional casualties for the 1730s war

against the Turks). One man reported that out of a draft of 26 officers, only he was still alive after 2 years service.

The regiments of the corps (all infantry) serving permanently on this less than desirable posting were those of:

<i>Apsheron</i>	<i>Shirvan</i>
<i>Derbent</i>	<i>Kabarda</i>
<i>Dagestan</i>	<i>Nasheburg</i>
<i>Salian</i>	<i>Nizovsk</i>
<i>Baku</i>	<i>Kurinsk</i>
<i>Tengin</i>	<i>Navaginsk</i>

### The Garrison Army

The Garrison Army of the 1730s was founded in 1712. Peter raised 39 regiments of 1,483 men each, taking the cadres from the Line. Total strength was 64,769 men, slightly more than the Infantry of the Line and the Guard combined. Their role was to maintain internal security, keep the peace in tribal regions, and defend strategic lines of approach in depth.

In 1716 the garrison infantry was expanded to 49 regiments of 2 battalions, and an additional battalion. By the 1730s, this had become 75 infantry regiments and 3 independent battalions, plus a number of special units. 20 musketeer regiments were designated *Ostzeiskiy* (northwest) troops, and given higher pay and status; 55 regiments were termed 'Internal' and had general policing duties within the interior provinces. All garrison musketeer regiments were of 2 battalions of 4 companies, but the *Ostzeiskiy* had a strength of 1,319, while the Internal regiments had a strength of 1,309.

On the eastern frontier were the Garrison Dragoons, 4 regiments and the *Roslavl Squadron* (some sources say 7 regiments). Dragoon regiments had 1,077 men in 10 companies; *Roslavl* had 544 men in 5 companies. These units were intended as frontier and security troops and rarely if ever operated as formed bodies. The *Roslavl Squadron* was based at Moscow. From time to time there was also a *Drabant Squadron* (or regiment) acting as an Imperial Bodyguard; the men were Tatars or taken from other eastern tribes.

The Ukraine also had its own body of 20 regiments of *Landmiliz*. These were a key component of the southern frontier defences. 16 of the regiments were mounted. Officially, 11 of the regiments were 'settled', i.e. used only in static roles. The foot regiments were 1020 strong, and the mounted regiments 1248 (though they have also been described as comprising 8 companies of about 180 men, giving a total of 1,440 men each). The regiments were normally just administrative bodies, though they fought as integral units when campaigning during the Russo-Turkish War. There was no battalion-level organisation. They were settled in widely dispersed military posts, or on the Lines of the Ukraine.

Similar to the Ukrainian *Landmiliz* was the *Zakamskaia* (or *Transkama*) *Landmiliz*, a body of 3 mounted infantry regiments and 1 musketeer regiment, based at Orenburg on the River Kama.

Socially, the *Landmiliz* enjoyed higher status as 'yeomen', and later as 'crown peasants' (a rank that had to be bought by the payment of 40 kopeks). This meant they were not serfs, and were spared a lot of the hardships that went with that life.

The *Mecklenburg Corps*, a little known formation, arrived in Russia in 1719 when a short war broke out between Russia and Britain. The Duke of Mecklenburg, Karl Leopold, was tied by marriage to the Tsar, and his lands were occupied by the British. In consequence the duke fled to Russia with his army of 1,900. The men were settled in the Ukraine. There is no indication of when this unit disappeared.

### Administration

The best description of early Petrine military administration can be given in a single word: 'minimal'. As an autocrat, Peter did not require a large governing council.

In the field he was accompanied by a small chancellery, the *blizhnaya pokhodnaya kantseliariya*, which served not only the Army, but the entire State.

During the course of the Great Northern War, the country was divided first into military districts, then subdivided into provinces, then re-divided into regimental districts. What civilian administration there was, was soon supplemented or supplanted by the Military when the entire nation was placed under the 1716 War Regulations. Governors could be general officers, or aristocrats given general officer rank – in practice there was no difference, since society as a whole was regimented, the only variations being relative status and the opportunity for advancement.

A Senate was organised to collect taxes and centrally direct the machinery of war-making. The senators, too, were all military men. Regimental districts, grouped into larger military districts, were responsible for billeting, paying, supplying, and staffing them.

Councils of war began as informal groupings, but were eventually systematised into a War College, of which the President (sometimes Minister of War) was also Commander-in-Chief under the Tsar. The War College was responsible for Army Administration. Business was run through various working committees, and overseen by an independent group of Assessors.

All in all, Peter's administrative apparatus was viewed as the best in Europe. Here was a state totally subservient to the requirements of the Army at every level, and in every area, from the supply of recruits and materiel, to finance and decision-making.

The weakest link was probably the Commissariat, for the usual reasons: ignorance, sloth, and opportunities for corruption. A General War Commissar presided over two Chief War Commissars – one for Infantry and one for Dragoons. Divisional-sized formations in the field always had one of these men attached to them (usually there were only one or two large armies, facing Sweden, Poland, or the Ottomans).

Victualling was assessed annually per soldier: 50 buckets of flour, 1.5 buckets of oats, 24 pounds of salt, and 75 kopeks worth of meat per man; horses were given 6 buckets of oats and 90 pounds of hay every 6 months. Rations were scaled up when on campaign outside the regiment's province, and converted to 2 pounds of bread, 1 of meat, and 2 glasses of spirits per day (in theory). Within a regiment's province, food and clothing were deducted from pay at source (food at 5 roubles per man per year, uniforms on a set scale based on the 'life expectancy' of the cloth). Clothing was quite cheap, and, depending on the item, was expected to last from 1 to 3 years. The Garrison Army cost less per man than the Regular Army – under half as much, even for the elitist *Ostzeiskiy*.

In 1720 the Army was costing 4,000,000 roubles per year, with 1,243,000 going to provisions. These figures are far less than those encountered in other European states, and are one of the main reasons behind Russia's ability to replace her losses in manpower – new recruits did not cost much.

### Münlich's Army Reforms

The President of the War College was, on behalf of the Sovereign, Commander-in-Chief as well as Minister of War. In 1730, Münlich was appointed to the post. Previously, he had been Director of Fortifications and Master General of the Ordnance. In 1731, he also became President of the Military Commission, set up by the Tsaritsa to reform the Army. In 1736, as war fever began to mount, the Commission also became responsible for military administration – in essence, Münlich drew as many threads as he could into his own hands.

Although a foreigner, one of Münlich's early acts was to standardise the pay scale, which had been divided into 'foreign' and 'native' scales, with foreign 'experts' being given higher pay. He also raised the pay of the men by abolishing deductions for food and clothing. And he limited the number of foreigners who could apply for

service in the Russian Army (though officers and volunteers of high rank were always welcome).

Münlich reduced length of service for the ranks from life to 25 years (at least it looked good on paper, though of course it meant that upon his discharge the State was no longer responsible for a man). A regular Cadet Corps was set up to train young noblemen. Furthermore, Münlich moved away from Peter's doctrine that rank and service to the state were to be strongly linked: i.e social rank was no longer to be directly tied to military service.

Other reforms were not as popular. In uniforms and equipment, the European standard was adopted (rather uncomfortable in comparison to the old uniforms): powdered and queued hair, gaiters and stocks, tight coats and breeches. Standardisation of equipment was attempted, but was not always successful. Foreign purchases came from a variety of sources, while local product varied in quality. (Officially, the musket was a 1734 pattern copied from the Austrian model.) And, as mentioned elsewhere, Münlich experimented with cuirassiers and hussars.

### Officer Corps

The Petrine Army's Officer Corps was dominated by two things: the Table of Ranks, which equated military and civilian service, and tied both to service to the State (in the form of the Tsar), and the predominance of foreigners. Peter saw both as necessities. The Table of Ranks stayed, though watered down during the 1730s. The foreigners stayed too, but became much less prevalent over time.

Most of the original officers in the Russian Army appear to have been Saxons. General C. H. von Manstein called them 'the most useless throw-outs from the rest of Europe'. Service in Russia was not desirable for men whose ability could win them a place in more salubrious surroundings. Peter tried to weed out the incompetents and replace them with Russians, but with limited success. Still, by his death, in 1725, roughly two-thirds of the general officers were Russian (and in his day a Russian was always given command of the Field Army when fighting German states such as Prussia). Where possible, officers were sent abroad for training and experience, though a number of colleges were opened in Russia.

In Russia, even more than in other European countries, the Nobility's reason for existence was service to the State. At 16, a young aristocrat was expected to join the Army, the Navy, or the Civil Service. The latter was the preferred choice, which was a problem. Those entering on a military career would be enrolled in the Guards for their apprenticeship, and might even be sent abroad to study. The alternative was to serve as a supernumerary with a regiment, but, since, in contrast to enrolment in the Guards, this brought no social benefit, it was rarely practised, and there were a lot of youths in uniform wandering the streets who had no military training whatsoever.

*[Manstein mentions the fact that in 1738 many promotions to general officer were made, but that the generals were permitted to retain their regiments – usually this was not the case. This had been done for fiscal reasons, since the Army only had to give them the balance of their pay rise.]*

In 1722, the Army rank structure was brought in line with the nobility's Table of Ranks, giving army officers the same pay and perquisites as other aristocrats. When coupled to the idea of a meritocracy, this made the Army a potential route for ennoblement.

*Noblesse oblige* was, in a reverse trend, transferred into the military sphere. Officers were expected to be as fathers to their men. Unlike the West, the paternalistic nature of Russian society made this a natural idea. Of course, the father-figure was often draconian, but many officers exhibited real care for the men under their charge. And high rank provided no immunity from punishment in the Russian Army. Any officer who failed in his charge could expect corporal punishment, exile, even death, as much as any of his men – though an officer, as always, had more means of official redress and better recourse to unofficial channels.



No matter what career path he chose, a noble was expected to serve the State for a minimum of 25 years. This was intended to foster professionalism, but it also led to incidents of incompetence when civilian officials were rotated through military commands. A stronger trend was the militarisation of society, as officers were rotated through civilian posts.

[Ranks:

<i>Generalissimus</i>	<i>Commander in Chief</i>
<i>General Feldmarshal</i>	<i>Field Marshal</i>
<i>General-anchef</i>	<i>General</i>
<i>General-Poruchik</i>	<i>Lieutenant-general</i>
<i>General Major</i>	<i>Major-general</i>
<i>Brigadir</i>	<i>Brigadier General</i>
<i>Polkovnik</i>	<i>Colonel</i>
<i>Major (1)</i>	<i>Major 1st Class</i>
<i>Major (2)</i>	<i>Major 2nd Class</i>
<i>Kapitan</i>	<i>Captain</i>
<i>Poruchik</i>	<i>Lieutenant</i>
<i>Podporuchik</i>	<i>2nd Lieutenant</i>
<i>Praporshchik</i>	<i>Ensign</i>

*Guards officers were graded two ranks higher.]*

## The Men

The Petrine Army began as a volunteer formation, but very quickly became conscript in nature. The first national levy took place in 1701. In 1705, compulsory service was established. Theoretically, all Russian men were eligible – except the Clergy and the Nobility, both of whom already served the State anyway. In practice, the village council would dispatch the local 'incorrigibles'. During the Seven Years War, annual enrolment was about 3% of available manpower (or 40,000 men per year).

Service was for life, eventually commuted to 25 years (15 for the Baltics, Ukraine, and Byelorussia). It was common for young men snared in the annual roundup to be given a village funeral before they departed for the depôt, since they would never return. A peasant who managed to join his regiment without having deserted (branding was experimented with in 1712 and chaining was nearly universal) or dying on the road, could expect a life of toil – much like the one he had left.

Discipline was brutal, but again, not much different from civilian life – indeed, the Military and Civil Codes were very similar. Minor offences were punishable by death. For major offences the pain of departing was intensified: breaking on the wheel, decapitation, and burning at the stake. (Officers also underwent these forms of execution.) Light punishments included burning the tongue with a red-hot iron, beating with the knout (flogging), riding a sawhorse or running the gauntlet (borrowed from the Swedes). Any officer could order any man to be beaten. Colonels held the power of life and death. Unit punishments commonly included decimation, with the survivors being beaten.

The men survived on a ration of flour and water, used to make *sukhare* (biscuit) and sourdough. Cabbage was added to the diet in the form of *shchi* (cabbage soup), and a watery beer was made out of rye. Meat was a rarity, and had to be purchased, usually by the 'platoon mess' consortium or *artel*.

In fact, the Russian soldier was not supplied with much. He was expected to bake his own bread, sew his own uniforms, cobble his own shoes, fashion harnesses, build wagons, and construct shelters, all from raw materials dumped in front to him, the cost of which was deducted from his pay. Regiments became miniature factories (and a paying investment for some colonels – often, too, soldiers not required for campaigning would be sent to work as serfs on their colonel's estates). Fortunately, a peasant with the necessary skills could usually be found somewhere in the unit.

Military training was another matter. It was not until 1721 that schools for NCOs were established in the various garrison towns, and all NCOs were former serfs. Though the manual of arms was

standard to all, each regiment could impose its own training regimen, with a consequent variation in quality.

Manstein gives a sample of how specialists were obtained:

'As to the surgeons of the companies, scarce can they shave. On a review of recruits a colonel will order a common peasant, who may have followed the plough-tail, to be a surgeon: the poor fellow protests in vain that he has no inclination to the profession, and that he shall never be able to learn it; but this avails him nothing, he must try; and if he has a thick head, it is made more penetrable by dint of blows. In the same manner are their bands chosen; so that one may easily judge of the quality of their music.' (Manstein p.171).

He also explains that this lack of qualified medical personnel is a great problem. Despite their reputation for endurance, the soldiers often become sick, and about a third die of their illnesses in every campaign. Their religious life, which includes a large number of fast-days, contributes to the weakening of their constitution. (At the same time, their fatalism enabled them to cope with suffering and death.)

Cavalrymen were recruited in the same way as infantrymen; there was no social status to be gained from the point of view of a common serf. And Greater Russian serfs proved to be poor riders, though excellent foot soldiers.

The Russian soldier's weaknesses included ignorance and a lack of initiative. But his advantages were an incredibly deep love of country, an even deeper religious faith, and an utter indifference to hardship. As a Russian general from a later time once said, 'the man who does not fear death is terrible. Nothing can stop him, if he is not shot down on the way.' When properly led, a Russian army could be invincible.

## Uniforms & Equipment

From the start, Peter stressed uniformity in dress and equipment. There was a political angle to this as well as common sense. The *Streltsi* had worn reds, blues, and oranges; Peter ordered the Army to wear green. His efforts were only crowned with success in 1721, however, and even then he had to permit the dragoons to wear blue and the artillery to wear red. Facings were introduced in 1730. Uniforms were 'German' style, but not 'Prussian-tight'.

Every infantry regiment, even the guard, wore long, green, single-breasted coats, called *kaftans* (basically a variation on civilian attire), turned back in red and with a red lining (not universally sewn back until 1742). The coat was fastened with 9 or 10 copper buttons and had 3 copper buttons on each cuff. Red worsted lace outlined the buttonholes down the left lapel. There were 2 decorative buttons at either side of the small of the back. Some sources report no pockets, others very simple ones. Dye quality was poor, often making the coats seem black. Vests (*kamzols*) and breeches (*pantaloni*) were red; summer service was sometimes performed without coats. Vests were long, and with sleeves, buttoned in the same manner as the coats. Black stocks and gaiters were white (introduced in 1729). Over all used to be worn the ankle-length greatcoat, or *shinel*, though apparently it had disappeared from service by the 1740s.

The native *kartuz* head-dress (a felt cap with flaps at the back and sides) was replaced by the tricorne (*treugolka*), except for grenadiers, who wore a uniquely Russian cloth mitre cap known as a *grenaderskaya tshapka*. The lower half of the front of this cap was covered by a brass plate decorated with the royal cipher and regimental iconography. The cap itself was green in front, red over green at the back, piped white, with a red tuft. It had a white flap at the back that could be folded down to cover the neck.

