

“UNTIL THE LAST DROP OF BLOOD”: THE EARLY BALKAN ADVANCES OF THE MUSCOVITE STATE AT THE AGE OF PETER I

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Abstract

The tsardom of Muscovy, which throughout the reign of Peter I had been transforming into what later came to be known as the Russian Empire, since late 17th century began to take an increasing interest in the Balkan region. Drawing upon the original documentary sources of the epoch, this article attempts to look at the circumstances of the early Balkan advances of Muscovy and to shed light on the strategies elaborated and applied by the tsarist government to win the Balkan Christians over to its side. The analysis of the documents allows the author to conclude that the common Orthodox religion and the widespread pro-Muscovite sympathies on the part of the Balkan population objectively served as the most reliable and effective tool for the tsar to promote his interests in the area. It is worthy of note that at the age of Peter I the Balkan Orthodox peoples, despite the eventual failure of the tsar on the banks of Prut, for the first time appear to be directly involved in the strategic war planning of the tsarist authorities. Once discovered, the Balkan card would be kept in the sleeve and used by the Muscovite/Russian state over the course of the next two centuries.

Keywords: Russian-Ottoman wars, Balkan Orthodox, Danube principalities, Peter I, Prut campaign, Muscovy, Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, Eastern question

Since the second half of the 15th century, when on the one hand the millennium-old Byzantine Empire ceased to exist, and on the other hand Ivan III by gradually seizing the nearby territories began to gather the new Orthodox empire of his own, Moscow becomes a site for periodic visits of the Balkan peoples of all kinds. It stands to mention the frequent exchanges of ambassadors between Muscovy and Moldova that were taking place in late 15th century¹; Sophia Paleologue and Elena Voloshanka, Ivan III's Greek wife² and Moldavian daughter-in-law³ bringing their retinues with them to Moscow; A. L. Ordin-Nashchokin's secret mission in Moldavia in mid-17th century⁴; the Balkan Orthodox

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¹ N. A. Mokhov, *Ocherki istorii moldavsko-russko-ukrainskikh svyazei* [The sketches in history of the Moldavian-Ukrainian-Russian contacts] Chişinău: Ştiinţa 1961, p. 25.

² Zoe Paleologue (d.1503), niece of the last two Byzantine emperors and since 1472 the second wife of Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow. After the marriage took the name Sophia. See: Isolde Thyrêt, 'Sophia Paleologue'. In: James R. Millar, (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Russian History*. N.Y.: Macmillan Reference 2004. Vol.3, pp. 1131-1132; T. A. Matasova, *Sofia Paleolog*. Moscow: Molodaia gvardia 2016; T. D. Panova, *Velikaja kniaginia Sofja Paleolog* [Great Princess Sophia Paleologue], Moscow: Moskovskii Kremel' 2005; L. Ye. Morozova, *Znamenityie zhenshchiny Moskovskoi Rusi XV-XVI veka* [Famous women of the Muscovite Rus' of the XV-XVI century]. Moscow: Veche 2014, pp. 26-142.

³ Elena Stepanovna (Voloshanka), daughter of the Hospodar of Moldavia Stephen the Great. Since 1483 wife of Ivan III's son, Ivan the Young. See: Morozova, op. cit., pp. 142-167.

⁴ L. Ye. Semenova, *Politicheskie kontakty mezhdru Rossiiei i Dunaiskimi kniazhestvami v pervoi polovine XVII veka* [Political contacts between Russia and the Danube Principalities in the first half of the XVII century]. In:

monks and clergymen that used to seek out support and financial assistance of the Muscovite rulers; people from Balkans settling in Muscovy as mercenaries, individual migrants, merchants, teachers, translators, and various adventurers or people with an unusual past. Sometimes they did not stay only in Moscow, but for various crimes could be even exiled and end up exploring the depths of Siberia.⁵

However for Moscow, even though since the times of Ivan III positioning itself as the successor of the Byzantine imperial legacy and claiming the role of the sole protector of the Orthodox Christian world, the Balkan issues for a long time throughout the 15-17th centuries were not on the immediate political agenda. Such a situation begins to change with the reign of Peter I, when the steady expansion of the Muscovites to the South brought them eventually into conflict with the Ottoman Empire. Peter's capture of the Ottoman fortress of Azov at the mouth of the Don River in 1696 marked only the initial stage in the forthcoming Muscovite-Ottoman rivalry. As a result, the strategic importance of the Balkan Peninsula increased in the eyes of the tsar and his officials. From now on, it perfectly made sense to look on the Orthodox Christian peoples living in the Balkans as a potentially useful ally in the struggle with 'infidel enemies of the Christian name'.

The increased Muscovite interest in the South Slavic lands

Famously, since late 17th century Peter makes efforts to improve fighting capabilities of his army and introduces wide-scale modernizing reforms, which were to change unrecognizably the entire Muscovite society. Moreover, another ambitious task was to learn from scratch the modern art of ship-building, which was completely new thing for a heretofore virtually landlocked Muscovy (not to count the cold White Sea in the Arctic area). In 1697-1698 Peter sends and himself incognito participates in the so-called Grand Embassy to Europe, a huge diplomatic mission that visited Berlin, Amsterdam, London

B. N. Floria, (ed.) *Svizi Rossii s narodami Balkanskogo poluostrva. Pervaia polovina XVII veka*. [Russia's connections with the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. First half of the XVII c.], Moscow: Nauka 1990, pp. 79-81.

⁵ T. Oparina, "Sibirskaiia ssylka grecheskikh pereselentsev XVII v.: puti i sud'by" [The Deportation of Greek Settlers to Siberia in the 17th Century: Routes and Destinies]. *Quaestio Rossica*. 5, no 1 (2017): 171-197. Also, for earlier connections between Muscovy and the Balkan peoples, see: N. P. Chesnokova, *Khristianskii Vostok i Rossiia. Politicheskoe i kul'turnoe vzaimodeistvie v seredine XVII veka*. [The Christian East and Russia. Political and cultural contacts in the middle of the 17th century] Moscow: Indrik 2011; B. N. Floria (ed.) *Svizi Rossii s narodami Balkanskogo poluostrva. Pervaia polovina XVII veka*. [Russia's connections with the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. First half of the XVII c.], Moscow: Nauka 1990; B. L. Fonkich (ed.) *Rossia i Khristianskii Vostok. Vypusk IV-V*. [Russia and the Christian East. Issue IV-V], Moscow: Yazyki slavianskoi kul'tury: Znack 2014; L. Ye. Semenova, *Kniazhestva Valakhii i Moldavii. Konets XIV- nachalo XIX v. (Ocherki vneshnepoliticheskoi istorii)* [Principalities of Walachia and Moldavia in late XIV-early XIX centuries (the sketches of foreign policy history)], Moscow: Indrik 2006, pp. 210-265.

and Vienna with a two-fold purpose – to gather diplomatic support against the Ottomans and the Swedes, and to find out more about the advanced European technologies, to send young Muscovites to learn in Europe military arts, navigation, engineering, mathematics, natural sciences and foreign languages, as well as to bring the skilled European experts to develop these fields of knowledge also in Muscovy.