In short, except in the details, uniforms of much the same style and lack of quality as any other European power's.

No regimental distinctions were permitted other than the regimental colours. The men were clean-shaven (grenadiers were required to have moustaches) and wore their hair in the usual queue (not always powdered).

Marines had the same dress, but vest, breeches, and cuffs were all green, and collars were white.

Dragoons wore the same uniform as the infantry, but in mid-blue cloth. They also carried the same equipment, since they frequently fought dismounted, except for carrying a longer *pallasche* sword rather than the short sword known as a *hanger*. The same statements can be made for the horse grenadiers.

Both infantry and dragoons used the model 1731 flintlock, fitted with a 16' triangular bayonet. This had no frog, since it was intended to remain permanently fixed to the musket. A buff leather shoulder belt supported a plain blackened cartridge box holding 24 rounds. A similar buff leather waist belt supported a hanger at the left hip.

For the Russo-Turkish War, Münnich ordered the carrying of pikes – roughly 200 per regiment. These were to be used to fend off Tatar cavalry charges. In the event, the cumbersome and universally detested sticks were more useful for crossing obstacles, though they also helped to repel Turkish assaults on Russian-held fortifications. However, battalions were also required to transport portable *chevaux-de-frise* called *rogatki*, and these came in very handy. On more than one occasion, the infantry advanced onto their objective carrying their *rogatki* with them.

Grenadiers carried a black leather grenade pouch, containing 2 grenades, in place of the cartridge box. Cartridges were carried in a black belly box. Both containers had brass plates similar to that of the grenadier cap. Grenadiers also carried a brass match case on the grenade pouch's strap, at chest height.

The Cuirassiers were dressed and equipped like those in the Saxon Army, even down to the cloth colour: pale cream coats faced red, vests red, with brass buttons. No regimental distinctions were made until late in the 1740s (for the *Garde-du-Corps*). The cuirass was regularly worn, and if on active service against the Turks or Tatars, backplates were worn as well. Headgear consisted of the tricorne, edged in white lace and lined with an iron *secret* to protect the skull. Cuirassiers carried the *pallasche* (a straight, heavy sword), a pair of pistols, and carbine and bayonet. A cartridge belt was worn over all.

Hussar uniforms were on the original Hungarian model. The intention was to uniform them in red and blue as a visible means of stiffening the hordes of irregular horsemen accompanying the army. In practice, the hussars had their own ideas. The Hungarians did wear red, but the Georgians went for 'aurore' (a kind of orange) and the Serbs embraced lilac. Dolman, pelisse, barrel sash, and breeches were of the same colour. The dolman was done up with toggles rather than buttons. Frogging and piping was black (red for the Georgians); the pelisse was lined with wolfskin. Caps were low, brown fur busbies (*kolpaks*) and had a bag in the same colour as the uniform, with three 'flounders'; boots appear to have been black, except for officers, who wore higher-status yellow.

The hussars were equipped with curved Hungarian sabres that could be hung from the wrist by a sword knot while firing a carbine. The carbines were a light, Dutch-made model, and rifled. However, poor quality powder and rough operating conditions led to frequent jamming and inaccurate shooting. Like every other soldier's firearm, hussar carbines carried bayonets. Belts were black leather, rather than the usual plain deerskin.

The Artillery wore infantry-style uniforms, but in red cloth and with dark blue facings and copper buttons. Gaiters were white. Bombardiers were dressed and equipped like grenadiers, in artillery colours. They wore a unique helmet made of leather and copper, with a neck guard at the back, a copper plate at the front, and a small plume on top. The helmet became standard for the grenadiers, too, in the 1750s. The fusilier regiment carried infantry equipment but wore the artillery uniform. Engineers came from the Artillery and

were dressed accordingly (as officers they would have gilt buttons, gorgets, sashes (indicating rank), and would not 'turn back' their coats).

The Garrison Army wore a different set of uniforms. They lacked vests, and wore collarless grey working coats of cheap quality. The garrison dragoons, were dressed the same, but with dark green coats over the grey. The outer coat had red facings. Breeches were also red. The Ukrainian *Landmiliz* were dressed in a similar manner to the Regular Army, although civilian dress appears to have been permitted while on duty.

Officer dress was similar to the rank and file, though of better quality. Breeches were green for infantry officers. Buttons were gilded. Coats were not turned back unless the officer was mounted. Mounted officers wore riding boots. All officers also wore the gorget and a sash over the right shoulder. In the mid-1730s a universal golden-yellow sash was adopted to emphasise Anna Ivanova's imperial claims. Three black bands on this sash meant a company officer, one thick black band meant a field officer. Generals had plain golden-yellow sashes. Officers below the rank of major were required to carry fusils, but not polearms as in some armies.

### Tactics

Initially, there was little agreement on drill or tactics. Generally speaking, however, since the Habsburg Imperial Army was used as a model, lines started out composed of 6 ranks, with volleys also being by rank. Cadenced marching was not introduced until 1755. From the start, the bayonet was heavily emphasised, particularly when Tatars or Turks were to be engaged. Beginning, like every other army, with a large body of pikemen, these were gradually reduced to nothing. Though retained in the arsenals, it was Marshal Münnich who reintroduced them in the field.

1708 saw Peter's first codification of combat drill. Battalion ranks were reduced to 4, and volley by rank or platoon was practised. Münnich brought in Prussian experts in 1731, but the Prussian model had actually been applied for some time. A battalion was composed of 4 divisions, split into platoons, with the grenadier company (if present) on the right of the line. The fourth rank did not fire, but served as a reserve. Battle experience also demonstrated that only platoon fire was effective over long periods of time.

Tactical deployments were to be 'Western': 2 lines and a reserve, with the cavalry on the wings. Details were left to individual commanders. Entrenching was recommended – an expedient at first, stemming from combat against the highly aggressive Swedes.

Münnich stressed firepower (during the Seven Years War, though doctrines changed, the Russians frequently achieved a higher rate of fire than the Prussians) and developed a tactic of a 'rolling advance' against the Turks that proved quite successful. On the offensive, the Russians used the rather modern concept of multiple columns, screened by an advance and rear guard. Münnich also made frequent use of divisional-sized squares, both defensively and offensively, allowing an army a certain amount of articulation in its manoeuvres when facing hordes of cavalry.

Heavy emphasis was placed on the science of fortification. Fortified posts and fortified lines were used to consolidate control over newly acquired regions; operationally, entrenched camps and redoubts were regularly constructed to protect lines of communication as the army advanced, and the enemy was 'invited' to attack the well-positioned Russians, rather than the Muscovites seeking battle. Against the mounted warriors of the steppe, this was pretty much the only way to secure victory. Terrain was also used to advantage; the Russians did not scorn the use of woods and swamps, even by their horsemen.

Due to the lack of resources on the steppe, when campaigning there most of the supplies had to be carried by the army. Grand Convoys were also organised as a 'B Echelon', and these would be heavily protected with infantry, cavalry, and artillery.

Münnich's slow-moving squares, bristling with *chevaux-de-frise* and wrapped in a mantle of combat wagons or *taburs*, were incapable of bringing an enemy to battle if he did not want to fight, but at the same time, they were impregnable. The Russians pinned their hopes on the politics of steppe society: denied forage and booty, shamed by the destruction of their encampments and the loss of their herds, the Tatar warriors would pressure their leaders into combat regardless of the odds. Scorched earth was applied as a deliberate policy, and not just against the Tatars. At the very least, the khans would be shown to be powerless and perhaps their tribesmen would prefer to place themselves under St. Petersburg's protection.

Unlike most European armies, where a balance was maintained between dragoons and heavy cavalry, the Russians focused almost entirely on dragoons. As mentioned earlier, this was due to the poor combat quality of the horses available, compared with Western breeds. Massed mounted action was avoided. Instead, the dragoons were used for pursuit, rearguard actions, reconnaissance, harassment, and laying waste the enemy's lands. Formed into a *korvolan* or flying column, dragoon regiments could have a devastating impact, and were more reliable than the Cossacks, who added a thirst for booty and an instinct for self-preservation to their otherwise similar duties.

Fighting dismounted, the cavalry adopted the infantry's four-rank line and frequently made use of covering terrain, such as tree lines, and of fortifications. For mounted action, they operated in a three-rank line, by line of squadrons, with the colonel's squadron in the center. They would advance no faster than a trot. This was the Prussian doctrine of the day. At 30 paces they would discharge their carbines, then either draw pistols and close for a further volley, or turn tail, rally, and begin again – very much 17th Century drills. But against the Swedes, what else could they hope to do?

Toward the end of the Germanification period, however, some colonels began to abandon the reliance on firepower in favour of charging home, which was again becoming fashionable. Initial actions against the Prussians showed the wisdom of this, and at the height of the Seven Years War it was standard practice to launch a charge at 100 paces after a trotting advance of some 400 paces.

In the war against the Turks, the dragoons typically dismounted and took cover within Münnich's divisional squares, along with the Cossacks, serving as a reserve in case the square was penetrated, as happened on a couple of occasions. Horse Grenadiers, though also poorly mounted, were effective as storming parties and 'fire brigades'.

### Strategy

Russian grand strategy during the 1730s evolved out of the struggle for survival against the Tatars, Poles, and Swedes. As security was established, emphasis shifted to the offensive, partly in a never ending search for greater security, but also in a drive for new markets, both foreign and domestic. A drive for regional hegemony became a way of fulfilling both aims.

The lessons learned subduing the Swedes and Poles were combined with the techniques acquired from dealing with the Tatars and other Asian polities. For the Russians, war has rarely if ever driven policy, it has always been one of a number of tools available for the political struggle.

In the 1730s, grand strategy was still developing. Essentially there were three tiers. Defensively, the core lands, how ever they might be defined at any given time, were protected by static formations – the Garrison Army – backed by a number of extensive fortified lines that channelled an enemy's potential approach.

Beyond the frontier, client states and allies acted as buffers. Poland became such a state in the 1730s; if the French royal candidate had been allowed to remain in power, Poland would have become a threat instead. Finland was annexed in the 1740s, putting Sweden under direct threat. In the south were the Cossack Hosts, and in the east, various tribes and khanates. The rulers of these clients were

given legitimacy by the tsars, as well as money, trading privileges, and weaponry, allowing them to develop their own security against other neighbours. Further afield, allies like Austria worked to guarantee Russian interests when these were in line with their own.

The third tier could be mobilised to defend the other two. This was the Mobile Army. How it was employed varied with the situation. It could be concentrated to defend the core lands, parcelled out against a number of threats (not as effective a strategy, of course, but the threats might be fairly weak), or used to conduct deep strikes against enemy core areas. This last method was employed during the 1730s.

First, against Persia (really from the later 1720s), where a strike was launched from Astrakhan against the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. At the time, this was at the extreme edge of Russian power, and the position could not be held over the long haul.

Second, the march to the Rhine during the War of the Polish Succession. This was a propaganda move, similar to one conducted in the 'teens against Denmark. Again, the Rhine was at the extremity of Russia's reach, but the demonstration had a salutary effect, from St. Petersburg's point of view. The army did not have to be maintained on the Rhine in perpetuity – the threat of return was perpetual.

Finally, the Russo-Turkish War was nothing *but* a series of deep strikes. An attempt had been made to hit the Crimea in the 1690s, but the Russian Army, indeed the Russian State, was not capable of achieving that goal. In 1736 it was. For the first time, the Russians were striking at the core of their Tatar enemies' own realm. The invasion of Moldavia was a similar effort, against the Ottoman Turks. The invasion of the Kuban was conducted by surrogates but also served to weaken Tatar hegemony over the Black Sea steppe. The upshot of the war was a decline in Ottoman and Tatar power, in the latter case, enough to topple the Khanate in the next generation, by a mixture of military and political means.

As the sphere of influence of a neighbouring power declined, Russia's expanded, allowing peaceful settlement of the former border zone and direct administration. Any client state in the zone would be dissolved or absorbed. A new frontier would be defined, and new clients developed. In Europe, this system could only be developed so far; in Europe there were any number of powerful regimes, with strong cultural and political identities, economies much more robust than Russia's, and militaries, that at least in combination, could match her own. In the east, however, expansion was possible clear to the Pacific Ocean.

## The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

Poland is another state about which volumes could be written. For the purpose at hand, a brief sketch will have to suffice.

### The State

The Commonwealth of the Crown of the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania came into being in 1569, with the union of the Polish and Lithuanian royal houses. At that time, Lithuania was the dominant partner – though the roles were later reversed – and included lands stretching east of Smolensk and far down into the Ukraine on both banks of the Dnieper River.

It was Sigismund II Augustus, last of the Jagellion kings, who brought the union about. He may also be said to have sown the seeds of its eventual demise, through making the monarchy elective. The Golden Liberty proclaimed that, 'the king reigns but does not govern'. The Commonwealth was a republic presided over by a king, under the supervision of a senate.

In many ways this was an enlightened system. Citizens had rights that had to be respected. Various religions were tolerated. Participation in war was often vetoed. Unfortunately, these privileges extended to the bloated noble classes, who still mentally lived in the feudal age.

The *Sejm*, or parliament of nobles, elected the king. Each noble had the right of veto, both at the central and district parliaments. Each noble also had the right of *rokosz*, to rebel against any 'abuse of power' by the king. And nobles had the right to form confederations to attain their political goals. Many times, those confederations were armed.

The three elements with political power were the king, the magnates, and the *szlachta*, or 'general nobility'. The magnates fought to achieve an oligarchy composed of themselves, while the *szlachta* fought to widen the power of the *Sejm*. Overall, the latter had the most success. Paradoxically, this gave the magnates greater freedom, which speeded the break up of the country.

The 17th Century was the Commonwealth's golden age. Relatively untouched by the Thirty Years War, the Commonwealth fought wars of expansion that took it as far as Moscow, where a Polish garrison remained between 1610 and 1612. Even the Mongols never did that (and the Russians have never forgotten, either).

However, after mid-century the Commonwealth's power declined. First came the Khmelnytskyi Cossack Uprising. The western Cossack Hosts were all originally sponsored by the Commonwealth, and they rebelled against attempts to reintegrate them – which would have meant paying taxes and being under the thumb of autocratic nobles. The Cossacks called on the Tatars for help, and on the Russians. This led to Russian domination of first the Left Bank (eastern) Ukraine, and later on the western Ukraine.

Second, in 1655 the Swedes invaded in earnest, as part of a coalition between them, the Elector of Brandenburg, and the Transylvanian Duke Rákóczi. This event was known in Poland simply as The Deluge.

The Commonwealth could still be a potent force, however. Jan Sobieski III allied with the Holy Roman Emperor against the Ottoman Empire and dealt them several defeats. In 1683 he helped save Vienna when it was besieged by the Turks, and ultimately the Poles helped push the Ottomans out of Hungary entirely.

That was the Commonwealth's swan song. By the 18th Century, the *Sejm* (and the country) was in a state of near anarchy as powerful nobles vied for control. It became the norm for a foreign ruler to be installed as the only way of resolving the various rivalries without too much bloodshed. But then, rival candidates played the factions against each other, so instability remained. Ultimately, as is well known, the Commonwealth was partitioned by its neighbours and ceased to exist.

## The Military

Lithuania and Poland had a common system, but separate administrations, including separate armies. A combined army would be commanded by two Grand Hetmans and two Field Hetmans (one Polish and one Lithuanian for each rank).