At the same time Peter sought to gain more information about the Balkans and improve connections with the Balkan peoples. In view of this, a member of the Grand Embassy Grigorii Ostrovskii was ordered to proceed from Hague through Venice to the “Slavinian or Slovakian and to Sclavonian land” (*Ъхать изъ Гаги ... до Славенской, или до Словацкой и до Шклавонской земли*), which meant the lands of the South Slavs and particularly the Venetian-controlled Dalmatia. Given the fact that in Peter’s times the Muscovite nobility rarely spoke foreign languages, the functions of interpreters were normally performed by foreigners. In this respect it is characteristic that Ostrovskii was not a born Muscovite but a foreigner, in all probability a Pole or Ruthenian, appointed to serve as an interpreter at the embassy and fluent in Italian, Polish and Latin.⁶

Instructions issued to Ostrovskii specified that he was to collect the detailed information about those “Slavinian, Slovakian and Sclavonian” countries, what sort of language do people speak there, could that language be understandable for people in Moscow, and to hire the experienced seamen of the Slavic origin to serve in the newly created Muscovite fleet.⁷ Ostrovskii set out from Hague on the very day when he received the tsar’s orders and already in two and a half months was back in Amsterdam, submitting report on his mission to the chief executives of the Grand Embassy on 2 January 1698 (23 December 1697, O. s.). This report has been found in The Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (RGADA) in Moscow and published in extenso by Ye. A. Kniazhetskaia.⁸

⁶ *Pis'ma i bumagi imperatora Petra Velikogo* [The letters and papers of the Emperor Peter the Great]. St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia Tipografiia, 1887, Vol. 1, p. 656.

⁷ *Nakazniya statyi Grigoriyu Grigorievichu Ostrovskomu* [The Clauses of instructions to G. G. Ostrovskii], 2 October 1697 (most obviously, the date is given according to the old style Julian calendar, which was in use in Muscovy and later in the Russian Empire until 1918; so, in fact, the date corresponds to 12 October 1697, New style; V. M.), in: *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 1, pp. 199–201. For the sake of consistency and to avoid any discrepancies all dates in this article will be given in Gregorian (New style) system, with Julian dates also put in brackets.

⁸ Ye. A. Kniazhetskaia, “Sviasi Rossii s Dalmatsiei i Bokoi Kotorskoi pri Petre I” [Russia’s connections with Dalmatia and Boka Kotorska at the time of Peter I], *Sovetskoe Slavianovedenie*, no. 5 (September–October 1973): 46–59.

Before his long journey, when still in Amsterdam, Ostrovskii managed to find about thirty mariners of the Slavic origin, five of whom were employed.⁹ Their ability to speak Slavic language was especially welcomed.¹⁰ Later on, on 5 November (26 October O. s.) in accordance with his instructions, Ostrovskii arrived to Venice and spent there three weeks.¹¹ Even though Ostrovskii himself in the end did not visit 'Sclavonia' (as it becomes clear from the text, by this word was meant Dalmatia) and stayed in Venice, in general terms the major purpose of his trip was attained. Ostrovskii managed to collect the primary information about the lands on the Balkan Adriatic coast and scouted the area for the prospects of employing the South Slavic people in the tsar's naval service.

When in last months of 1697 Grigorii Ostrovskii was trying to fulfil his mission, he was not the only person from Muscovy staying in Venice at that time. There was also a group of Muscovites studying there naval science and engineering. As early as in March 1697 Peter I requested the Doge of Venice to lend assistance to a group of 19 noblemen, who were sent by the tsar to the Most Serene Republic as students.¹² Sending students abroad was indeed revolutionary, since in earlier times no one in medieval Muscovy would even think about such a thing like studying in the lands of heretics. Now in Peter's days Europe began to gradually open up, even though many of the nobility at initial stages of the Petrine reforms took their abroad assignments as a burden. Along with that, intellectually curious people had the opportunity to share their observations of European life.

One of the students sent to Venice, Piotr Andreievich Tolstoi¹³, has left a written account of his travels.¹⁴ Apart from seeing a number of Italian cities, Tolstoi in autumn 1697 and in summer 1698 had twice crossed the Adriatic

⁹ Ibidem, p. 49.

¹⁰ F. A. Golovin to Peter I, a letter dated 16 or 17 October 1697 (5 or 6 October, O. s.), *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 1, p. 657.

¹¹ Kniazhetskaia, *Sviasi Rossii s Dalmatsiei*, p. 50.

¹² Gramota k Venetsianskomu dozhu Silvestru Valerio [The Letter to the Doge of Venice Silvestro Valerio], 7 March 1697 (25 February 1697, O. s.), in: *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 1, p.p. 133-135, 610-611.

¹³ Count Piotr Tolstoi (1645-1729) was destined to be the direct great-great-grandfather of one of the most renowned authors of the Russian and world literature Count Leo Tolstoi. He volunteered for a study abroad already at the age of 52. In this way, Piotr Tolstoi aimed to put himself back into his monarch's good graces. Later, in 1701, Piotr Tolstoi would be appointed Muscovy's first permanent ambassador in the Ottoman Empire. See on him: F. A. Brockhaus. and I. A. Efron, (eds). *Entsyklopedicheskii slovar' Brockhousa i Efrona* [The Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary]. St. Petersburg, 1890-1907. In 86 Vols. Vol. XXXIII (65), pp. 457-458.

¹⁴ P. A. Tolstoi, *Puteshestviie stol'nika P. A. Tolstogo po Evrope 1697-1699*. [The Travels of stol'nik P. A. Tolstoi in Europe 1697-1699]. Moscow: Nauka, 1992. Before this academic edition, Tolstoi's itinerary notes have also been published at: P. A. Tolstoi, "Puteshestviie stol'nika Petra Andreevicha Tolstago" *Russkii Arkhiv*, 1888, № 2, pp. 161-204, № 3 pp. 321-368, № 4 pp. 505-552, № 5 pp. 5-62, № 6 pp. 113-156, № 7 pp. 225-264, № 8, pp. 369-400.

Sea, and visited Istria, Dalmatia, Dubrovnik and the Bay of Kotor. He thus saw and described life and activities of the people living on the Balkan Adriatic coast, mentioning Croats, Serbs and Montenegrins. Tolstoi provided information about the geographic details, occupations of locals, their language and religious affiliations. As for the Serbs living in the Bay of Kotor region under the Venetian jurisdiction, they were compared by Tolstoi to the Don Cossacks, due to their living in the frontier zone and the military practises.¹⁵ Also, the author tells about “free people called Montenegrins”, which “do not serve anybody, at times fighting with the Turks and at times with the Venetians”.¹⁶ Tolstoi always notes a friendly attitude to him on the part of the local South Slav people, and as a religious person of his age oftentimes visits both Catholic and Orthodox churches and holy places. It is worth pointing out that in local Orthodox churches he could see books and icons “brought from Moscow by the Greeks”.¹⁷

To be sure, the books and icons printed and painted in Moscow and then found by Tolstoi in a remote Orthodox church on the coast of the Bay of Kotor serve as yet one more evidence that the contacts between Muscovy and the Balkans developed long before Peter I's time. However, only in late 17th – early 18th century when the Muscovites in their drive to the South come into an open confrontation with the Ottoman state, the Balkan Peninsula increasingly attracts attention of the tsarist government. Since Peter I the Balkan Orthodox Christians, most of whom were the Ottoman subjects, enter into the foreign policy calculations of the Muscovite statesmen as a strategic card that could and would be employed against the Ottomans.