Armies were composed of the following elements:

- *Wojsko kwarciane*, or tax-paid regulars. The name means 'quarter army'; they were supposed to be paid with 1/4 of the royal taxes. In practice, because the Crown often leased its land to the nobility, the magnates had to foot the bill; often they did not bother and hired mercenaries instead, which caused a number of army revolts. Because of this, the *wojsko kwarciane* were downgraded in the mid-17th Century and joined the:
- *Wojsko komputowe* or 'supplemental' army, paid out of funds voted by the *Sejm*. Average numbers ran to 12,000 for Poland and 6,000 for Lithuania in peacetime, jumping to 24-40,000 and 8-22,000 respectively during war.
- *Pospolite ruszenie* was the *levée en masse* of the *szlachta*, the feudal host. It was an anachronism, but could still be called.
- *Piechota lanowa & wybraniecka* were peasant levies.

- *Registered Cossacks* were the Cossack elite, supported by the State. After the Khmelnytskyi Revolt this idea was abandoned. By the 1730s, any Cossacks still under Polish influence would have been the retainers of various magnates with whom they had formed some sort of relationship.
- Plus a royal guard, various mercenaries, and a collection of private armies. Towns had their trained bands (generally called *insurrectios* in Eastern Europe), and also hired mercenaries.

These units remained on the books into the 18th Century, but in the 1730s, the Commonwealth really had no standing army at all, and the magnates with their private armies remained responsible for the country's defence.

## Moldavia

In the 1730s, Moldavia was one of the Danubian Principalities (the other being Wallachia), regions having a certain degree of autonomy under Ottoman supremacy. Like Wallachia, Moldavia was technically demilitarised. The Ottomans saw to its defence. However, many Moldavians served in the Ottoman armies. The majority were probably labourers, but the native nobility still had its bands of retainers, and these would have swelled the ranks of the *sipahis*. The typical *voynuk* warrior would be classed as a hussar.

The principality incorporated various tracts of land at different times (present day Moldavia excludes much of its original territory, which is now in Romania). The core of the principality originated partly as a Hungarian buffer zone on the east side of the Carpathians – a wasteland between the mountains and the Dniester River designed to keep the Steppe People at a distance – and partly as a vassal region of the Medieval Galician-Volhynian state of southeast Poland, whose capital was at Lviv.

In the 14th Century, the King of Hungary attempted to fill the power vacuum left by the demise of the Cumans (one of the fiercer and better organised of the migratory nations) in those parts. The Tatars had the same idea, but the Hungarians were successful in driving them back over the Dniester. In 1353, one Dragosh, a Vlach prince of Hungary, was sent to establish a line of defence against the nomads, centred on the Siret River. Shortly after, another prince, one Bogdan (who became Bogdan I) rebelled from the King of Hungary and took control of the region as its first independent ruler. Bogdan extended his sway north to the Cheremosh River, but the Tatars continued to dwell in the southern parts of Moldavia – what became known as Bessarabia.

Bogdiana, as it was then called, had its capital first at Siret, then at Sueava in the Bukovina; Iasi (Jassy) was only established as the capital in 1565. The principality was divided into two districts: the Upper Land (Thara de Sus) of Bukovina, and the Lower Land (Thara de Jos) straddling the Prût. In religion, despite the Hungarians' best efforts, the Moldavians were Orthodox Christian, developing strong, though not always amicable relations with Byzantium and her heir, the Kievan Rus'. There were, however, pockets of German and Hungarian Catholics, and, latterly, Hussite refugees. The common people were mainly Slavs and Roma (Gypsies, not all of whom are nomadic thieves).

Bogdan's line was known as the Mushatin Dynasty, after his son-in-law, Petru Mushat, who had his capital at Sueava. The Mushatins were closely related to the Wallachian line of Basarab (of whom the famous Dracula was a member). But Moldavia also formed close ties with Poland. At the time of the foundation of Bogdan's state, Hungary and Poland had a union similar to that of the later Polish-Lithuanian union, but this was in the process of breaking up. The Mushatins, opponents of Hungary, allied themselves with the Jagiellon princes of Poland, Petru I becoming a vassal of Wladyslaw II in 1387. Moldavia gave considerable aid to the Poles in their fight against the Teutonic Knights. It was at this time that they gained the area up to the Cheremosh as a debt payment from the Poles (it was essentially another depopulated border zone), though ownership remained disputed and Moldavia lost it again in the 1500's. But

Petru also expanded southward as far as the Mouths of the Danube, and secured a border with his kinsfolk in Wallachia. He gained an outlet to the Black Sea at Bilhorod-Dnistrovsky (near Akkerman) at the mouth of the Dniester.

Moldavia's rulers became involved in the power struggles of her neighbours, Hungary, Poland, and Lithuania, with a kaleidoscope of Mushatins appearing and disappearing as the favourites of one or another external power. However, in 1400, an Hungarian-sponsored prince named Alexandru cel Bun managed to pursue an independent course (favouring Poland), and, his own election having been aided by Wallachia, he was in turn able to influence the choice of Wallachia's rulers.

Alexandru had a very long reign, under which Moldavia first came into conflict with the Turks – over the fortress of Bilhorod-Dnistrovsky. After him, Moldavia experienced a series of weak reigns and civil discord. The country was even divided between rival claimants for a time. One of the last of these, Petru Aron (c1450), became, before the Hungarians disposed of him, the first Moldavian prince to pay tribute to the Sultan.

The second half of the 15th Century was taken up with the rule of Stephen the Great. This was Moldavia's golden age. Stephen made war on Hungarians, Poles, and Turks alike; he also invaded Wallachia, and obtained lands in Transylvania. Moldavian arms were successful most of the time. Nevertheless, Stephen was forced to surrender the Bujak (or Bessarabia) – the southern portion of Moldavia where the Tatars dwelt – and to continue paying tribute to the Ottomans. (That is, he surrendered control of the key fortifications in the Bujak, which amounted to the same thing.)

It was under Bogdan III cel Orb that Moldavian subjugation to the Turks began in earnest. As the decades passed, Istanbul would exert greater and greater influence over both the internal and external affairs of her vassal state.

The 17th Century was an abysmal period for the principality. Under a successor of Bogdan III, Petru Rareș, the Moldavians lost the powerful fortress of Bender to the Ottomans, though they retained the surrounding lands. Unable to pay the tribute demanded, her rulers lost the right to mint their own coins. (At one point the Moldavian State coinage was actually counterfeit.) Her fortunes became tied to the Ottoman Empire's; as it declined, so did she.

Like her sister, Wallachia, but to an even greater extent, Moldavia remained an underpopulated agrarian country that supplied grain and cattle to the Ottomans. Other items of trade became Ottoman monopolies, a circumstance which further depressed the economy, though the Turks did well by it. The general population sank into serfdom, supplemented by a slave population of Roma and Nogai Tatar captives.

Moldavia was required not only to pay taxes, but to provide military forces on the usual vassal model, on demand, with the result that her military also collapsed under the strain. Only a handful of Serbian mercenaries (the *Seimeni*) remained, bodyguards for princes who were now expected to buy their legitimacy from the Porte (in the form of cash-gift 'taxes in advance') before a rubber stamp election by the boyar nobility. Even these troops were eliminated (literally) after a rebellion in the mid-17th Century.

*[The Seimeni were flintlock-armed infantry].*

Vlach political society had a clan-based elective-kingship mechanic, not quite as bad as Poland's *Sjem*, but chaotic enough. Thus the boyars, too, spent much of their time and money angling for the job of Hospodar (prince), or for lesser appointments; in the absence of a salaried officialdom they had little choice. They faced stiff competition from imported Levantine and Greek administrators sent to enforce the laws and collect taxes, the Ottomans making great use of privately-contracted tax farming. By the late 16th Century, the boyars and their princes were frequently at odds, and the latter turned to the Ottomans as a lever against the former. The line of the Mushatin dwindled away amid a crowd of usurpers and Ottoman

puppets. Anarchy grew, coupled with increasing raids by Turks and Tatars.

At the end of the 17th Century, a new line of boyar stock, the Movileshti, took power. They became pawns in a three-way struggle between an aggressive Polish-Lithuanian state, the Habsburgs, and the Ottomans. Lithuania made repeated inroads into the principality as she fought her wars against the Turks and the Austrians. For a short while, Michael the Brave, a Wallachian prince, succeeded in uniting Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania (1600 AD), but the edifice soon collapsed, the Poles conquering as far as Bucharest before the Polish-Swedish War took their attention elsewhere. The Turks picked up the pieces.

In the mid-17th Century a Moldavian boyar-prince named Vasile Lupu restored order for a time. But when he invaded Wallachia with the help of the Zaporozhian Cossacks his army met disaster at the Battle of Finta (1653). Moldavia was then twice occupied by the Wallachians and the Movileshti dynasty was replaced by the Ghicas (Gikas, Jikas); curiously, as supporters of the Ottomans, the new dynasty clashed with their Wallachian occupiers, now led by an anti-Turkish prince.

In the 1680's the Ghicas involved themselves with Lithuanian internal affairs, aiding the Zaporozhian and Western Ukrainian Cossacks against their former Polish masters, and participated in the great siege of Vienna in Mehmed IV's army. By backing the losing side, the Great Turkish War turned out to be as much a disaster for Moldavia as it was for the Ottoman Empire. Particularly, neighbouring Podolia was returned to a hostile Poland, while Habsburg rule over Greater Hungary and Transylvania brought another enemy close to hand.

In compensation, Moldavia sought alliance with Russia, the self-proclaimed guarantor of Orthodox minorities within the Ottoman Empire, taking an anti-Turkish stance and proffering support for Peter the Great's southern offensive in 1710-1711. But Hospodar Dmitri Cantemir was defeated by the Turks before he could join his new allies, and no Moldavian help was forthcoming, a fact which contributed to Peter's humiliating surrender on the Prut in 1711. An annoyed Sultan Ahmed III abolished the rule of native princes entirely, ushering in the Phanariote Period with the rule of an appointee of the Porte, native to Constantinople. The first of these was Nicholas Mavrocordatos.

*[General Manstein recounts a tale of Prince Cantemir's descendant, who accompanied Marshal Münnich in his 1739 campaign. He led a regiment of Wallachian hussars, but was also, naturally, of great political value. When travelling to join the Russians in 1736, he had passed through Poland, and had been stopped to visit Grand Hetman Potocki. Now, Potocki was a relation of his, but no lover of Russia. He imprisoned the prince and wrote to the Turks offering him as a prize. According to Ottoman practice, this inevitably meant being flayed alive for treason. But, the prince managed to get a letter out, asking for help from Russia, and this was provided, though the affair had to pass all the way up the chain of command to St. Petersburg before Potocki would release him. So, at the outset of the 1739 campaign, when the rest of the irregulars made their grand raid into Moldavia, Cantemir turned his Wallachian hussars around and ravaged Potocki's lands, nearly causing a rupture with Poland at a critical time. Cantemir denied it all, saying it must have been some Wallachian traitors serving in the Ottoman Army...]*

The Phanariotes were leading Greek merchant families who had become key players in the life of the state at Constantinople. Rule of a foreign principality was a coveted reward for them, and those who managed to attain the honour exploited the situation to the full. Phanariote rule was corrupt and nepotistic even by Ottoman standards. The rule of any given prince tended to be short and bloody.

Yet a number of them tried to improve the Moldavian Government. One introduced salaries for government officials (to the violent revulsion of the boyar class), while another abolished serfdom. Direct Ottoman interference declined. Of course, the ruination of the country by repeated Habsburg and Russian invasion, and the emigration of thousands of peasants looking for a better life, also

reduced Ottoman interest in the region. Decade by decade, Russian influence increased.

In 1712, the Turks took control of the other key Dniester fortress – Khotin – and attempted to found an Islamic colony there, but after its capture by the Russians in 1739 and the subsequent occupation of Iasi, Ottoman days were numbered. After more wars, the Bukovina was ceded to the Habsburgs in 1772, Transnistria to the Russians in 1792, and Bessarabia to them in 1812.

The first half of the 19th Century saw the move to a union of Wallachia and Moldavia and the end of Phanariote rule in both principalities. In the main this was accomplished through Russian military occupation. The Crimean War ended Russian control of the region (though not their influence) and the principalities achieved a closer unity, though initially under separate crowns. Not until 1881 was the Kingdom of Romania formed, under a Hohenzollern prince (Carol I). With this act, Moldavia ceased to exist as a separate principality.

## The Kabardians of Eastern Circassia

*'Kabardian princes consider themselves to be the finest knights by birth not only among Circassians but among all of the Caucasus peoples. Indeed, one cannot deny such supremacy, exaggerated by Kabardian swagger'.*

Simeon Bronevsky

*'Between these two seas there isn't enough space even for one prince'.*

Aslanbek Kaytouko, Supreme Prince of Kabardia 1739-1746

The core of Kabardia lay in what is now the republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, and was split into Greater and Lesser Kabardia. A federation of Circassian tribes, led by their own aristocracy, the Kabardians had, by the 15th Century, become powerful enough for Ivan the Terrible to desire marriage with a Kabardian princess (Princess Gosheney, daughter of Prince Temriuk Idarov). This act naturally intensified Russian interference in Kabardian affairs, but it also led to Kabardian influence over Russian affairs as the two aristocracies intermingled.

*[A simple visual indication is the fact that the typical 'comic-strip' Russian wears Kabardian clothing.]*

Kabardian warriors were a mix of mountaineers and horsemen. The former did not campaign far away from home, but the latter supported the Kalmyks and Cossacks during the Russo-Turkish War of the 1730s. Individual Kabardians also fought in the Russian Army (the Kabarda Regiment was raised in the region, but there is no indication it was an ethnic unit).

Like most tribal peoples, the Kabardians' personal weapons were status symbols. In the 18th Century they would include a fine musket, suitable for hunting as well as war, a pistol, a sabre or cavalry sword, and a dagger. Bows continued to be used as well.

Tsarist policy toward Kabardia followed the time-honoured methods of divide and rule, carrot and stick. Initially, relations were good, but once Peter the Great conceived his plan for the conquest of the Caucasus, relations took a turn for the worse. Russian policy in this regard was also true to form. They invited themselves in as the protectors and champions of the Circassians against the aggression of their neighbours, in this case the Turks, Persians and Tatars.

But, while writing in 1711, 'We only wish that today you would show to us your friendship and loyalty against the Turkish Sultan and the Crimean Khan, who started war against us... Should you be our citizens, we would not demand any taxes from you,' the Tsar was planning a massive offensive that would strike out from Azov into the Kuban, from Astrakhan to Azerbaijan, and from Piatyorsk to Tbilisi. At St. Petersburg, among the expansionist set, Kabardia was seen as the key to the trade roads through the Caucasus Mountains. When the Kabardians asserted their loyalty and invited the Russian Army in to secure their state, they found themselves treated like a conquered people.

*[On the other side of the coin, the Kabardian princes only regarded themselves as loyal subjects of the Tsar when it suited their interests.]*

Though Russia returned Daghestan and Azerbaijan to Persia in 1735, in some respects, Kabardia was the reason for the War of 1736-39. It was Ottoman interest in the region, and Tatar raiding at their behest (though directed primarily against Nadr Shah), that led to Russian accusations against the Porte, and the chastisement of the Crimea. Anna Ivanova called on the Kabardians to join Russia's fight 'on their behalf', promising independence. At the end of the war, the sole gain of any consequence was the recognition of an extended Kabardian state as a buffer between the Muscovites and the Ottomans. Of course, the Circassians never got their independence.

## Various Ottoman Forces

For a discussion of the Ottoman Army 'proper' the reader is invited to consult the author's Commentary on the *Türkenkrieg* fought by the Porte and Vienna. What follows are notes on contingents not previously discussed.

### The Kurds

The Kurds belong to the Iranian linguistic group. They have lived in the region known as 'Kurdistan' (now eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, and northwestern Iran) for perhaps 2,000 years. Their political identity begins with certainty in the 10th Century. At that time, Kurdistan was a powerful Muslim state; the great Saladin was a Kurd, founder of the Ayyubid dynasty. The Kurdish alliance with the Ottoman Empire, however, began in 1514.