In order to count on the help of a number of Orthodox Christian peoples the tsar was quite reasonably interested in collecting more information through trusted channels, sending secret agents and establishing direct contacts, spreading anti-Ottoman propaganda that would be instrumental in winning over the hearts and minds of local elites as well as ordinary people.¹⁸ As the Balkan Christians themselves were enthusiastically inclined towards the distant northern state of their co-religionists, perceived as the successor of Byzantium with the historical mission to liberate the Orthodox peoples from “Hagarite slavery”,¹⁹ the Muscovites normally had no difficulty in gathering

¹⁵ Tolstoi, *Puteshestviie stol'nika P. A. Tolstogo*, p. 116.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 118.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 117.

¹⁸ Using the subversive tactics with the aim to spark anti-Ottoman uprisings among the Sultan's Christian subjects was not solely Moscow's invention and had also been practised in late 16-17th centuries by the Austrian Habsburgs, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Vatican, see: I. F. Makarova *Bolgarskii narod v XV-XVIII v. v.* [Bulgarian people in XV-XVIII centuries], Moscow: KomKniga, 2005, pp. 39-41.

¹⁹ Note various legendary prophesies circulating among the Balkan Orthodox peoples, stating that the Ottomans' long rule over Constantinople will eventually be terminated, and this liberating

certain support among the sultan's Christian subjects. Starting from Peter I's reign, the strategy of inciting the Balkan Christians to rise up against the Ottomans would become a regular practice in all subsequent wars between Muscovy/Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

Sava Vladislavić and the contacts with the Habsburg Serbs

The aforementioned mission of Ostrovskii and the travel notes of Tolstoi prove the interest on the part of the Muscovite statesmen, including the tsar, to the Balkan region. At the same time, the regular contacts with the area were maintained through the Balkan natives invited into the tsar's service. Among the first and most prominent Balkanites who distinguished themselves in Muscovy, one should mention Peter's "eyes and ears" in the Ottoman Empire count Sava Vladislavić (Raguzinskii).²⁰ By origin a Herzegovinian, he later settled in Dubrovnik (from where his nickname "Raguzinskii") and by the last decade of the 17th century is known to run his private business in Istanbul. In fact, Sava Vladislavić begins to cooperate there with the Muscovite ambassadors, providing them information about the Ottoman domestic and foreign policy.

Along with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos, Sava Vladislavić due to his connections in Istanbul becomes an extremely valuable information source and an advisor to Piotr Tolstoi, the first permanent Muscovite ambassador at the Porte.²¹ In late 1702 Sava under the guise of merchant arrives to Muscovy and enters into the service of the tsar. At least on two occasions Peter I would send Sava Vladislavić again to the Ottoman Empire with special secret missions, in 1704-1705, and in 1707-1708.²² In particular, Sava delivered to Moscow "A Secret description of the Black Sea", and is thought to be one of its authors. The strategic importance of this document becomes even more apparent on considering the fact that the Black Sea remained still unknown to the Muscovites.²³

mission was ascribed to the Muscovite monarchs. Such popular beliefs were bolstered by famous marriage of Ivan III with Sophia Paleologue (1472), and Moscow's claims to be the champion of the Orthodox Christian world. See: Makarova, *Bolgarskii narod*, pp. 89-92.

²⁰ See on him: Jovan Dučić, *Graf Sava Vladislavić - Raguzinskii. Serb-diplomat pri dvore Petra Velikoga I Yekateriny I*. [Count Sava Vladislavić - Raguzinskii. A Serbian Diplomat at the court of Peter the Great and Catherine I]. St. Petersburg: Skifiya, 2009.

²¹ Dučić, *Graf Sava Vladislavić*, pp. 36-39.

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 43-47.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 45. This description has been published among other papers of P. A. Tolstoi, containing intelligence information collected by the Muscovite ambassador. See: P. A. Tolstoi, *Opisaniie Chernogo moria, Egeiskogo Arkhipelaga i Osmanskogo flota* [A Description of the Black Sea, Aegean Archipelago and the Ottoman fleet] (Moscow: Natalis, 2006), pp. 66-128. The book also includes the secret accounts of the Aegean Archipelago and the Ottoman fleet: Tolstoi, *Opisaniie*, pp. 129-289. Presumably, taking into consideration his background, experience and duties, Sava Vladislavić might have a hand in drawing up of the given reports, or some part of

Sava Vladislavić came to be the main advisor of the tsar in the issues relating to the Ottoman Orthodox subjects, and was instrumental in establishing contacts with the rulers of Moldavia and Walachia, the Montenegrin Metropolitan (Prince-Bishop) Danilo I, as well as the Republic of Dubrovnik.²⁴ In addition, Vladislavić contributed to the Muscovite victory in the momentous battle of Poltava (1709), where he held the position of the chief quartermaster of Peter's army.²⁵ Later on, staying in service of his new home country, Vladislavić would be sent as an extraordinary ambassador to China (1725-1728) to negotiate demarcation of borders and, unofficially, to gather intelligence on Chinese state.²⁶ On top of all that, even if indirectly, Sava Vladislavić left a truly indelible mark on Russian literature, when after one of his secret missions in Istanbul he brought a little black African boy as a gift to Peter I.²⁷ The tsar famously baptized and educated his godson, who was named Abram Petrovich Gannibal and is known in the first place as maternal great-grandfather of the celebrated Russian poet Alexander Pushkin.

Aside from Vladislavić, some other people from the Balkans were settling in Muscovy in early 18th century, entering into the military and naval service of the tsar. The natives of Dubrovnik, Dalmatia and the Bay of Kotor were joining the nascent Muscovite fleet²⁸, while small groups of Serbian militiamen from the Habsburg Military Frontier areas began to offer their help to the Muscovite army. The grievances against the Austrian administration combined with the sympathies to the rising in power Muscovy, drove the most daring people to search for a better and more stable life in a large Orthodox state of their co-religionists.

As far back as 1698, the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije Černojević, who guided the Great Serb Migration of 1690 from the Ottoman Empire to the Habsburg lands²⁹, addressed the Grand Embassy of Peter I that came at that time to Vienna. He complained about the religious oppression of the Orthodox Serbs organised by the Jesuits despite the guarantees of religious freedom given by the Habsburgs in early 1690-s³⁰, and the increased attempts to convert his

them.

²⁴ Dučić, *Graf Sava Vladislavić*, p. 51.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 116-130.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²⁸ P. Rudiakov, *Pereselenie serbov v Rossiiu v XVIII veke v kontekste ukraino-serbskikh istoricheskikh sviazei 18-19 v. v.* [Migration of the Serbs to Russia in 18th century in the context of the Ukrainian-Serbian historical relations in 18-19th centuries], in: Sredoje Lalić (ed.), *Seoba Srba u Rusko carstvo polovinom 18. veka.* [The Exodus of the Serbs to the Russian Empire in mid-18th century], Novi Sad: Srpsko-ukrajinsko društvo 2005, p. 360.

²⁹ On the background of the Great Exodus of the Serbs to the Habsburg empire on the verge of the 17-18th centuries, see: Iu. V. Kostiashev *Serby v Avstriiskoi monarkhii v XVIII veke.* [The Serbs in the Austrian monarchy in the 18th century], Kaliningrad: Kaliningradskii Universitet 1997, pp. 18-26.

³⁰ On the privileges given by Leopold I and the legal status of the Serbian population in the

flock into Uniate Catholicism. On behalf of the Orthodox Serbian population of the Habsburg Empire the Patriarch urged the Muscovite mission to speak in support of the Serbs at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I.³¹

At the same time the Austrian Serbs voiced their complaints about the Habsburgs also at the court of the Wallachian hospodar. In 1702 a Serbian officer with the rank of Colonel was sent to Wallachia and asked hospodar to inform Moscow that the Serbs cannot stand the Uniate oppressions under the rule of Kaiser, and would be ready to join forces with the tsar's army against the infidels.³² After having found themselves divided between the Austrian and the Ottoman empires, and remaining in a position of religious minority on both sides of the Habsburg-Ottoman border, the Serbian people clearly sympathized with the faraway, scarcely known, but gaining strength Orthodox Muscovy.

In view of this, in the first decade of the 18th century the South Slavic migration to the Muscovite state begins as a movement of military experts wishing to serve the Orthodox tsar. One such example was Pante Božić, a colonel of the Austrian army and the commandant of the town of Titel (situated at the entry of the Tisa River into the Danube) in the Habsburg Military Frontier, who entered the Muscovite military service with a group of Serbian soldiers in the end of 1704. It is worth of note that Božić did this through the agency of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, one of the main informants and confidants of Piotr Tolstoi, the Muscovite ambassador in Istanbul.³³

Božić conducted negotiations on behalf of "all of the Serbian commanders living under the Austrian rule in Hungary on the Ottoman border" (*отъ всѣхъ начальныхъ Сербовъ которые живутъ подѣ цесаремъ въ Венгерской земль при границахъ Турскихъ*), asking whether the tsar would agree to make the Austrian Serbs his subjects (*имѣть за своихъ подданныхъ и вѣрныхъ*). The Serbian commanders obliged "to serve always against infidels without any payment, and not demanding any weapons, but merely for Orthodoxy alone" (*служить противъ бусурманъ безъ всякой платы и жало-*

Habsburg Empire in late 17-early 18th century, see: Kostiashev, *Serby v Avstriiskoi monarkhii*, pp. 48-59; I. I. Leshchilovskaia, *Serby pod vlast'yu Turtsii i Avstirii* [The Serbs under the rule of Turkey and Austria], in: I. I. Leshchilovskaia (ed.), *Slavianskiiie narody Iugo-Vostochnoi Yevropy i Rossiia v XVIII v.* [The Slavic peoples of the South Eastern Europe and Russia in 18th century], Moscow: Nauka 2003, pp. 8-18.

³¹ *Politicheskiiie i kul'turniie otnosheniia Rossii s iugoslavianskimi ziemliami v XVIII v.: Dokumenty* [Political and cultural relations of Russia with the South Slav lands in 18th century: Documents], Moscow: Nauka 1984, pp. 21-22.

³² Report of the Wallachian ambassador David Corbea, submitted to Posol'skii Prikaz (the ambassadorial office) in Moscow on 17 December (6 December, O. s.) 1702. *Istoricheskiie sviazi narodov SSSR i Rumynii v XV – nach. XVIII v.* [Historical connections of the peoples of the USSR and Romania in 15-early 18th centuries], Moscow: Nauka 1970, Vol. 3, p. 181.

³³ Dučić, *Graf Sava Vladislavić*, p. 44; I. I. Leshchilovskaia, *Serby v Rossii* [The Serbs in Russia]. In: I. I. Leshchilovskaia (ed.), *Slavianskiiie narody Iugo-Vostochnoi Yevropy*, p.278.

ванья, никакого ружья не требуя, но токмо за едино православіе).³⁴ In 1708 one more delegate from the Austrian Serbs, Hristofor Tutrinović, visited Moscow to confirm their wish to become subjects of the Muscovite tsar.³⁵

What is at issue here is clearly not a request to come over to the tsar with the piece of Hungarian territory they lived in, as it would imply an immediate armed conflict with the Habsburg Monarchy. This was rather an attempt to persuade the tsar to enter into the war with the Ottoman Empire and help the Serbs to regain their old country. Besides, on the part of some venturesome individuals the mission of Božić might also have a purpose to feel out the prospects of migration to Muscovy, all the more so that Božić himself never returned back. The Serbian commander was not only accepted in Moscow, but was made both an adviser of Peter I on the Serbian issues and a representative of the Serbian people at the tsarist court.³⁶ Božić settled in Ukraine, was granted two villages with a mill in the Nizhyn regiment³⁷, which were inherited after his death around 1712 by his widow and son.³⁸

The flow of the Balkanites wishing to join the tsar's military service increased towards the beginning of a new war with the Ottomans, went along with the preparations for the Prut campaign, and continued well after the end of hostilities and the Peace of Adrianople (1713). Those who settled in the new place surely preserved links with their home country, shared impressions with their friends and neighbours, acted as mediators between the tsarist government and the potential migrants. No doubt, many of the South Slavic migrants were encouraged in particular by Sava Vladislavić and owed their chances to build a new life to his careful help and guidance. For example, Vladislavić personally wrote to Count F. M. Apraksin, the General-Admiral and Commander of the Muscovite naval and land forces in the Baltics, to render assistance to the native of Dalmatia Matija Zmajević,³⁹ who recently began to serve in the

³⁴ S. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii d drevneishikh vremen* [History of Russia since earliest times]. St. Petersburg: Tov-vo "Obshchestvennaia pol'za" Publ., 1851—1879, Vol. 3, p. 1578.

³⁵ S. Bogoyavlenskii, "Iz russko-serbskikh otnoshenii pri Petre Pervom" [From Russian-Serbian relations under Peter I] *Voprosy Istorii*, 1946 (8-9), p. 25.

³⁶ Rudiakov, *Pereselenie serbov*, p. 360.

³⁷ In Ukraine, the Hetman state of the 17th- to 18th-century was divided into military-administrative districts known as regiments (polks). The regimental administrative division was abolished with the last vestiges of autonomy of the Ukrainian Cossack Hetmanate state in 1781.

³⁸ Ukase of Peter I regarding the widow of Colonel Panteleimon Božić. 5 April (25 March, O.s.), 1712. *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 12, part 1, p. 148.