In that year, Sultan Selim I annexed Kurdistan (and Armenia), which had belonged to Persia. The man tasked with organising the new province was himself a Kurd – a Court historian – and he left the local power structures intact, merely turning the Kurdish chieftains into *sançak* governors.

Relations with the Ottomans were never entirely peaceful, however. During the 17th Century there were a number of revolts – turf wars between the Kurds and neighbouring governors that were bloodily crushed. The hated foe, Persia, also made good use of Kurdish tribes living within her borders.

At other times, the Sultans could count on the services of a fine body of Kurdish *sipahis*, supported by infantry – about 7,800 men. Another 20,000 mountaineers served to guard the homeland. The cavalry were most likely lancers rather than bowmen, still bearing shields, perhaps, but not body armour. They would have carried pistols or bows as secondary weapons, along with an assortment of blunt or spiked instruments. The infantry were *tüfekçis* – musketeers using the accurate, rifled weapon of the same name – probably mounted for transport. For close combat the men might have used either the downward-curving *yataghans* or straight *kincal* short sword of the Caucasus.

### The Mamelukes

The Mamelukes originated as a body of slave warriors – variously described as Circassians or Central Asian Turks – who overthrew the Arab dynasty of Egypt and installed their own. Under the famous Baibars, himself a Mameluk (and by birth a Kipchak Turk), they became famous as the first power to defeat the Mongols. Under the Ottoman sultans, Egypt enjoyed a great deal of independence. The Mameluks ruled as provincial governors, paying only nominal heed to Istanbul.

Though virtually an independent state, the Mameluks did routinely send a body of 3,000 *sipahis* to the sultans during wartime, as a form of tribute. These men were not armoured (few Mamluks were any more) but they were superb light horsemen, wielding spear, sabre, and pistol. The nature of their weapons means they would have fought in close order, though not in disciplined ranks.



## Levends, Arnauts, & Yörüks

A few words should be said about some of the Ottoman formations not mentioned in this author's Commentary on the Türkenkrieg.

*Levends* (levents) began as a form of naval infantry, but in the 18th Century the word had been revived to describe gangs of bandits hired by the state to keep them off the streets. A typical band would have been composed of demobilised soldiers and deserters, young men with nothing better to do, and a few outlaws.

In peacetime they survived like all outlaw bands by robbing caravans, kidnapping, extortion, and charging 'tolls' on travellers. If they earned a bad enough reputation, the state might hire them to fight, which gave them an opportunity to earn legitimate booty and perhaps retire – though most would just return to their old ways.

The State was in such a rickety condition that the *levends* became the staple of its infantry. They could hardly be more unruly than the Janissaries, and they cost far less. Some sources suggest they even had a uniform, though the pictures may simply reflect the fact that those who were former Janissaries kept their old uniforms. Muskets were common, as were a variety of edged weapons: *yataghans*, axes, polearms.

*Arnauts* were another pillar of the later Ottoman Army. The word means someone of Albanian origin – 'greater' Albania, that is. They could be cavalry or infantry. Despite their relatively small province, the Albanians provided a tremendous number of soldiers, and most of them were of excellent quality. Presumably they fought in tribal units, acting as shock cavalry or as sharpshooters depending on their role. Probably most of the infantry was mounted for transport; the *arnauts* may even have been all-arms warriors.

The *Yörüks* were a distinct people, nomadic Turkish mountaineers dwelling mainly in south-central Anatolia, but also in the Balkans. They could be hired as mounted sharpshooters.

## The People of the Steppes

### The Tatars

Remember 'Far Tatar'?' A mythical land one could only find in musty books of olden days, a place lost in the vast wastes of the East, where men walked on their hands and sported dog heads instead of human ones? Well, there used to be a Tatar, until it was Collectivised in the name of Social Improvement. Indeed, over the aeons, much of the population of Europe passed through it on their way to better things. Strictly speaking, *Far Tatar* equates to Cathay, which equates to China and its outliers – a big chunk of real estate in itself. Plain old Tatar had its western bounds in the Dobruja – the hill country around which the lower Danube winds, finding its way to the sea – and the southern reaches of Moldavia. It terminated in the Don Basin and the Caucasian foothills. Bounded on the north by the great sea of forest that once stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals, and by the Black Sea on the south, Tatar was mostly steppe land, lightly forested with birch and oak in the north, arid in the south, and everywhere a sea of grass. It was very much like the American (or Canadian) prairie in the days of Indian and buffalo – and not just in geographical terms. For it was also a frontier.

Herodotus records that when the Persian Darius took a break from trying to conquer the Greeks, he tried his hand at invading the Ukraine. Encountering the nomadic bands known in those days as Scythians, Xerxes demanded the usual tribute due a mighty conqueror. The locals went away and got it for him – a bird, a frog, a mouse, and five arrows. 'Unless you fly away like birds, or jump into the lakes, or burrow underground, you will get nothing but arrows'. Legend says that was the last time the Persians tried to conquer the Steppe.

So the picture has always been in the West: the steppes of Asia on the fringes of the world (*but it is really in the center of a continent*), windswept grasslands peopled by wandering savages who lived by plundering the homes of civilised men. Scythians, Goths, Huns,

Alans, Magyars, Cumans, Bulgars, the list goes on. Their origins were diverse, too. The Magyars and Goths came from the north, the Bulgars from the Volga, the Huns from the Chinese borderlands. The names are deceptive, for usually the tribe named were merely the leaders of confederations of peoples. And so they vanished in name when the warriorhood dwindled away. But the people are still here, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia. The Hungarians name themselves after Attila's confederation and are also the Magyar. There are still Goths living under that name in the Crimea, and Alans who never left the Caucasus. And on the steppes of the Ukraine there remain the Tatars, washed up by the tide of the greatest invading sea of all: the Mongols.

### The Mongols

It is possible to blame the Mongols for many things: the creation of the predator states of Tatar, the appearance of the Turks, who would eventually transform the Byzantine Empire into the Ottoman Empire, and the rise of Muscovy into the Russian Empire. But their invasion of Europe in the 13th Century was an accident.

Genghis Khan's rise to power is well known. An outcast member of one of a handful of tribes living in the northeast corner of the steppe hard by the Empire of the Chin, he avoided an early death at the hands of his rivals and by 1206 had achieved overlordship not only of the clans of his own tribe, but that of neighbouring tribes as well, through a combination of bravery, shrewdness, and ruthlessness. He kept his people on side by leading them in ever expanding raids against neighbouring tribes, proving his fitness to rule by personal example and 'getting the goods' for his followers. These methods became government policy. Membership in the Mongol Empire brought with it the excitement of warfare under an unbeatable commander, a generous dollop of booty, and self-rule in other matters. The extermination of the few tribes who refused to play served as an example to the rest. That was the other side of the coin, of course. Service to the Khan of Khans required absolute unquestioning obedience, be it paying taxes, fulfilling a conscription quota, or making a suicide charge to help fill up a moat.

Genghis extended his sway far and wide. Clans and tribes flocked to place themselves under his banner, or fled far away, like the Seljuk Turks. The Chin proved the toughest enemy, not falling until 1226; Genghis himself died a year later. He never got around to planning the invasion of Europe. That stemmed from the Khwarismian War of 1219-1222.

The Khwarismian Turks had embraced Islam and built themselves the greatest of all the Moslem kingdoms, centred on the famed oases of Bokhara and Samarkand, astride the ancient Silk Road. The name of Samarkand has magic not only for Western ears. His army swelled by the addition of the Tatar tribes of Central Asia and other Turks, Genghis, desiring the fabled wealth of the Khwarismians, crushed them in a succession of sieges and pitched battles. The Khwarismians were trade rivals; no mercy was shown them. Bokhara resisted and was obliterated; the men of Samarkand surrendered and were butchered (because they were 'cowards'). For the slaying of the Khan's grandson outside Bamian, every living thing in the city was destroyed.

*[Genghis usually pursued mass destruction for a purpose, however. Many lesser communities were spared. This was the lucrative Silk Road, after all. It was Timur the Lame – Tamerlane – claiming the mandate of the Khan in a later century, who turned the fruitful plains of Transoxania into a dustbowl and made pyramids of the skulls of the inhabitants.]*

By 1220, most of the work was done. The erstwhile ruler of Khwarism fled west across northern Iran and hid himself on an island in the Caspian Sea, where he soon died. A Mongol army followed in hot pursuit, lost his scent, and decided to keep on in search of plunder to make their march worthwhile. They pillaged their way around the coastal strip of northern Iran, plunged into Georgia, defeated the Georgians, and, discovering the Black Sea, made their way over the Caucasus and into the steppes between the Volga and the Don. Presumably they tossed a bone or two, because instead of going home, they turned west. The rumour of their

coming went before them like a shockwave, and on banks of the Khalka, in 1223, they met a coalition army sent from the principalities of the Rus'. That the raiders soon dispatched, but they went little further, beyond raiding the Crimea, at that time studded with Genoese and Greek trading towns. They were needed elsewhere, and vanished into the blue.

In 1227 Genghis died, and the convoluted process of choosing a successor and divvying up the inheritance began. Since the most powerful of the Mongol princes were based either in the homeland, or in China, anyone who wanted a share of the proceeds had to return to Mongolia, but after an absence of ten years, the Mongols returned to the fringes of Europe with a vengeance.

In 1237, Batu, a grandson of Genghis, led his personal horde, composed of a core of Mongols supplemented by large numbers of Tatar and Turcoman auxiliaries (from whence the Mongol armies became known colloquially as 'Tatars') in a systematic conquest of eastern Europe. Proceeding 'by the numbers', any city of note was sacked and the district it used to be the center of laid under tribute. Chief among these was Kiev. Once the seat of the most powerful of the Russian principalities, calling itself the 'Third Rome', Kiev was virtually erased. From Kiev, Batu's men set out to pillage Poland, Silesia, and Hungary; some of them even caught a glimpse of the Adriatic.

*[The Tatars <proper> appear to have originated as a Turkic people living in the Altai Mountains, neighbouring the Uighurs who still live there. The name was later applied by Europeans to all nomadic people of Turkic and Mongolian race, partly out of confusion with the Latin 'Tatarus' or Hell – the minions of Genghis Khan had to have come from there. The Tatars were such a numerous component of the Mongol armies that their language and culture came to dominate the steppe. The forming of new tribes was common among the steppe peoples. It arose from the fact that a ruler had to travel in order to maintain his power, even if his people were 'settled' in a particular region, which led to the sensible notion of using his personal followers and bodyguard, or Nökör (the Western equivalent would be the Latin comitas) as the government; since it was a military government, the Court became also a warrior ruling caste composed of the 'best men'. A permanent bureaucracy was also necessary in settled areas, but this would be formed from the old administration of a conquered region.]*

### The Tatars of the Golden Horde

Just when it seemed as though all Europe would suffer the fate of Khwarism, the Great Khan died, and Batu hurried off to ensure his position with the new khan of khans. He left many of his men behind, garrisoning key locations, and when he finally returned, it was with a mandate to set up a khanate of his own (tributary to the Great Khan's, naturally). It would become known as the *Zolotaya Orda*, the Khanate of the Golden Horde, and with good reason. As was the Mongol habit, the principalities that comprised Russia were laid under tribute, but otherwise left to their own devices. Batu's loyal Tatar followers were given *yurts* (settlements) around the north shore of the Black Sea and out across the steppe, with permission to raid the neighbouring subject peoples from time to time, keeping the one group satisfied, and the other in line.

*[Yurt is usually taken to mean one of those large circular tents, but it really signifies a territorial encampment. While ordo is the proper name for a camp, yurts evolved from the allotting of pastures to ones followers after the area had been too well looted to pay them in booty. Land instead became the source of revenue and the gift of land the expected reward for military service. One's allotment depended on how many warhorses one owned. The Ottomans, being Turks, used this system too, though they adopted the more economically advanced practice of taxing the landowners and paying the latter from the central authority, rather than just letting them live on the land – the advantages being a) it was easier to take a 'fief' away from one man and give it to another, and b) the ruler could develop a royal army and a central administration, without having to rely entirely on his vassals' performance. The basic idea came from steppe culture, not the Byzantines, but the latter gave the Turks the idea of linking fiefs (timars) with money].*

Batu's horde was one of only several, but it was the wealthiest, at least in the West, and the longest-lived. Its capital lay at Sarai (Saratov) on the Volga, and it ruled or directly influenced a realm incorporating the Urals, Muscovy, Kiev, and the Crimea. Being so

far away from the centres of Mongol power, it, and its neighbours in Central Asia, were virtually autonomous. The great Kublai Khan (1257-94), last of the old-school Mongol rulers, preferred life in China, and his heirs followed suit. The rulers of the western hordes did as they pleased, fought among themselves, ossified, and mingled their bloodline with their subjects until they were no longer known as Mongols, but simply Tatars.

In 1380, Grand Prince Dmitri of the Don (1359-89) led a coalition of Russian princes against the Tatars of the Golden Horde in an effort to end their rule. The 'revolt' weakened Tatar rule considerably. The Crimea became virtually independent. Civil war followed, leading to the subjection of the Horde to Tamerlane's purposes; his focus lay toward the south.

A century later, the Golden Horde was merely a name. In its place was a handful of lesser khanates, the most important of which was the Kipchak Horde, based upon Astrakhan. In the 15th Century, a number of the clans composing this horde became disenchanted with the leadership, which seemed to be losing ground both to an advancing Russian influence in the region, and the pressure of other tribes from further east. These clans broke away to form their own horde, migrating west to settle permanently in the Crimea; indeed, the horde broke up entirely, and the vacuum was quickly filled by the Kalmyk people. The surviving elements also moved west, settling variously in the Kuban, the Caucasus, the Donets Basin, and the lands north of the Crimea.

*[Manstein makes an interesting digression into the mode of Tatar warfare. Lightly encumbered, and trailing a string of horses, they could make 25 leagues (100 Km) in a day without blowing their mounts; tired mounts were cut loose to recover and could often be picked up on their return (presumably strays, properly branded, would be returned to the owner by other Tatars). 48 hours was the most time they allowed themselves in enemy territory. To counter the Tatars, the Zaporozhians were set to watch the lower Dnieper and the lands between it and the Crimea. They would send warning by an ingenious set of triple beacons: one beacon for Tatars sighted, two for a post under attack, three for a penetration, at which the Cossacks would assemble and cut the Tatars off.]*

### The Crimean Tatars

The Crimean Tatars called upon a Genghisid prince to leave his exile in Lithuania and rule over them – it was axiomatic that the ruler of any large group of Central Asian nomads be led by a man who could claim some degree of kinship with Genghis Khan, a tradition known as *Schamiloglu*; even the Muscovite rulers felt it necessary to maintain this claim when dealing with the powers of Central Asia.

*[Ivan the Terrible, reportedly, went to the trouble of enthroning a Genghisid prince as Moscow's Tsar (not Tsar of All the Russias, just Moscow's), and then humbled himself by dressing down and sitting with the boyars whenever the man was present.]*

The man called in by the Tatars was Hacı Girei, who waged a long fight against elements of the Kipchak Horde (whose leaders claimed suzerainty as 'purer' descendants of the Great Khan and true heirs of the Golden Horde) and against dissident elements within the Crimean Horde. Freedom from Kipchak overlordship was attained in 1441. More was attained than simple freedom. The Crimean Tatars acquired suzerainty themselves: over Yedisian (modern Bessarabia), Tauridia (the Crimea, Perekop Isthmus, and approaches to it), the Kuban (lands between the Don and the Kuban Rivers), and most of the Ukraine between the Dnieper and Don Rivers, as far north as Voronezh on the Volga, a region known as the *Desht-i Kipchak*.

The second generation of Gireis fought over the lordship of the Khanate in the manner traditional to the steppe peoples, until the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed II 'the Conqueror', stepped in as arbiter. He imposed the rule of one of the sons of Hacı, Meñli I Girei, in 1475. From that point the Crimean Tatars became a client state of the Ottomans, though it was not until 1502 that Menli I defeated the last attempt at reabsorption by the Kipchak/Golden Horde.

## Khans of the Crimea During the War

- Qaplan I Girei, third time Khan. 1732-36 AD.
- Fe'tih II Girei. 1736-37 AD. He was the Kalga Sultan, installed by the Ottoman Sultan upon the deposition of Qaplan Girei. Qaplan was fired for provoking the war by not reining in his people.
- Meñli II Girei, second time Khan. 1737-40 AD. Fe'tih was fired for timidity.

Around this time the Ottomans occupied the former Genoese Principality of Theodoro, which had not been dismantled by the Tatars, and which included a number of fortified trading towns on the west and south coasts of the Crimea, calling it the Eyâlet (province) of Kaffa. (The Genoese had early on gained a monopoly over the distant Byzantine trade networks of the Ukraine.) But the rest of the Crimea and all the other lands of the Khanate remained independent of Turkish control. Ottoman influence, however, became very strong in the late 16th Century – for example, the Sultan's name was included in Friday prayers.

## Subject Hordes

After the lull occasioned by the collapse of the Golden Horde, conflict between Muscovy and the Crimean Tatars arose in the 16th Century, when the Gireis claimed suzerainty over more distant Khanates – specifically those of Astrakhan and Kazan. The Russians also coveted these regions. 1556 was a key year, when the Astrakhan Khanate came apart.

An important tribe, the Nogai, transferred its allegiance to the Gireis. Ivan the Terrible conquered Astrakhan and Kazan, splitting the Nogai Horde. Those living on the Lower Volga were called the Great Horde, while those to the southwest were known as the Little Horde.

*[The Nogai (Nogay) were the family and followers of one Emir Nogai, a Mongol general who ruled a vast expanse of territory west of the Caspian. In 1300 this man died and his 'empire' fell apart, but ethnically, the Nogai regarded themselves as one people.]*

In 1571, Devlet I Girei sacked Moscow, earning the title of Taht-Algan, or Seizer of the Throne, but a year later the Tatars lost the battle of Molodi, and with it any meaningful dominance over the Volga region. During those years, the Kalmyks made their appearance and began to occupy Nogai lands. The Nogai emigrated to the Don Basin and the Kuban. In 1634 both halves of the Nogai Horde submitted to Crimean Tatar rule.

By the time of the 1730s war, the Khanate of the Gireis was roughly as follows:

- The Krim Tatars pursued a settled existence in the Crimea. North of the Crimea, their nomadic relations, a mix of Krim and Great Horde Nogai, composed the 'Prekop' Horde. Their capital lay originally at Salaçiq, near the Qirg Yer or 'Cave Town' east of Bacha Serai (Bakhchisaray); in 1532 it was moved to Bacha Serai, founded for the purpose in that year. Allied to them were the Camboyluk Nogai.
- The Kazyev, Cetishkul, and similar Hordes in the Kuban region were members of the Little Nogai, in some cases with a mixture of Cossacks or Circassians thrown in.
- The Cedsan Horde living between the Dniester and the Bug were a Great Nogai splinter group. The Bujak and Bielogorod Hordes living in Bessarabia, though Great Nogai, had placed themselves under the direct protection of the Ottoman Sultan. It is likely they included nomadic Vlach and refugees from various failed Cossack uprisings.

The Khanate also contained a number of minorities, who, like those in the Ottoman State, enjoyed certain privileges and exemptions, particularly from military service, but who were required to pay taxes in compensation. Most were town dwellers: Greeks,

Armenians, Adyghe (Circassians, periodically under Tatar rule), Karaites, Qirimçaq (Crimean) Jews, and Crimean Goths (*yes, some Goths survived Attila and the Dark Ages*). Often they had their own town quarters. All were permitted their own religious and legal institutions within the overall Khan State.

## Society

In religion, the Tatars were Muslim. Originally Shamanists, elements of the Mongol-Tatar peoples had embraced nearly every faith, from Taoism, to Buddhism, to Judaism, to Christianity. Islam did not become firmly rooted until the 15th Century (even then the Kalmyk Horde remained pagan and ultimately turned to Lamaistic Buddhism). Accepting Islam was one of the factors that prevented closer union with Russia while bringing closer ties to the Ottoman Empire.

Tatar government was not autocratic. Matters were resolved through a council of *beys* who were the heads of their respective clans. The Ottoman Turks, too, had begun in this fashion, until they adopted the autarky inherent in the mantle of Byzantium.

As 'heirs of Genghis Khan', the Khans of the Crimea were treated as allies by the Ottomans, not subjects. They were never, legally, appointees of the Sultan. True, their rule had to be confirmed by the latter. True, beginning in the 17th Century the Sultans made a point of removing Khans they did not like. But, the Gireis remained the ruling House until the end of the Khanate. They retained control of their foreign policy (with advice from Istanbul), did not pay tribute, minted their own coinage, and had their names included in Friday prayers – the prerogative of a sovereign.

Laws were a mix of Tatar tradition, Sharia, and Ottoman Law. The religious element was led by the Mufti, ironically a financial rather than a spiritual post. The *kadiasker* – an Ottoman appointee – nominally oversaw the *kadis* who were the chief judicial officials. In practice, it was the khan and his *beys* to whom the *kadis* turned for guidance. The *serasker*, or chief military officer, sometimes known as the *kalga sultan*, was usually a close relative of the Khan. Only in the last years of the Khanate were Ottoman forms of administration adopted, with the land being redistributed as so many 'provinces' that the khan could use to pension off his supporters.

The Sultans paid for the Khanate's services in war, and the Crimean Tatars provided a critical element of light horsemen, typically 20,000 strong – though a figure of 100,000 is quoted for the 17th Century campaigns against Vienna, this, like the campaigns of the 1730s probably includes the Nogai tribes.

## Economy

The Crimea was a terminus of the Silk Road, and here the settled portion of the population employed itself as merchants, manufacturers, and artisans. The peninsula was divided into 40 cantons, with 30-40 villages in each, ruled by *kadis* in the Ottoman manner. The climate of the peninsula is mild, the land is fertile, and the Tatars proved themselves adept at wine and tobacco growing, silkworm cultivation, and honey production. Bacha Serai was famed for its rugs; Crimean knives were another valued product.

Livestock from all over the steppe was sold in the Crimea, much of it for export to the Ottoman Empire – estimated at 200,000 head of cattle per year from Koslov (Eupatoria) to Istanbul alone. Grain was also shipped in bulk. Marshal Münnich estimated the Khan's yearly income from trade at 1,000 purses of 500 crowns each; he received a further '20th' on all booty taken.

The Nogai were also famous horse traders. They sold to the Cossacks, and directly to Muscovy, through special state fairs held annually near Moscow. 30-40,000 horses were traded every year. The tsars did take the precaution of controlling the number of Tatars permitted across the border (otherwise they would have ridden their whole army in, sold their spare horses, and plundered their way out).

On the darker side, Kaffa was perhaps the biggest slave port in the western world, and the annual 'Harvest of the Steppe' yielded some three million souls over the life of the Khanate.

Tatar slaving arose from weakness, not strength. The khans originally derived most of their wealth from tolls levied on passing caravans and merchant vessels, and on the Genoese trading communities on the Black Sea coast. In return, they provided supplies (mainly food) to those communities, which encouraged the tribesmen to settle permanently. However, once the Ottomans expropriated the towns and administered them directly the Khanate's revenue dropped. The Ottomans preferred to treat the Khanate as an undeveloped buffer zone and the *eyâlet* imported most of its grain from Moldavia and the Dobruja (benefiting Turkish middlemen instead of Tatar or Italian ones).

To reclaim lost revenue, the Tatars turned to an older economy, one sponsored by the Medieval Italians who founded the coastal cities: slaving. The 'kicker' lay in the fact that this weakened the Khan's authority. The clan leaders, the *bey*s and *mirzas*, not only had control of the nomadic elements, they also owned most of the land within the Crimea itself, and were responsible to the people suffering from the decline in farming there, namely, themselves.

If the khans did not organise annual raids, the clan leaders would do it anyway – and as they could field much larger armies than the Khan's personal guard, he was not about to try and stop them. It eroded his authority if he acted against them, and it eroded his authority if he did not act against them.

This cramped any effort at developing a lasting peace with the Khanate's northern neighbours, either way one looked at it. It was a vicious cycle, as slaving always is:

*Men stand and trade their mutual chains  
And barter truth for filthy gains,  
Committing shame against the Lord  
By harnessing for black reward  
People in yokes and sowing evil  
In fields commissioned by the Devil...  
And what will sprout? You soon will see  
What kind of harvest there will be!*

The expansion of the Ottoman Empire's influence over the steppe led inexorably to the destruction of its client and the loss of a large chunk of its empire.

## Politics

As their 'foreign policy' failed, the khans began to lose ground politically. Raids against Muscovy failed to win the legitimacy they needed to re-found Genghis' empire; indeed, the Russians had a stronger claim to do so! Russia's grip on the Volga prevented a physical linking with other Tatar khanates.

Other chieftains within the horde challenged the Girei's right to rule. The Nogai withdrew their support, with Russian encouragement. (The Russians had difficulty turning the Nogai into a client state of their own, though, because the horde was too fractured – the chiefs took bribes, but there was no one whom all the chiefs would rally behind.)

External pressures mounted. The Kalmyks, though Buddhist, submitted to Moscow and became fairly loyal allies against the Tatars. In a series of campaigns throughout the later 17th and early 18th Centuries, the Russians and their allies pressed close upon the Khanate's core territories. And in the war of 1735-39, the Russians succeeded in sacking the Peninsula multiple times. Worse yet, the Kalmyks exterminated – literally exterminated – large numbers of Nogai in the Kuban, which was given to the Kabardian chiefs at the end of the war.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1768-74 saw the separation of the Khanate from Ottoman influence. The Russians, having 'won the Tatars' freedom', promptly reduced them to the status of a client state. Such degradation further weakened the khan's authority, so

much so that in 1783, the Empress Catherine II was 'forced' to intervene in a civil war and simply annexed the peninsula. The last Khan fled to the Ottoman Empire in 1787, where he was later executed for treasonable activities; the royal family, however, survives to the present day.

*[Like other ethnic minorities, the Tatars were relocated en masse by the Stalinist regime, but at the time of writing, about 15% of Crimea's population is Tatar. Well, actually, at the time of writing Russia has again annexed the Crimea and many of the 15% have fled to the Ukraine, fearing another round of persecution.]*

## Warfare

For the Tatars, offensive warfare was carried out by means of the raid. Since the same sort of raids were carried out in 'peacetime', the concepts of war and peace tended to blur. When a neighbour declared war or came after them in strength, the Tatars would usually avoid battle, go where the enemy was not, and launch more raids. In most cases the opposition was a non-Muslim neighbour, since attacks on them yielded far greater booty, and were justifiable on religious grounds. However, the Tatars could plunder one another, usually when a particular family group had been outlawed.

Only the Khan of the Crimean Tatars, when faced with overwhelming force, would retreat into the Crimea and defend the entrances to it; he could also call on the Ottoman Empire for aid. Even in such cases, the Tatars relied on the conditions of the steppe to win the fight, wearing down an opponent before he reached the Khan's forces; on the enemy's retreat, the Tatars would follow and harass him unmercifully.

The Tatars were not above making alliances with one enemy against another. More than once they joined with Poland against Muscovy, or with the Cossacks against either state. The Cossacks themselves were a product of the Tatar threat – frontiersmen permitted greater freedom in exchange for defending the Polish or Russian heartland.

*Chambuls*, or raiding parties, could be led by the Khan (called *seters*, or sanctioned raids) or by local nobles (*çapul*s). Sometimes the *çapul*s were in contravention of treaties made by the khans themselves. The khans took between 10% and 20% of the haul (another nomad tradition).

The numbers involved in a raid varied from 10-20,000 up to 40-50,000. By the 18th Century, great raids, which might fare as far afield as the Danubian Principalities, Warsaw, or Moscow, and be led by the Khan or the Kalga Sultan, were infrequent. The khans had already lost some of their authority over the *bey*s and *mirzas*, who often undertook raids without permission, and even took bribes from the Poles or Russians.

The principal raiding trails across the steppe were:

- The Woloski Trail, following the Black Sea from Perekop to the Dniester River, thence to the Prût and along the latter to Kolomija. From here it ran north to Lublin.
- The Kuczman Trail from Perekop to Bar, running on the south side of the Bug.
- The Czarny Trail from Perekop, which crossed the Bug and forked to reach either Kiev or the region west of Bar.
- The Murava Trail, from Perekop east, then north via the Kalchik River to Oskol and Livni to Tula. From there it branched to Bryansk or Moscow.
- The Izyuma Trail, an alternate to the Murava which branched off along the Kal'mius and crossed the Donets, passing between Valuiki and Belgorod before rejoining the Murava.
- The Kal'mius Trail, branching off the Murava again and reaching further east to cross the Donets beyond Tsarev-Borisov. It rejoined the Murava at Livny. A spur ran up from Azov.
- The Nogai Road, running from the Don halfway between Azov and Tsaritsyn on the Volga and following the Koper River toward

the Voronezh rivers. At their confluence it branched, going to Riazan and to Dankov.

- The Volga Road – straight up the Volga, raiding the riverside communities. This route was also used by the Kalmyks and Bashkirs.

Some of these routes fell into disuse as the politics of the steppe changed and Russian borders expanded. To halt such raids, the Russians mustered some 65,000 men annually to man a series of border earthworks and forts stretching between the major rivers. The most famous is the Belgorod Lines, between that city and Voronezh; in 1738 the Lines of the Ukraine, between Dnieperpetrovsk and Izium, were completed.

The Lines were only partially effective. Such devices typically require far more resources than a state can muster. Often, their main value lies in slowing down an enemy retreat when laden with spoil, rather than stopping the initial penetration. Supporting the Lines were, of course the Cossack bands, as well as local levies of mounted noblemen (on the model of the *insurrectios* of Hungary). These could observe, harass, and pursue the Tatars, though such activities might have deadly consequences. The Tatars were unparalleled horse warriors.

### Forces

The Khan's forces, at their peak, consisted of from 200-1,000 Janissary or *Tüfekçi*-style musketeers, supported by *zarbuzan* cannon (light pieces, swivel-mounted on the backs of camels – very popular with the armies of the Near East at the time).

The bulk of the 'horde' – 'army' or 'corps' – was composed of mounted archers, unarmoured for the most part, though rich men and chiefs might sport chainmail hauberks and iron helms. The Tatars did manufacture their own guns and powder at Bacha Serai, but the process was expensive, and besides, the composite bow still shot further and faster. Lance and sabre were carried for close quarter fighting.

Some sources suggest the poorest Tatars fought on foot, but this is likely to have been the case only with a 'general levy' of the population, or in situations where the horsemen had lost their mounts; normally, each Tatar rode with a string of horses.

If the Khan did call a general muster, the four *karachi beys*, leaders of the four clans of the Krim Tatars, would call out their men and rendezvous with the Kalga Sultan. Sub-commanders were *mirzas*, men of note.

A *levée en masse* could call up all able-bodied males between 15- and 70, on pain of having one's head removed and one's property plundered. Such a call up was made in 1736; usually, the *mirzas* just showed up with their bodyguards, relatives, and the best clansmen they could find.