³⁹ S. Vladislavić to F. M. Apraksin, 8 February (28 January, O. s.) 1713. *Politicheskiiie i kul'turniie otnosheniia*, pp. 45-46. What is interesting, Zmajević was a devout Catholic and came from a noble Dalmatian family. He is known to serve in the Venetian Fleet, but in view of the fact that he killed in a duel a Dalmatian nobleman, he had to leave his country at a young age. In 1710 Zmajević contacted the Muscovite ambassador in Constantinople Piotr Tolstoi with a request to take him into the tsar's service. Due to the war, which started in November, he had to spend with Tolstoi almost two years in the Ottoman prison. Later he joined the tsar's navy, distinguished himself in the war with Sweden, and eventually became Admiral of the Baltic Fleet. See more

Baltic Sea navy. Two other Balkanites, Hijeronim Natalić and Ivo Tudzić became at this time the advisers of Peter I on the naval issues.⁴⁰

Almost six years after the mission of Božić, in 1710, a group of Serbian commanders (Colonels Jovan Tekeli, Vulin Potisac and Hadži Mojsije Rašković) from Arad and Szeged in the Habsburg Military Frontier authorised Captain Bogdan Popović to visit Moscow (he arrived there in May 1710) and remind the tsar their readiness to turn against the Ottomans in alliance with the Muscovite army. They promised to support the tsar with an army of 10 thousand men, including 7 thousand cavalry and three thousand infantry.⁴¹ Sometime earlier, in the first half of 1709, the hospodar of Wallachia Constantin Brâncoveanu met and had a talk with one of the aforementioned Serbian Colonels Jovan Tekeli. Brâncoveanu summarised the complaints about the Habsburg authorities expressed by the Serbian commander in their private conversation. Tekeli was angry at the Habsburgs, saying that the Serbs made a mistake when they became the subjects of the Austrian monarchy. While they hoped for the better, served the Habsburg Monarchy, "shed their blood for Germans and lost many brave men for them", the Serbs got no benefit and instead even experienced a religious oppression.⁴² When compared to the Habsburg Monarchy, the distant and Orthodox Moscow enjoyed the growing popularity among the Serbs, who regularly offered their services to the tsar.

As a result, the Muscovites could reasonably expect that they would have no difficulty in mobilizing the Austrian Serbs against the Ottomans, should it turn out to be necessary. Moreover, there were the Serbs staying under the Ottoman rule, Dalmatians, Montenegrins, and other Balkan Orthodox Christian communities, which no doubt might have infused Peter I with the hope to trigger a wider uprising among the Balkan Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire. For all that, the Serbs, Montenegrins or Greeks inhabited the areas geographically remote from the borders of the Muscovite state. In this regard, the Danube principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia due to their location on the way to the inner parts of the Balkans were of prime strategic importance to Muscovy.

on him at: Polovtsov A. (ed.) *Russkii biograficheski slovar'* [Russian Biographical Dictionary]. St. Petersburg: Imp.Rus. Ist. O-vo, 1916. Vol. 7, pp. 418- 420; Dučić, *Graf Sava Vladislavić*, pp. 53-56.

⁴⁰ Rudiakov, P. Chernogortsy v Rossii i v Ukrainie (XVIII – nach. XIX v.). [Montenegrins in Russia and in Ukraine (18-early 19 c.)] In: *Zbornik radova Medunarodnog naučnog skupa: Rossija i Balkany v techenie poslednjih 300 let – Rusija i Balkan tokom poslednja tri stoljeća*. [Proceedings of the International Scholarly Conference: Russia and the Balkans over the last three centuries], Moscow- Podgorica, 2012, p. 418.

⁴¹ *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 12, part 1, pp. 421-422; A. I. Dashkov to G. I. Golovkin, 10 February (30 January, O. s.) 1711. *Ibidem*, p. 423.

⁴² C. Brâncoveanu to G. I. Golovkin, 8 August (28 July, O. s.) 1709. *Istoricheskie sviazi*, Vol. 3, p. 309.

The Danubian conspiracies

After having destroyed throughout the second half of the 17th century the independence of the Ruthenian Cossack state, the Muscovites expanded further to the South and engaged into an increasing confrontation with the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire. In these conditions, the long-term geopolitical ambitions of Muscovy would inevitably make the two Danubian principalities an area of the vital interests of the tsarist government and a focus of contention between the Muscovites and the Ottomans. It should be noted that Peter I had every reason to believe that in the case of war against the Ottoman state he may count on a broad support from local population in both principalities. It was not just commonly shared Orthodox religion, but also pro-Muscovite attitudes on the part of the ruling elites, including the secret assurances of hospodars themselves, which might have suggested the tsar such an idea.

The extensive secret correspondence of the top officials in Moldavia and Wallachia with the Muscovite authorities, produced on the verge of the 17-18th centuries, shows that Peter I was regularly encouraged to start a war with the sultan. The hospodar of Wallachia Constantin Brâncoveanu, hospodars of Moldavia Antioch Cantemir, Constantin Duca, Mihai Racoviță and Dimitrie Cantemir one after another promised the tsar to provide the necessary military and logistic support in would-be anti-Ottoman campaign, vowed to join forces with the Muscovite army if it enters the principalities, and, on top of that, served Moscow as first-hand sources of information on the Ottoman domestic politics.

In 1697 the Wallachian hospodar Brâncoveanu sent an embassy to Moscow, addressing Peter I on behalf of the wider Orthodox clergy, more than twenty Wallachian boyar families, and the Balkan Orthodox peoples in general. Brâncoveanu asked the tsar to go on a march against the Ottomans and assured him that should Peter decide to proceed to Constantinople, not only the inhabitants of the Danubian principalities, but also the Orthodox Bulgarians, Serbs and Macedonians “would be going ahead of the Muscovite army and fight not like men, but like lions” all along his way.⁴³

Brâncoveanu worked out a more specific plan of the proposed joint anti-Ottoman campaign, and presented it to Moscow through his envoy in 1698.⁴⁴ To begin with, the hospodar of Wallachia advised the tsar to take the Ottoman fortress of Ochakov (Ott.: Özü), as due to its location Ochakov was much

⁴³ A Note of the Wallachian envoy Gheorghe Castriot on the aims of his mission to Moscow, 26 September (16 September, O. s.) 1697 (the date of translation from Greek into Muscovite), *Istoricheskiye sviazi*, Vol. 3, p. 117.

⁴⁴ Gheorghe Castriot to the Muscovite government, 20 September (10 September, O. s.) 1698. *Ibidem*, pp. 123-127.

more important than Azov, both in defensive and offensive terms. It divided the Crimean Tatar forces in two, was conveniently situated near the entrances of the Southern Buh and Dnipro Rivers into the Black Sea, thus allowing easier transportation of troops from inner parts of the continent. Furthermore, the Zaporizhian Host, located upstream of the Dnipro River, locked this water route from enemy while Ochakov could also be used as a base for naval attacks on the Crimea, Budjak, the mouth of the Danube and even Istanbul.

Apart from that, Brâncoveanu proposed the Muscovite authorities to take by all means the city of Kerch⁴⁵ on the easternmost tip of the Crimea, in order to make the Crimean Tatars to split their forces for defence against potential attacks from multiple directions, and at the same time to disrupt communication between the Crimean Tatars and the Circassian peoples in the Caucasus. It would also be advisable to block the way out of the Crimea at Perekop, and move the rest of the army across the Budjak steppes to the Danubian principalities.⁴⁶ By that time the Orthodox Christian peoples from all over the Balkans would join forces with the Muscovite army, like "many springs and small rivers flowing into one huge ocean".⁴⁷ The final objective is not stated clearly, but in any case it is expected to bring the triumph of "the Holy Eastern Church of God".⁴⁸

Such attitudes did not go unnoticed by Peter I, and in 1700 the hospodar of Wallachia secretly received the Order of St. Andrew the First-Called⁴⁹, only two years since it was introduced by the tsar as the highest award of the Muscovite state. In a few months Brâncoveanu was also granted an official letter that guaranteed him an asylum in Ukraine should he be dismissed by the

⁴⁵ As regards the Crimean city of Kerch, the Wallachian Hospodar might have not known that earlier that year, in summer, the Muscovites already had designs on obtaining Kerch by planning to put forward the respective clause at the congress of Karlowitz. On 6 July (26 June, O. s.) 1698 the Muscovite delegates handed over the preliminary clauses for negotiations with the Ottomans to the Habsburg officials, and asked for the opinion of the Habsburg side. See: "The clauses to be presented to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold", *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 1, p. 262, and also at: *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii drevnei Rossii s derzhavami inostrannymi* [The Records of the diplomatic relations of the ancient Russia with the foreign countries], St. Petersburg: 2-e Otdeleniie Sobstvennoi E. I. V. Kantseliarii 1867, Vol. 8, p. 1359. On 10 July (30 June, O. s.) the Chancellor Count Kinsky commented on the diplomatic plans of the Muscovite side. The Habsburg official voiced a doubt that the Ottomans would agree to cede a territory which was not lost by them. He suggested that Muscovy should first take Kerch militarily, and after that to negotiate according to the *uti possidetis* principle. In the end, the Muscovite delegation refrained from making any official claims regarding Kerch. See: *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*, Vol. 8, pp. 1364-1365.

⁴⁶ *Istoricheskie sviazi*, Vol. 3, pp. 123-124.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

⁴⁹ Extract from the case of the Armory Chamber, concerning the manufacture of a cavalier cross to award the Wallachian hospodar Constantin Brâncoveanu, in accordance with the decree of Peter I. 1 September (21 August, O. s.) 1700. *Istoricheskie sviazi*, Vol. 3, p. 151, see also: pp. 358-359.

Porte.⁵⁰ Brâncoveanu, however, stayed in his office and continued to maintain secret contacts with the tsarist authorities.

In September 1702 another Wallachian ambassador, David Corbea, arrived at Posol'skii Prikaz (the ambassadorial office) in Moscow⁵¹ and towards the end of the year presented a written report about the aims of his mission. Corbea's note at the beginning calls attention to the visit of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos to Bucharest. Dositheos, already mentioned earlier as one of the most valuable agents of the Muscovite ambassador at the Ottoman Porte, met with Brâncoveanu and the highest Wallachian officials Constantin and Mihai Cantacuzino.⁵² They had a private talk, deliberating about how to save the Orthodox Christians from oppressions by "the Turks and heretics". All in attendance decided, in the name of the numerous Balkan peoples, to remind the tsar that all of them will support him as soon as he starts to fight with "the enemies of Christ".⁵³

Hospodar Brâncoveanu and the Cantacuzino brothers even advised the tsar to make peace with the Swedes and switch attention to the Ottomans, because the latter were "weak, powerless and lacking wise leaders". Thus, in their opinion, it was exactly the right time to attack the Ottoman state, in order not to waste a chance.⁵⁴ The tsar was also flattered by comparing him with the biblical Moses: "As the sun shines for all the world and Moses rescued the Israelites from the Egyptians, so we, all Orthodox, want the Holy Majesty to save us from the tyrant and the heretical yoke."⁵⁵ Once again, as it happened before, the letter of Brâncoveanu's ambassador contained strategic advices on how better to organize campaign, and same sort of assurances that the tsar will be supported by all Balkan Orthodox ethnic groups, including the Austrian Serbs

⁵⁰ A Letter Patent [Zhalovannaia gramota] from Peter I to Constantin Brâncoveanu. [Not later than 9 February (29 January, O. s.) 1701] *Istoricheskie sviazi*, Vol. 3, p. 162.

⁵¹ S. A. Beloborodov, "Deiatel'nost' N. G. Spafariia-Milescu v Rossii (1678-1707)" [Activities of Nicolae Spafari Miclescu in Russia (1678-18707)]. *Iezhegodnik Nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta russkoi kul'tury Ural'skogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. 1995-1996*. [Yearbook of the Research Institute of the Russian culture of the Ural State University. 1995-1996], Iekaterinburg: Izd-vo UrGU 1997, p. 19.

⁵² Constantin was holding the office of stolnic, and Mihai occupied the position of spatharios, the key offices at the courts of the Danubian hospodars. *Stolnic* was a boyar rank and the position at the court in the history of Moldavia and Wallachia, a seneschal; a person in charge of the royal table. Spatharios - in Wallachia, holder of the royal sword and bludgeon and second in rank in the army after the voivode. See: *Dictionare ale limbii române* (Online Dictionary of the Romanian language). The entries: "stolnic" <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/stolnic> and "spătar" <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/spătar> (accessed September 10, 2017).

⁵³ A Note of the Wallachian envoy David Corbea on the aims of his mission to Moscow, submitted on 17 December (6 December, O. s.) 1702, *Istoricheskie sviazi*, Vol. 3, p. 177.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 179.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*. The original translation from Wallachian, made at Posol'skii Prikaz, runs as: "Как солнце сияет всего света и Моисей избавил израильтян от египтянов, так и мы, все православные, желаем от святого величества, дабы нас избавил от тиранского и еретического ига."

and the Wallachians from Transylvania.⁵⁶

As for the Moldavian rulers, they, as a general matter and just like their Wallachian counterpart, kept up the secret correspondence with Moscow. Antioh Cantemir in 1698, Constantin Duca in 1701, and Mihai Racoviță in 1704 were asking for the Muscovite protection.⁵⁷ Quite clearly, the hospodars of the Danube principalities, along with some high standing boyar families were engaged in subvert activities against the Ottoman state. They served Peter I as an important source of information about the Ottoman and Crimean Tatar domestic politics, provided advices, assisted in meeting some requests of the tsarist authorities.