When the Khan had a grip on things, mustering took only 2-4 weeks. The rendezvous was typically just outside the Lines of Perekop for a raid, or just inside if on the defence. The villages of both the Krim and the Nogai were 'decimally organised' (as in Genghis' armies) and the men's names were registered. Usually the response was good, since plunder was the only way to increase one's income above subsistence level. Additionally, the Khan might remind the tribesmen of the *ghaza* – the responsibility to participate in a Holy War.

### A Grand Raid

After the muster, the horde would ride off to wherever the Khan had decided. Raids could be as meticulously planned as any operation by any other army. A raid on Moscow (not attempted since the 17th Century) took 55 days, one way.

The best time for raiding was harvest time. Forage was plentiful, and several weeks could be spent herding the serfs who were by necessity forced to leave the protection of their communities to

gather the harvest. Short raids occurred during early winter, when the rivers were sufficiently frozen and the ground had a layer of snow – so the horses' hooves, which were unshod, would not crack on the hard ground. The horses often wore leather stockings to help them in the snow.

The horde travelled light, each man carrying only a few pounds of roasted grain or meat and getting the rest by foraging. Extra supplies were carried on horseback or by camel. Carts were only used if the infantry guard and artillery were present, in which case they could be used to form a *tabur* or 'wagonburg' in the same manner as the Ottoman armies (or any other cavalry-heavy army, for that matter).

The march was accomplished in several columns, each several riders wide (about 800-1,000 paces across). The columns would be drawn in or spread out depending on the terrain, the availability of forage, the amount of dust in the air, and the proximity of the enemy. A column might be anywhere from 16 Km to 40 Km in length depending on whether ranks were closed or open. In front of the column rode a screen of 100 warriors, each leading two remounts. Every hour the column halted for a few minutes rest.

The Tatars rarely had difficulty with the terrain. Ice or rock could be hard on the horses, but not snow. Rivers also were not a problem; if needed they could make rafts out of wood or sheep's bladders. They avoided marsh and dense woods, however, and preferred marching along valleys they had used before.

When near to the enemy's territory, the horde would camp for a couple of days, doing without fires and keeping movement to a minimum, while parties were sent out to reconnoitre. If there was no sign of an armed opponent, they would speed forward, either in separate columns, or as one great mass, depending on the nature of the raid – deep raids punched through the enemy's lines enmasse, then fanned out in the interior.

In a very large raid, say of three columns of 20,000 men each, two would ride on, while the third split in half, with each portion scouring the flanks some 40 Km away from the main body.

Towns would be blockaded, but not stormed, because the Tatars lacked the necessary equipment and time. They might try to obtain bribes to go away before the harvest was completely spoiled.

In the outlying villages they rounded up the inhabitants to sell as slaves in the market at Kaffa and stole whatever horses or cattle there were. At each village, the site would be watched by four sets of picquets, and bonfires lit to prevent any attempt at escape. In the dawn they would ride in and sack the village, killing any who resisted and making the rest prisoner.

After the flanking wings had had their fun, they would return and divide the spoils, giving a tenth to the leadership. The second column would then split up in the same manner and go off 'harvesting' while the original flankers reformed into a solid column in the center. When all the columns had cycled through, it was time to go.

In winter, or whenever a local *mirza* could be persuaded, small raids would be launched in the form of 10-12 detachments of up to 1,000 men each, crossing the frontier on a broad front with a screen of scouts in the lead. Each evening they would rendezvous with whatever they had managed to acquire and divide it up.

Booty slowed them down, so the Tatars tried to avoid staying more than 48 hours in enemy territory; on a deep raid, where this was not possible, the booty would be centrally collected in a heavily guarded baggage train. On a small raid, the Tatars would flee the scene of their crime, their tough little horses giving them an edge over their pursuers. The raiding party would split into smaller and smaller fragments every few miles, until they had escaped, then reform to raid again.

Battles were to be avoided if possible, and were only fought to defend their spoils. If a large enemy force could not be eluded, the

Tatars would first skirmish with it at many points, using their remounts to maintain the effort all day.

A typical charge was made in the shape of a 'half moon', perhaps 40 riders wide, with the leaders in front, on the flanks, and in the rear. They would ride in uttering fearsome war cries and firing their bows, then wash around the enemy formation, still firing, before retiring for a fresh horse. Sometimes they hung back and conducted mass indirect volleys of arrows.

Until the 17th Century, these tactics were quite successful. Field Marshal Galitsyn's army was smashed in the 1690s during an unsuccessful attempt to raid the Crimea, and even Peter the Great could do nothing when pinned against the Prût in 1711. But in the 1730s they proved utterly ineffective. On rare occasions, a doughty band of warriors could penetrate a Russian square, but they were only given the choice of dying or cutting their way out again. Even small bodies of Russians were able to withstand many times their number by forming square and applying heavy doses of artillery fire.

Curiously, after the first appearance of firearms, the Nogai remained afraid of the guns, but the Krim learned that they were inaccurate. Many of the encounters in the 1730s involved the Nogai, which might explain the uniform Russian successes. Musket fire still served more as a morale booster for the Russians. But it is odd that the Tatars' archery should have become so ineffective – the Russians had not reverted to wearing plate armour. Nevertheless it was so.

In both the earlier wars, the Russians also suffered from supply problems, and a general lowering of morale. This was not so in the 1730s. Also, the artillery, both guns and personnel, had improved dramatically, which may have been a nasty surprise to the overconfident Krim. The ordinary soldiers, too, had learned to trust in their formations, their leaders, and in supplementary defences like the *rogatki*. The Russians also worked well with their Cossack auxiliaries, though paradoxically, many of the frontiersmen were about ready to revolt over attempts to make them into regular cavalry formations. The Tatars, who were virtually a pure cavalry force, could perhaps no longer cope with an opponent who applied an integrated mix of formations.



## The Cossacks



*Cossacks composing their reply to Sultan Mehmed IV's demand for surrender (1675), picture by Repin:*

*'Thou Turkish Satan, Greetings !*

*What the hell kind of noble knight art thou ?*

*Thou beer-brewer of Jerusalem, thou goat-flayer of Alexandria, thou swineherd of Egypt, both the Greater and the Lesser, thou sow of Armenia, thou goat of Tatar, a blockhead, a swine's snout, a mare's -, a butcher's cur, an unbaptized brow, May the Devil take thee! That is what the Cossacks have to say to thee, thou basest-born of runts! Unfit art thou to lord it over true Christians!*

*The date we write not for no calendar have we got; the moon is in the sky, the year is in a book, and the day is the same with us here as with thee over there, and thou canst kiss us thou knowest where!*

### Origins

'Cossack', or 'Kozak' is a Turkic word meaning a 'free warrior'. The term was applied to any number of frontier societies, but strictly speaking, the Cossacks were military colonies, often originally self-founding, but occasionally set up by Tsarist decree.

The earliest Cossack bands were founded by escaped serfs and outlaws, who moved to the lawless zones on the borders of Muscovy; a similar process took place on the fringes of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Mingling with the other peoples of the steppes, they fought all comers, and allied with whichever of the 'great powers' seemed most likely to protect their interests.

The homeland of many of the Cossacks was the Ukraine; in the 1730s an estimated 40% of the population of the Left-Bank Ukraine (Russia's side of the Dnieper) were Cossacks and their families.

After a series of 'revolts' in the early 17th Century, Cossack independence began to decline. Muscovy obtained dominance over Poland in the same Century, and most of the bands, particularly those of the Left-Bank Ukraine, turned to her for protection. The Ukraine recognised the suzerainty of Muscovy in 1654, with the Treaty of Pereiaslav. The Polish Cossacks of the Zaporozhian Sich refused to do so in name, but all the same, sought Russian aid and subsidies more often than not.

As the Russian Empire expanded, most bands, rather than move with the border, accepted Muscovite overlordship. In exchange, they were free to administer their own domestic affairs and remained untaxed. Serfs who managed to reach a Cossack society were allowed their freedom. Though having a multiethnic composition, all were of the Orthodox faith, which as time wore on, facilitated their absorption into the Russian sphere. Attempts were periodically made to achieve Ukrainian independence, but did not succeed. Instead, the Cossacks settled for the lesser goal of 'autonomy'.

For a time, autonomy was acceptable to the tsars. The Empire approved the Cossacks' otherwise elective choices of leaders, supplied them with arms, and awarded them donatives. The leadership was co-opted by Russian Society, deliberately, so that by the 18th Century, the more important Cossacks had strong family



ties within the Russian nobility. This came about through the age-old practice of taking hostages – sons of the Cossacks were sent to Moscow and St. Petersburg as insurance for the Cossacks' good behaviour, but also to learn Russian ways. The Polish nobility set the example for the Zaporozhians and other western Ukrainian Cossacks. A gulf between rich and poor Cossacks developed as a result.

By the mid-17th Century there were only 1,000 *starshina* (leading families) in the Ukraine, and this small but powerful group managed to have its once-elective rule made hereditary. This was boon for their sponsors – first Polish, then Russian – who were guaranteed a known group of representatives to deal with who would share their own outlook on life.

By the 18th Century, less than half of the Cossacks of the Left-Bank Ukraine could afford weapons. Many, the so-called *pidpomichnyky*, or 'helpers', were reduced to an exploited peasantry. The richer *vyborni kozaky* (the 'elect') remained the warrior elite.

Although such development was similar for all the Cossacks, there were regional peculiarities. Those of Slobodia, though under Tsarist rule, enjoyed much autonomy. Those of the Polish (Right-Bank) Ukraine derived from a mix of military border colonies set up by the Polish government and mercenary bands. At the beginning of the 18th Century, the Right-Bank Cossacks achieved a brief unification under Hetman Ivan Mazepa, before being annihilated by the Russians. The remnants split up, some joining the Zaporozhians, and the others being forcibly settled in the Left-Bank Ukraine. In contrast, the Cossacks of the Don grew so numerous that the tsars, who retained a much tighter control over them, directed new settlements to be founded on the ever-expanding eastern borders.

### Organisation

Cossack societies were organised as *voiskos*, or hosts (hordes), divided into regiments, or *starshinii*, each with its own district. Regiments were organised into *sotnias* (hundreds), equivalent to companies. A *sotnia* was broken down into *kurens* or troops of 25-40 men. In all, there were perhaps 70,000 Cossacks available for military service. Usually, only a third of a given host would go on campaign.

The *voisko* was originally run by an assembly of notables, but led by an elected *hetman*, hence '*hetmanate*', a term often used for the larger Cossack societies. Larger bands usually had a 'civilian' *hetman* and a war leader, or *ataman*. Depending on the stability of a band, *hetmen* might come and go frequently, sometimes at peril of their life – a man was safe only so long as he 'wore the badge'. A Cossack's loyalty was first to his 'brothers', then to the *hetman*, and only then to the Tsar. Outsiders saw them as 'a cruel horde of plunderers, preying alike on friends and foes'. Certainly a Cossack felt himself to be as good as the next man, if not better.

By the end of the 17th Century, all Cossacks paid by the Russian State received 5 roubles per year; their leaders, if approved, received much more, including gifts as well as coin. By the early 18th Century, *hetmen* were routinely appointed by the Tsar, and Russian officers were seconded to the regiments during war.

The largest and most important of the hosts were the Malorussian (formerly the Ukrainian or Little Russian Cossacks), the Zaporozhians, the Don, the Terek, and the Yaiks (Urals) Cossacks. There were also 'regular' Cossack regiments, made up of enlistees to the Russian Army: three composite regiments of *companeiskiy*, and the semi-regular Slobodian Cossacks (between 5-9 regiments) of southern Muscovy. There was also the *Slobodski Polk*, founded in 1731 as a 500-man second battalion for the *Sloboda Hussars*. Lowest on the totem pole were the Foot Cossacks, a kind of border guard found on the Polish frontier.

*[Sloboda are a form of 'free community', established by royal charter, like the free cities of the Holy Roman Empire.]*

War ironically contributed to the Cossacks' subordination to St. Petersburg. It was expected of them, and they came to expect, that they would aid Russia's wars by launching diversionary offensives (versus the Tatars) or contributing corps to Russian offensives (in the West).

Marshal Münnich attempted to impose uniformity upon the various Cossack bands, leading to a series of mutinies and strikes. (It was shortly after some 'troubles' in 1738 that the *atamans* of the Don Cossacks became Russian appointees.) Despite their protests the Don and other Cossacks became more and more just another branch of the Russian Army, just another element in Russian Society, a process that reduced their effectiveness even as it tamed them.

Their main use, as is well known, was in harassment, plundering, scouting, and the applying of scorched earth tactics. In earlier days, they (particularly the Zaporozhians and Don Cossacks) had lived much like their Tatars neighbours, on plunder. Though one reason St. Petersburg paid the hosts subsidies was to discourage this practice, they still received a bounty on captured Tatars and other enemies.

No one expected the Cossacks to engage in a stand up fight; few expected them to remain with the army once they had acquired enough booty, and fewer still had any illusions about their discipline. For all that, there are accounts of Cossacks fighting on foot, and even assaulting fortified positions.

If a Cossack regiment did fight, they would usually do so on horseback, charging in extended line in hopes of enveloping the enemy, shouting '*urrah*' and brandishing their weapons. If repulsed, they would draw off and wait for another opportunity.

As may be expected, uniforms and equipment were not standard. The men were expected to provide their own. However, as time wore on, the more important bands did at least standardise some of their kit and dress, through the establishment of local manufactories. (As noted elsewhere, the Malorussians even had their own cannon foundry.)

Cossack ponies were small and tough steppe breeds that could go long distances on short commons; a Cossack usually had a remount, and on service with the Regular Army, wagons were used. They did not ride in close order, and often did not even use spurs – their small mounts allowed them to guide with their feet or their reins.

Basic kit included a sabre, a lance, one or more pistols, and a *turki*, or rifled musket, generally obtained from the Caucasus (these were highly prized items in Steppe Society, accurate, durable, and often very ornate).

'Uniforms' featured kaftans, baggy pants, and 'Turkish' boots: Siberian Cossacks favoured fur caps and fur-lined coats; other Cossacks did not.

### The Malorussians and the Slobodians

Originally Polish, the Malorussians came into being in the 17th Century, when Muscovy obtained the Left-Bank Ukraine at Poland's expense. Their bases lay at Korsun, Bratslav, Khastiv, and Bohuslav. By the 18th Century they comprised 20,000 men and could field 10 regiments – Cossack regiments were generally very large. (In 1725 there were a reported 55-65,000 Malorussian Cossacks and 23,000 Slobodian Cossacks.)

Slobodia as a region broadly followed the outlines of the Cossack regimental districts: Ostrohke, Izyum, Kharkov, Okhtyrka, and Sumy, all named after their depôts, which were founded specifically as military colonies. The above-mentioned regiments comprised a total of 98 *sotnia*. In the west, the border ran with the Hetmanate of the Ukraine (home of the Malorussians). On the south it bordered the Zaporozhians' domains and those of the Tatars. In the north lay Muscovy. The eastern border lay over the Donets toward the middle Don, butting onto the lands of the Don Cossacks in the southeast.

Once part of Kievan 'Rus, Slobodia was turned into a wasteland by the Mongols. As Mongol power waned, the principality of Muscovy absorbed the region, but only in name. It was a favoured route for Tatar raiding expeditions against the North, and those plunderers kept the region in relative impoverishment until the 1760s. Nevertheless, a small trickle of immigrants fleeing serfdom established themselves, making a living by hunting and fishing, and beekeeping; there was also a well-known saltworks near Bachmut.

To curtail Tatar raids, the Muscovites began building massive lines of fortifications, generically known as the Lines of Belgorod. Many of the workers remained in the region, and of course the Lines required a large garrison, which also attracted additional settlers. Many were Ukrainian Cossacks fleeing harsh Polish rule. This influx (from 120,000 in the 17th Century to over 400,000 by 1732) helped to create conflict with the Tatars by pushing out the older, Russian, colonists and leading them to seek new lands in the south and east. With large numbers of these pioneers routinely taken as slaves by Tatar raiders, they gave the Russian State a pretext for the war of 1735-39.

The Russians encouraged Ukrainian immigration, seeing it as a way to block the migration of their own serf population; they happily armed the Cossacks and offered favourable terms of settlement in exchange for military service on the frontier. Cossack society was organised along military lines, and the regiments and their colonels received charters from the Tsar. In the 18th Century, half the population of Slobodia was Cossack. Those of the Cossacks who fell in status were assigned to the regiments as well – serfs of the colonels – while the 'elect' warrior-hood became a closed caste.

The Ukrainian Hetmanate (Malorussia or Left-Bank Ukraine) had some autonomy. Slobodia had none. Its overseers had always been Muscovites – at one point the Foreign Office, at other times one of the military governors in the region (Kiev, Kharkov, Azov, etc.). In 1726 the War College assumed authority over Slobodia and the hetmanates, which had been elective, became Russian appointments, usually drawn from among the *starshina*. But even foreigners were sometimes appointed. Such men became powerful landowners, treating their regiment as a fiefdom, and sometimes as a factory – Okhtyrka was famous as the first Russian tobacco factory.

*[The Cantemirs, princes of Moldavia, one of whom commanded Wallachian troops for the Russians in the 1735-39 war, were an example of these foreign Slobodian colonel/landowners.]*

Slobodia's second-class status as a military bulwark of Muscovy led to many uprisings. Sometimes, the rebels even joined forces with the Tatars. Moves were periodically made to join with the Ukrainian Hetmanate, since there were close ties between the populations. However, Peter I instituted a brutal repression during the Great Northern War when many Ukrainian Cossacks sided with Charles XII of Sweden, and Anna Ivanova completely abolished Slobodia's autonomy in 1732. By the mid-19th Century, the region had been parcelled out among the neighbouring gubernias. In Soviet times, it was split between the RSFSR and the Ukraine SSR.

*[Their recent loss of autonomy helps explain why the Slobodian and Malorussian Cossacks fought poorly in the Russo-Turkish War.]*

### The Zaporozhians

The same upheaval that led to the formation of Slobodia also created a splinter group, the Zaporozhians. The Zaporozhians, strictly speaking, dwelt on a number of islands in the Dnieper, below the cataracts (hence their name, which means 'beyond the cataracts'). To them were added those Polish Ukrainian Cossacks who lived on the right bank of the Dnieper, and who did not want to join with their Malorussian brothers under the Tsar. By the 1730s they had between 8-15,000 men, and could field up to 5,000 at a time.

They controlled 80,000 sq. Km of land, grandiloquently known as the Liberties of the Host Beyond the Cataracts. In fact, at the height of its power, Zaporozhia extended all the way from Poland to the

Sea of Azov, shielding the Russians from the full impact of the Tatar menace.

The northwest frontier ran along the Boh River and its tributaries the Syniukha and the Velykyi Vys, and a tributary of the Dnieper known as the Tiasmyn. This border faced the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's southeastern marches, or Right-Bank Ukraine.

On the northeast, the border with the Ukrainian (Malorussian) Hetmanate ran down the Dnieper and the Orel rivers, and stretched all the way to the Donets River, where its eastern border with Slobodia Ukraine ran along the Donets. In the southeast, Zaporozhia bordered the lands of the Don Cossacks, following the Kal'mius River, and at one point touched the Sea of Azov, between the Kal'mius and the Berda River.

*[Yes, the reader has correctly noted Zaporozhian land claims overlapped those of the Nogai.]*

The Zaporozhians were always the most 'free', the most rowdy, and the most insolent. They particularly resented Russian interference in their affairs (and eventually would be dispersed to places like the Dobruja). Uniquely, their society recognised complete equality among the Brothers, regardless of social origin, though as the 18th Century wore on and Russian influence increased, there was a rise in *znatni* or *starshi tovaryshi*: notable men. This created a divide between rich and poor as in the other Cossack societies.

All administrative bodies were formed by general election, and a man could be challenged on his performance at any time. Over all presided the Supreme Sich Council (*sich* meaning settlement – their capital), under which were the Kish of the Zaporozhian Sich (central administration), the Kish *otaman* (*ataman*) and personal *starshinii* (as judge, chancellor, and quartermaster), and the *otamans* of the Zaporozhian *kurins*. Together, the officers formed the Council of Officers. The lands beyond the Sich itself were divided into 8 *palankas*, commanded by colonels (*'palanka'* in the same sense that the Saxons used the term *burg* or *borough*).

The Sich Host itself included 38 *kurins*, each of several hundred men; there were more in the outlying areas. Only unmarried Cossacks were permitted to live at the Sich. They constituted the main body of warriors. Married men, downgraded to 'militia' or 'retirees', had homesteads in the *palankas*. Farming (mainly cattle ranching), hunting, and fishing were engaged in, both individually, and collectively by the *kurin*. The Zaporozhians also functioned as middlemen on the trade routes leading from the Crimea to Poland. Strength in numbers was maintained by an influx of peasants seeking freedom or adventure; Cossacks also sometimes left the Sich to return to peasantry, or were expelled for one reason or another.

At the start of the 18th Century, the Zaporozhians were caught on the wrong side of Tsar Peter's war. They had joined Ivan Mazepa's attempt to build a 'Third Force' – a truly free Cossack State – sponsored, unfortunately, by Charles XII of Sweden. The Russians destroyed their *sich* and routed them out of the country.

Fleeing south, the Zaporozhians joined with the Tatars and continued the fight against the Russians for some years, but finding themselves treated as second-class citizens in Tatar society, in 1734 they made their peace with the Russians and returned home as one of the first acts of the war. They founded a new capital (Pokrovska Sich), not far from the old one. This was a substantial town. It, along with the *palankas* (districts), held 100,000 people. Now, however, they would be under direct military rule by the Governor of Kiev.

*[When accounts of the 1735-39 war mention the Zaporozhians, it should be borne in mind that these men had only just set up shop again, were seeking the approval of the Russians, and were under a cloud of suspicion. They fought very hard.]*

By the 1750s the Russians would give their lands to a wave of Serbian immigrants (ironically fleeing persecution triggered by the war) in an attempt to create a 'New Serbia'. The Pokrovska Sich was destroyed and the Host abolished in 1775, on the orders of Catherine

II, who called it a 'political monstrosity'. The population were absorbed into the Russian State (with their lands going to the nobility), sent to form the Black Sea Cossacks, or escaped to the Dobruja to form the Danubian Sich.

### The Don Cossacks

The Cossacks of the Don (15,000 men fielding 22 regiments) were founded in 1570. They lived mainly on the Lower Don, above Ottoman-held Azov, but their realm extended northward to Voronezh, and eastward to the Volga. The oldest of the formal Cossack Hosts, it has been variously argued that they came from bands of escaped serfs, or were indigenous to the region; in the latter case they would have accepted outcasts like escaped serfs into their bands. The Don Cossacks were always Orthodox Christians.

Old enemies of the Turks and the Tatars, who shared a border with them (the friendlier Kalmyks bordered them on the east) the Don Cossacks also joined forces with the Poles against Muscovy, before Muscovy became the dominant regional power. Nevertheless, they saw themselves as Russians (just not lapdogs of Muscovy). Most of their rebellions against the tsars came about when the Russians tried to take away their autonomy (in particular, when it was demanded that they return runaway serfs – a demand made on other Russian client states as well). For all that, the Don Cossacks needed Russian arms and Russian goods to survive.

The Don Cossacks are mentioned as important players in the conquest of Siberia in the 16th Century. A powerful band rode east as far as the confluence of the Ob and the Irtysh, where they founded the town of Obskoy in 1585. From then on they remained loyal to the tsars, aiding them in their wars against the Ottomans and their allies. Although their political influence diminished in the 18th Century, as the boundaries of Russia expanded, they remained a powerful military asset well into the 20th Century (their last role was as allies of the Wehrmacht in World War II, along with their former Tatar foes).

The leadership, which, like most Cossack Hosts, was elective, had close ties with St. Petersburg. Early on, the Common Assembly made decisions democratically, but as with the other Hosts, eventually the elected *atamans* were absorbed into the Russian nobility, those wealthy enough to own weapons and horses became their warrior-followers, and the rest became serfs. This was facilitated by the so-called Don Shipment, an annual subsidy made to the leadership; the rank and file were expected to subsist on plunder or stand cap in hand before their captains.

But the trend toward societal stratification was both more and less pronounced with the Cossacks of the Don. More pronounced, because the leadership was so closely tied to the Russian aristocracy, but less pronounced because the Don Cossacks remained on the edge of the State; the rank and file retained a greater degree of freedom.

Two spin-offs of the Don Cossacks were the Tereks and the Yaiks.

The Tereks, founded in 1577, lived on the Terek River. They were originally detached from the Don Cossacks to be a guard upon the borders with Persia, and they had strong ties among the Circassian tribes.

Similarly, the Yaiks (Urals) were a branch of the Don Cossacks founded at Voronezh in 1571, who mingled with a variety of odd fragments of the early settlers of Siberia. They were more a tribal group than a Cossack host, retaining a great deal of independence, and controlling the Ural River all the way to the Caspian. Yaik pirates infested that sea, and Yaik raiders struck as far away as Merv. They also attacked Russian settlements when the fancy took them.

Other Cossack hosts, some famous, were not formed until after the Russo-Turkish War of the 1730s. The Siberians, for example, only came into existence in the 1750s.

## The Kalmyks

*'They are of low stature, and are generally bow-legged, occasioned by their being so continually on horseback, or sitting with their legs below them. Their faces are broad and flat, with a flat nose and little black eyes, distant from one another like the Chinese. They are of an olive colour, and their faces full of wrinkles, with very little or no beard. They shave their heads, leaving only a tuft of hair on the crown.'*

Henry Bruce

*'He another day being asked, by an Officer how much he would have to bring him such a Horse, that a Turk then was riding on, amongst the other Skirmishers; Zara ask'd what he would give him, the Officer answer'd bring the Horse and then We shall agree; accordingly 50 Rubels was condescended upon, to be the prise, upon which He went & Kill'd the Turk and brought the Officer the Horse.'*

*Zara the Callmuck (Earl of Crawford's Journal, Vol. 2. p.206)*

The Kalmyks (Calmucks) are Oirats, a people originating in Mongolia. They were a successor state to Genghis Khan's empire, much like the Golden Horde, a coalition of four western Mongolian tribes: the Khoshut, the Choros, the Torghut, and the Dörbet, and they called themselves the Alliance of Four – the Dörben Oirat. For four hundred years the people of this state roamed the lands between Lake Balkhash and Lake Baikal, and their khans claimed the mantle of Genghis, in opposition to the direct line of Eastern Mongolian heirs who had conquered China and 'gone soft'. They fought the Eastern Mongols, the Ming, and the Manchu, but their homeland of Dzungaria was eventually subjugated by the Manchus in 1759.

*[The name Kalmyk is not what they call themselves. It is a Tatar word meaning 'those who remain'. Some suggest it applies to the people who were unable to participate in a later counter-migration east, but they had been given the name much earlier. It may stem from the time when their Turkic neighbours first migrated west and left them behind for a time.]*

The Oirat rulers were not, according to steppe tradition, permitted to be called 'Khan' until the mid-17th Century, when the Dalai Lama was awarded the title, nor were they regarded as 'true' Mongols – they did not even consider themselves to be Mongols – but that did not stop them from trying to obtain overlordship of Central Asia. They claimed legitimacy because the leader of the Khosut tribe, under Genghis, was the Khan's brother. Long before their demise, the people who would become known as Kalmyks broke away from the Oirat and migrated west.

*[Genetically, they are Mongols. Linguistically they spoke a form of Mongolian, with five or six main dialects, but they have adopted so many Russian and Tatar words that they now have their own official language. The language still periodically comes under attack from Moscow.]*

The Alliance of Four did not have a fixed capital or a single family to lead it; even bureaucratic elements of society such as the military, 'civil service', and religion were not cast in any particular mould. Customary Law was not enforced until 1640.

The Kalmyks, uniquely for the people of the western steppes, though not for Mongols, are Buddhists, following the Dalai Lama and what is called the 'Virtuous Way' (a derivative of Mahayana Buddhism) – the Yellow Hat sect. It is a monastic form, so the Kalmyks used portable tent monasteries.

*[Stone monasteries were built in areas where they established permanent settlements.]*

Some Kalmyks, especially the upper classes, became Orthodox Christian when living under Tsarist protection, most notably the children of Don Duc Olmo (Donduk-Ombo), the sixth Khan. The Tchougievski Cossacks included a few hundred baptised Kalmyks. The nobility, of course, hoped this would guarantee Tsarist recognition of their claims to leadership within the Horde.

*[Lenin's grandmother was a baptised Kalmyk. Their impact on world history is far from negligible.]*

The Oirat tribes, including those splinter groups that were sometimes absorbed, were each ruled by a *noyon*, or prince, who

was also *chief tayishi* or chieftain (a prince by birth, a chieftain by law). Lesser *yayishi* supported his rule and led *ulus* or subdivisions of the tribe. These lesser nobles were not dependent on the prince for economic or political reasons, and could be poached by neighbouring chieftains, with predictable results.

Early in their history the Alliance of Four conquered all of Mongolia, but they did not hold it long, and were expelled from Eastern Mongolia, where they had subjugated the 'real' Mongolians, after about two decades. They tried again a generation later, and then again. Each time they found themselves pushed further west until nearly all of Mongolia was Mongolian.

The Kalmyks established a new home in Dzungaria, among the Altai Mountains. Two generations later, in the mid-16th Century, they were being driven northwest along the Ob and Irtysh by the Altan Khan, another Genghisid descendant. The Oirat fought back and succeeded in reconquering their new home – but not for long. In the early 17th Century, the Altan Khan drove them into eastern Kazakhstan.

The westernmost tribe of the Alliance of Four was the Torghuts. They established contact with the Russians when the Muslim Kazakhs forbade them trade with the cities on the Syr Daria River. At this time, the Russians were mainly interested in trade with Siberia, not conquest.

The easternmost Oirats were the Khoshuts. Denied access to China because of the Altan Khan, they traded with Tibet instead and were the first Oirats to embrace Yellow Hat Buddhism.

The other two tribes developed the Oirat power base. Rulers emerged who looked east again to Mongolia. They halted the Altan Khan's expansionism, but when they tried to unify the Oirats, problems arose. The Oirats split into three: the Khosut Khanate migrated to, and became the protectors of, Tibet; the Dzungars (central tribes) became the Dzungar Empire and again challenged the Mongols; the Torghuts and some of the Dörbets migrated to the Volga and established the Kalmyk Khanate.

Seeking broader pastures, the Kalmyks came out from the region of the upper Irtysh in 1618, under *Tayishi* Kho Orluk, skirting to the north of their enemies the Kazakhs and over the southern Urals before descending the Volga. They arrived in their new homeland in 1630.

This region, stretching between the Russian garrisons at Saratov and Astrakhan, and between and over the Don and the Volga, had been part of the Tatar Astrakhan Khanate, but it was now claimed by Russia. Most of the land was uninhabited. The people who used to live there were the Nogai Tatars. Most had fled to the Kuban and the lands of the Crimean Khanate; those who remained became vassals of the Kalmyks.

Relations with Russia were strained at first. The Russians could not prevent the Kalmyks moving in, but they did not want them joining any sort of Tatar confederation. The Kalmyks raided Russian and Bashkir settlements (the latter were already vassals of the Tsars) and *vice versa*. To put a stop to this, the Tsars made the Kalmyk chiefs swear a variety of oaths; they became Russian subjects... sort of. For all practical purposes, they remained their own masters.