For example, Gavriil Golovkin, a close associate of Peter I and the head of the Posol'skii Prikaz, who since 1709 assumed the position of the State Chancellor, asked Mihai Racoviță to report him on the rumours regarding the arrival of the Swedish colonel to Moldavia and his attempts to recruit the Wallachians to the service of Karl XII. If these rumours happened to be true, the hospodar of Moldavia was instructed to frustrate the Swedish plans.⁵⁸ Even earlier, Mihai Racoviță himself, when addressing the tsarist government for protection in 1704, warned the tsar not to trust the Phanariote Greeks of Constantinople, as they "were more Turks than Christians" (понеже греки царградцы турки суть, а не христиане).⁵⁹ On other occasion, in the aftermath of the Poltava battle (1709), Racoviță informed Peter I about the planned marching route of the defeated Karl XII and the Cossack hetman Ivan Mazepa across Moldavia. The hospodar of Moldavia suggested that Peter I should attack the Moldavian (in fact, Ottoman) territory and capture both the Swedish king and the Cossack hetman.⁶⁰

When it comes to Brâncoveanu, he also continued to help the Muscovites with sharing secret information on the issues relating to the Ottoman state and the Ottoman military preparations, regularly sending to Peter I his friendly assurances, congratulating the tsar on winning the Poltava battle, facilitating the message delivery for Muscovy's ambassador at the Porte Piotr Tolstoi, and at times even providing the latter with money.⁶¹

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 180-181.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 132-135, 166-167, 204-206.

⁵⁸ Chancellor Gavriil Golovkin to Mihai Racoviță. 21 May (10 May, O. s.) 1709. *Ibidem*, p. 305.

⁵⁹ Mihs

⁶⁰ "For this sake, take care and constantly think of capturing them, and immediately send there the sufficient force, and I put my hope in God, that you will seize and convoy them like a piece of dung" (*Того ради радейте и промышляйте о поиманье их, и тот час пошлите довольное войско тогда, и надеюсь на Бога, что их поимаете и поведете их как гнои*). Mihai Racoviță to G. I. Golovkin. September 1709. *Ibidem*, pp. 314-316.

⁶¹ See the extensive correspondence between Constantin Brâncoveanu and the Heads of Posol'skii Prikaz Fyodor Golovin and Gavriil Golovkin throughout the years 1704-1710. *Ibidem*, pp. 200-201, 268-270, 277-280, 284-288, 292-293, 295-296, 301-302, 307-310, 318-320.

Accordingly, it stands to reason that the ruling elites of the Danubian principalities, led by hospodars (C. Brâncoveanu, A. Cantemir, C. Duca, M. Răcoviță), were involved in secret relations with Moscow and largely encouraged the expansionist designs of Peter I in the Balkan direction. Orthodoxy objectively served the Muscovite state as a very useful tool to further its political influences and objectives across the Balkan dominions of the Habsburg and the Ottoman empires. On the other hand, it seems that the Balkan Orthodox peoples themselves helped Muscovy and later the Russian empire to grasp the huge strategic potential behind the image of the “protector of Orthodoxy”, and to begin increasingly using it. Comparisons with the Moses of the Bible might have flattered the vanity of the tsar, as well as numerous promises of a broad popular support might have led him to consider marching against the Ottomans through their Balkan possessions. However, the tsar was engaged in a large-scale war with Sweden, and the prospect of fighting on two fronts was not in his best interests.

Muscovy’s victory in the battle of Poltava over the joint Swedish-Cossack forces except that it irrevocably reinforced the domination of Moscow in Ukraine, also boosted the standing and prestige of the Muscovite tsar in the Balkans. Peter I himself, having defeated Karl XII and Ivan Mazepa, was largely inspired by his military success and sought now to build on the progress already made. The long anticipated and secretly discussed possibility of creating an anti-Ottoman coalition of the Balkan Christian peoples began to be seen as a very promising undertaking. Nevertheless, at this very point to launch a war against the Ottomans was still very much undesirable for the tsar.

The ambassador at the Porte Piotr Tolstoi in his report to the newly appointed Chancellor Gavriil Golovkin⁶² pointed out that the recent successes of the Muscovite state caused serious concerns among the Ottomans, who would continue to increase their military forces on the border unless the Muscovite armies move away from the border area.⁶³ In order to avoid sliding into confrontation, Tolstoi urged the Chancellor to assure both the Khan of Crimea and the Ottoman Commander-in-chief of the Eyalet of Silistra (*Silistre Seraskeri*) Yusuf Pasha that Moscow had no hostile intentions towards the Porte.⁶⁴ From the Ottoman standpoint, however, the Porte indeed had all the reasons to be concerned about the growing Muscovite expansion to the South. Furthermore, it looked quite natural on the part of the Porte to have a wish to

⁶² The post of Chancellor was introduced by Peter I on 27 July (16 July, O. s.) 1709, so, by the time when Tolstoi sent his report, G. Golovkin stayed in the new office for only four days.

⁶³ “Мнится мне, что здешние возимеют паче великий страх от страны царского величества и доколе услышат, что рати московские от границ отдалятся, будут иметь прилежнейшее попечение о умножении при границах своих ратей”. P. A. Tolstoi to G. I. Golovkin, 31 July (20 July, O. s.) 1709. *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 9, part 2, p. 1001.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*

revenge its recent defeats and to get back the territories that only a decade ago belonged to the Ottomans.

When the Ottoman Empire formally declared war on 1 December (20 November, O. s.) 1710, this came as no surprise for anyone. It should be noted, that Moscow and the Porte were not at peace in the full sense of the word, since the Treaty of Constantinople (1700) was concluded as a truce for thirty years.⁶⁵ Even though on 14 January (3 January, O. s.) 1710 the sultan Ahmed III confirmed the prolongation of the truce for the same term of thirty years⁶⁶, both the Ottomans and the Muscovites were quite aware that the resumption of hostilities was only a matter of time.

In three days after the declaration of war the Porte also changed the hospodar of Moldavia.⁶⁷ Embarking on a conflict with Muscovy, the Ottomans tried to reinforce their influence in the Danube principalities and needed there a person in whom they could place their confidence. Dimitrie Cantemir, who became the new Moldavian hospodar, in the eyes of the Ottoman government stood out as the best candidate for that post. The Porte knew about the feud between the princely families of Cantemir (Dimitrie's father Constantin and brother Antioch in the past both were hospodars of Moldavia) and Brâncoveanu, so it was hoped that Dimitrie Cantemir would keep watching closely on the Wallachian hospodar Constantin Brâncoveanu, which had long been suspected by the Ottomans of secret relations with the Muscovite state. Animosity and rivalry of two families seemed to provide a perfect guarantee that hospodars would not align and conspire against the sultan. Besides, Dimitrie Cantemir grew up and got brilliant education in the Ottoman capital, and by the time of his appointment spent in Istanbul more than twenty years, having established extensive connections among the Ottoman bureaucracy.⁶⁸ In view of all that, the new hospodar of Moldavia was thought to be a reliable servant of the Porte.