In 1640 the Kalmyks joined with their Dzungarian brethren and the Eastern Mongols in swearing allegiance to the Iki Tsaadzhin Bichig, or Great Code of the Nomads (mythically supposed to be the rules laid down by Genghis Khan). This code comprehensively regulated nomadic life, and was the only set of laws the Kalmyks recognised as valid.

Despite their rocky relationship, the Kalmyks served the Russians more often than not. They needed Russian support against their Muslim neighbours, and the Russians were impressed by their powerful cavalry arm, which, under the great Ayuka Khan, was employed extensively against Persia, the Ottomans, the Nogai, and the Krim Tatars. On his own account, Ayuka Khan fought the

Kazakhs, subjugated the Mangyshlak Turmens, and raided the Kabardians.

The tsars bought the services of the Kalmyk khans with money and dry goods, and tax-free trade opportunities with Russian frontier markets – much as they did with the Cossacks, but the Kalmyks remained far more independent.

Ayuka's time was the zenith of Kalmyk power. After Ayuka's death in 1724 there was a period of instability. The nobility vied for power, accepting bribes from the Russians to enhance their positions. They permitted the Russians to establish settlements on their grazing lands (the Volga Germans being one example). The Khan was forced to accept a ruling council, which reduced his power, the Orthodox Church made inroads, and constant demands for cavalry units to serve Russian interests weakened the Khanate.

At the same time, they overestimated their own regional importance *vis á vis* St. Petersburg. For example, Ayuka treated the Governor of Astrakhan as an inferior, while the central government regarded the two men as equals, and if it had to choose, would back the governor over the khan any day of the week. Such an attitude only led to greater oversight by the Russians.

Under Catherine the Great, the Kalmyks decided to migrate 'home' to Dzungaria. A portion were trapped by the melting Volga and remained behind (and the Dörbets choose to stay), but 2-300,000 did leave, suffering terrible hardships on the road from marauding Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, and from the desert – their leader chose to take the shortest route. Only a third of those who set out made it to Dzungaria and Chinese rule. Vexed, Catherine abolished the Khanate and placed the area and its people under the Government of Astrakhan.

The Kalmyks have had a hard time ever since. The Torghuts lost their leadership role to the Dörbets because they joined Pugachev's Cossack revolt. Their lands were partitioned among several regional governments. Some of the people were resettled.

It was not all bad. The most loyal of the Dörbets of the Don valley were lumped in with the Don Cossacks – at least they received the same privileges that way. In 1865 Elista was founded as their capital. It still contains the largest Buddhist temple in Europe.

But, as with most of the minorities in Russia, the Kalmyks gained nothing from backing the Red Revolution. They became politically divided between those who supported the Bolsheviks, and those who did not. The Red Army drafted 18,000 Kalmyks to keep them out of White hands, but many did join the Whites, hoping to receive official status as Cossacks.

Persecution followed the establishment of the Kalmyk ASSR, which was an exclusively agricultural zone. In World War II, many Kalmyks welcomed their German liberators and fought for them – though many joined the Red Army as well. As a result, all Kalmyks, including Red Army soldiers, were deported, suffering the usual mass deaths in the process. The KASSR was abolished, and even the place names were changed. Only in 1957 were the Kalmyks permitted to return, and in 1992 they became an autonomous republic of the Russian Federation. But with their lands now a desert thanks to Soviet economic practices, life remains hard.

## The Bashkirs

The Bashkirs were another important client of the Tsarist State, though during the 1735-39 war with the Turks they were enduring a period of revolt against Russian encroachment.

They are first reported in Western sources from the 10th Century AD. Over the next few centuries they developed into a powerful confederation of seven tribes. Originating as a Mongol people, the Bashkir 'nation' absorbed elements of the neighbouring Bulgar, Pecheneg, Kipchak, and other tribes, adding Turkic and Slavic stock. Most appear Mongolian rather than Turkic. Their language, however, is similar to Tatar.

They dwelt east of the Urals, mainly on the upper Ural River, with the Volga Bulgars to their west, the Kipchak Horde to their south, and the Kyrgyz to their east. In religion they were pagans, becoming Sunni Muslims fairly late in their history. Nomads, they bred cattle like most of their neighbours, and also hunted and kept bees.

Once a threat to their neighbours, Bashkir regional dominance inevitably waned and in 1556 they accepted Russian supremacy; the town of Ufa was established as a trading post and defence against the now-dominant Kyrgyz.

The first 'rebellion' of the Bashkirs occurred in 1676 and proved difficult to put down. Another insurrection, sparked by ill-treatment by Russian tax collectors, flared up in 1707. In 1720 the Bashkir people signed one of the usual 'client' treaties with Russia, assuring their independence, but requiring them to return any Russians who had fled to their lands (of which there were a fair number – 20,000 returned over a two-year period).

Problems arose again with the founding of Orenburg in 1735 and the establishment of a Cossack colony in the region (this particular settlement failed; the existing Orenburg was founded in 1743). Inevitably, settlers followed the founding of a military post, the land was divided and sold, with much of it going to the rich owners of lumber concerns who exploited the people living on their property. The Bashkirs were forced onto reservations, and Orthodoxy was rigorously proselytised among them. Naturally, the Bashkirs went on the warpath.

A series of three revolts rocked the 1730s. That of 1735-36 was put down when General Rumyantsev brought regulars and factory militia ('factory' in the sense of 'Hudson's Bay Company militia') from Perm. The Bashkirs who participated in the revolt lost their lands, which were given to loyal neighbouring tribes, many of whom had been subject to Bashkir rule. Lesser uprisings followed in 1737-38 and 1739-40. These events never involved the Bashkir nation as a whole, but only alliances of a few clans at a time.

Despite these revolts, the Bashkirs frequently sent contingents to fight for the Russians in the European theatre, generally along with the Kalmyks. The Russians felt their unusual appearance would frighten the opposition; like the Kalmyks, they were primarily bow-armed light horsemen. Bashkirs were present at Torgau in 1761.



## Bibliography

THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY INCLUDES WORKS USED FOR THE PRESENT AUTHOR'S *TÜRKENKRIEG* COMMENTARY.

Abbott, John S. C. **Austria, its Rise and Present Power**. Peter Fenelon Collier, New York, 1887 (1948 edition). The war can be found between pp.399-411. Not recommended as an accurate source, though a dramatic read. Many glaring errors.

Anderson, M. S. **War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime 1618-1789**. Sutton Publishing Ltd. Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK. 1998. General work.

Bain, Robert. **The Pupils of Peter the Great**. Constable & Co. Westminster, 1897. Reprint by Kessinger's Publishing, no date.

Carlyle, Thomas. **History of Friederich II of Prussia**. Project Gutenberg online text version. Some mention of the war, but brief.

Crawford, Earl of. Journal Vol 2: **Journal and Operations of the Campaign made by Her Russian Imperial Majesty's Army of the Dnieper Under the Conduct of Veldt Marshal Count de Munich Toward the Dniester, in the Year 1739**. Located in the Library of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, PA, USA. Despite the title, it is for the year 1738. He had it compiled in 1739. A first-hand account, with the repetitiveness of a diary, but still quite interesting, and *legible*. A number of very good maps, reproduced by Paul Dangel and scattered throughout the text or in the Annex. The next section of his work includes the campaign on the Danube in 1739. The other volumes are a collection of accounts of various military actions of the period.

Davies, Brian L. Warfare, **State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700**. Routledge, New York, 2007. Useful background material. Describes economies, politics, and military practices of the Russians, Cossacks, Poles, and Tatars, and their relationships with each other.

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.

LeDonne, John P. **The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire, 1650-1831**. Oxford University Press, 2004. The title says it all. LeDonne has written other material on the subject.

Manstein, C. H. von. **Contemporary Memoirs of Russia From the Year 1727 to 1744**. Da Capo Press, New York, 1968. Indispensable. Also readable. Of interest also to those researching the War of the Polish Succession and the Russo-Swedish War of the 1740s.

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.

Rambaud, Alfred. **Russia**. Peter Fenelon Collier, New York, 1887 (1948 edition). The same series as Abbott's *Austria q.v.* More accurate than the latter. Very little on the war, but a decent overview of Russia under Peter the Great and his successors in the first portion of Volume II.

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™.

## Credits

ADDITIONAL THANKS must be accorded to Paul Dangel and his wife Pat, who very kindly agreed to visit the library of the APS in Philadelphia and photograph a long list of items out of Crawford's Journal that I was interested in. Not content with this, Paul also offered to draw all the maps found in the Annex, reproducing them from material found in the Journal, and has since added the maps of Oczakov and Stavutschina. I cannot begin to thank them enough for their help.

I would also like to thank the staff of the APS Library, who accepted Paul and his wife as my agents merely on the strength of an email (the material in the library is not the sort you can check out for a couple of weeks and dump through a slot after closing time): our contact persons, Valerie-Anne Lutz, and Sandra Duffy, and the assistance of Charles Greifenstein, Frank Margeson, and Earle

Spamer, who set aside the room and provided the necessary equipment for study and reproduction.

## The Annex:

The five-page Annex consists of two diagrams of Oczakov (one from Crawford and one from Brown). Crawford's appears similar to descriptions of the spy's spurious copy, but contains items such as the Russian redoubts that could only have been added later. Brown's appears closer to reality but lacks certain features. It is possible his diagram is based on the reconstructed fortress that was besieged in the 1787-92 war.

Also in the Annex is a map of Bender (from Crawford). Remember that in the 1738 campaign the Russians did not reach the Dniester at Bender, but remained a considerable distance upstream. The notation about Charles XII of Sweden refers to an affray called the Skirmish at Bender. The king had been expelled from Istanbul but refused to leave Ottoman soil. He camped at this village, and on February 1st, 1713, he and his escort of 40 guardsmen stood against an attack by several hundred Turks. Ultimately, they were overwhelmed and the king was captured.

There is a copy of the OOB for the Army of the Dnieper (or Grand Army) of 1738 (again, from Crawford). This diagram shows the three divisions and detached elements, as they would have marched, with either the third or second division in the lead, and fought, either facing left or right. (It may be assumed that the heavy artillery park and engineering personnel, when present, did *not* act as a flank guard).



*P. Dangel, hard at work on Crawford's Journal.*



A sudden bliss has seized my mind,  
And to a mountain peak it carries me  
Up where the wind's forgotten how to stir the trees;  
The deepest valley lies in silence.  
Perceiving something, quiet goes the brook  
That used to babble without cease  
When rushing swiftly down the hill.  
There, they are braiding laurel wreaths  
And word is spread to every side;  
Smoke curls up from the fields afar.

Do I see Pindus down below me?  
I hear the pristine sisters' songs!  
With flame Permessian I burn,  
I strive in haste toward their visage.  
They've given me the healing water:  
Drink, and forget your every toil;  
Rinse out your eyes with dew Castalian.  
Beyond steppes and mountains cast your gaze,  
Direct your soul toward those lands  
Where morning breaks upon dark night.

Just like a ship 'midst raving waves  
That threaten to engulf it,  
Severs their frothing caps,  
And clings steadfastly to its course  
Amidst the raging silver foam,  
Its wake ablaze across the deep:  
Thus did the hordes of Tatars haste  
Around to meet the Russian force;  
Cavalry steam obscures the sky!  
What happens then? They're felled at once.

Love for the Fatherland empowers  
The souls and hands of Russian sons;  
They each desire to spill their blood,  
They draw their strength from sounds of war.  
How does the mighty lion scare  
A wolf pack baring poison teeth  
Showing ferocious, gleaming eyes?  
His roaring quakes the woods and shore,  
His tail churns up the dust and sand,  
Uncoiling mightily, he strikes.

Is it bronze thunder in Mount Etna's breast,  
That bubbles in a sulfurous brew?  
Or is it Hades shattering his chains,  
And throwing wide his gaping jaws?  
It is the nation of an outcast slave  
Igniting a high castle's moat,  
Raining down steel and flame upon the valley  
Where our well-chosen warriors,  
Ringed all around by swamps and foes,  
Storm the swift current into fire.

O, hide your forces, Istanbul,  
In mountains, where the fiery sky  
Belches out ashes, flames and death;  
Beyond where Tigris scours its banks.  
But in this world there is no barrier  
That could curtail the eagles' flight.  
They stop for naught: not waters, forests,  
Hills, torrents or the wildest steppes.  
The eagle legions can attain  
Heights that are scaled by wind alone.

Let earth, like Pontus, heave and breathe,  
Let all the world's expanses groan,  
Let blackest smoke obscure the light  
Moldavan peaks be drenched in blood;  
But none of this can hinder you,  
O Rus', for fate herself protects you  
In blessed Anna's name.  
And now your ardent zeal for Her  
Carries you swift through Tatar ranks,  
Cutting wide swathes for you to pass.

The day conceals its rays amidst the waves,  
And leaves the fight to burn against night;  
The Tatar prince has perished in the dark;  
The Tatars lose both light and hope.  
A wolf steals from the deepest woods

Toward the pallid Turkish corpse.  
Then someone watching his last sunset,  
Cries out, 'O, veil this crimson scene,  
And cover up Muhammad's shame!  
Sink like the sun into the sea!'

Why is my soul thus seized by fear?  
My blood runs cold, my heart laments!  
What sudden clamour strikes my ear?  
The woods and desert wind are howling!  
Fierce beasts are hiding in a cave,  
The door of heaven opens wide,  
Above the army, stormclouds part -  
Then all at once the Hero enters,  
His face aflame, he routs the foe  
With blood-washed sword.

Is it not he, who razed the fortress  
That threatened Rus' beside the flowing Don?  
Is it not he who struck the Persians down  
Amidst the thirsting reaches of the steppe?  
Just such a gaze he cast upon his foes  
When he debarked on Gothic shores,  
Just such a mighty hand he raised,  
And his steed galloped just as swift  
When now his legions trampled the plains  
That lie before the dawning day.

All round him from the clouds above  
Rain thunderbolts and lightning,  
And sensing Peter's forces nigh  
The woodlands and fields lie trembling.  
Who joins his fierce gaze to the south,  
All cloaked in terrifying thunder?  
It must be he the victor at Kazan,  
Who by the Caspian's banks  
Did overthrow the proud Selim -  
And strew the steppe with Pagan heads.

One hero speaks now to the other:  
'We did not toil in vain,  
Nor were our exploits futile:  
For now the world's in awe of Rus'.  
Our work has broadened our frontiers  
To north, to west and to the east.  
And in the south, our Anna celebrates,  
Bestows this triumph on her people.'  
Now darkness closes round our heroes -  
Conceals them from our eyes and ears.

The river swirls with Tatar blood  
That's spilled among the warriors.  
And fearing battle to rejoin,  
The foe escapes across the barren land,  
Abandons sword, encampment, shame,  
They paint a ghastly sight while running  
Through their slain brothers blood.  
Even the slightest trembling leaf  
Strikes fear into their hearts now  
Like screaming cannonballs.

The woods and vales sing out with springs  
'O, victory to Rus'! O, victory!'  
The foe now fleeing Russian swords  
Is terrified by his own steps.  
Then, seeing her own men in flight,  
The moon, ashamed of their disgrace,  
Doth blush and hide her face in gloom.  
And glory flies in dark of night,  
With trumpets to all lands to herald  
The terrifying might of Rus'.

An Ode in Blessed Memory of Her Majesty the Empress Anna Ivanovna on the Victory Over the Turks and Tatars and the Taking of Khotin, 1739. By M.V. Lomonsov.

*[M.V. Lomonsov (1711-1765) was a Russian literary giant. His works are pretty stilted now, but in his day he was regarded as an innovator, and this poem of his is still widely taken to be the origin of modern Russian poetry. He was also a leading all-round scientist, founder of the Moscow University, founder of the first chemical lab in Russia, and a pioneer in atomic theory. One of his many achievements was the discovery that Venus has an atmosphere.]*