Cantemir got the sultan's orders to prepare Moldavia for the war, and in case of Constantin Brâncoveanu's treacherous behaviour to seize him and bring to Istanbul.⁶⁹ On 21 December 1710 he arrived at Iași⁷⁰ and began to

⁶⁵ The treaty, which ended the Ottoman-Muscovite war of 1686-1700, was concluded at Constantinople on 14 July (3 July, O.s.) 1700. The full text of the treaty is available at: *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 1, pp. 368-378.

⁶⁶ *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 1, p. 488.

⁶⁷ A. Kochubinskii, 'Snosheniia Rossii pri Petre I s iuzhnyimi slavianami i rumunami' [Russia's relations with the Southern Slavs and Romanians in times of Peter I]. *Chteniia v Imperatorskom Obshchestve istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh* [Readings in the Imperial Society of Russian History and Antiquities] (ChOIDR), Vol. 2, (1872), p. 43.

⁶⁸ D. P. Ursu, 'Tiurkologiiia v Rumunii: mynule y siogodennia' [Turkology in Romania: past and present]. *Skhidnyi svit*, 2011, Issue 1, p. 118.

⁶⁹ V. N. Ermuratskii, *Obschestvenno-politicheskie vzgliady Dmitriia Kantemira* [The Socio-political views of Dimitrie Cantemir], Chișinău: Gos. Izd-vo Moldavii 1956, p. 29.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*

act, but contrary to the expectations of the Ottoman side. The Porte did not suspect that Cantemir had established a wide network of connections with the tsarist authorities when he was still in Istanbul. Cantemir was acquainted with ambassador Tolstoy, the special agent of the tsar Sava Vladislavić, while Cantemir's older brother Antioch, who earlier on two occasions was the hospodar of Moldavia⁷¹, secretly corresponded with Moscow. Tellingly, Dimitrie Cantemir asked the Grand Vizier to allow him openly communicate with the Muscovites under the pretext of gathering intelligence about the enemy's plans.⁷² Thus he could not be afraid of getting caught, though many Moldavian boyars never knew that Cantemir entered into secret negotiations with Peter I.

Already in January 1711 Cantemir sent an envoy to the tsar, promising to place at disposal of the Muscovite army 20 thousand cavalry.⁷³ The Muscovite tsar was preparing for campaign, and the military and logistic support promised by the hospodar of Moldavia would be highly welcomed. In April another Cantemir's emissary, Ștefan Luca, arrived to the tsar's headquarters in Lutsk in order to conclude an alliance between the Moldavian hospodar and the Muscovite tsar. On 24 April (13 April, O. S.) 1711 the treaty of alliance between Cantemir and Peter I had been signed.⁷⁴

According to the treaty, Moldavia was put under the protectorate of Moscow, and Dimitrie Cantemir took an oath of allegiance to the tsar (until the Muscovite armies enter Moldavia, it had to be secret). For his own part, the tsar guaranteed the hereditary right of Cantemir family to rule in Moldavia, as well as full autonomy of Moldavia in its domestic affairs, including the right to manage tax revenues. The Muscovites could not hold the local offices, buy estates and marry Moldavian women. Peter I pledged that he would never make a peace with the Ottomans, in which Moldavia had to return under the sultan's rule. However, to be on the safe side, the articles 14 and 15 stipulated that if something goes wrong and Cantemir would have to make an escape from the Ottoman Empire, he and his heirs would be granted an asylum in the Muscovite state, lifetime financial allowance, and house in Moscow equal to that which the hospodar had in the Ottoman capital.

As it can be seen, the die was cast by Cantemir largely in an attempt to guarantee certain independence of Moldavian principality by making it a satellite of the Muscovite tsar. Whatever ambitions moved Cantemir, whether

⁷¹ In 1695-1700 and 1705-1707.

⁷² Kochubinskii, pp. 43-44.

⁷³ *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, p. 461.

⁷⁴ Diplom danniy Valakhskomu kniaziiu Dmitriiu Kantemiru [Diploma given to the Prince of Wallachia Dimitrie Cantemir]. 24 April (13 April, O. S.) 1711. *Polnoie Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (hereafter cited as *PSZRI*) [Complete collection of laws of the Russian Empire]. (St. Petersburg: 2-e Otdeleniie Sobstvennoi E. I. V. Kantseliarii, 1830). Series I, Vol. IV, pp. 659-662; *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, pp. 173-176.

the sympathies to the Orthodox coreligionists or, in view of the shaky position of hospodars under the sultan, the wish to establish the hereditary rule of his family in Moldavia, his defecting to the Muscovites came to be utterly unexpected by the Ottoman side. As for Peter I, the alliance with the Moldavian hospodar looked as a promising start for the future campaign.

The Balkans in Muscovy's strategic war planning

Officially, in response to the Ottoman earlier declaration of war, the tsarist government issued a manifesto, declaring the commencement of hostilities against the Ottoman Empire on 5 March (22 February, O. s.) 1711.⁷⁵ On 8 March (25 February, O. s.) the manifesto was publicly announced in the Uspenskii Cathedral of the Kremlin.⁷⁶ Along with that, the plans for subversive activities on the Balkans began to be elaborated and put into practice. For the first time the Balkan peoples were included into strategic considerations of Moscow as a potential ally in its growing confrontation with the Ottomans. In the same way, for the first time the Danube appeared to be in the focus of Moscow's military planning.

In the light of numerous assurances of support, which were done previously by the Serbs in the Habsburg service, Wallachian hospodar Brâncoveanu, and hospodars of Moldavia, Peter I hoped to find a warm welcome among the Orthodox subjects of the sultan, as soon as his army enters the confines of the Ottoman state. However, the passive support was not enough and Moscow aimed to go as far as to raise a general anti-Ottoman uprising of the Balkan Christian peoples.

In spring 1711, before the active phase of the military operations, there were prepared three manifestoes addressing the Balkan Orthodox population. These included the manifestoes of 14 March (3 March, O. s.), 3 April (23 March, O. s.) and 19 May (8 May, O. s.) that were addressed in the name of the Muscovite tsar (*Τζάρης της Μοσχοβίας*) to the South Slavic peoples, all Christian subjects under the Ottoman rule and the inhabitants of the Danube principalities respectively.⁷⁷ Characteristically, the proclamation, which had as its target audience the whole Christian population of the Balkans, was composed in Greek.

As one would expect all three manifestoes are similar in contents, full of religious rhetoric, emphasizing that the Ottomans were the natural born

⁷⁵ The text of the Manifesto is available at: *PSZRI*, pp. 627-635; *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, pp. 74-83.

⁷⁶ *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, p. 386.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 117-119, 151-153, 225-227. Also see: Petri Magni, *Russorum imperatoris, litterae datae ad Graecos Turcis subiectos*. 3 April (23 March, O. s.) 1711. In: F. Miklosich, and J. Müller (eds), *Acta et diplomata Graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, Vindobona: Carolus Gerold 1865, Vol. 3, pp. 279-281.

enemies of Christians, who continue to oppress and enslave them, and who allied with heretical king of Sweden in order “to do away with the last Eastern Orthodox monarch, so that the Orthodox Christians would no more have any benefactor or safeguard”.⁷⁸ In his turn, Peter I announces that he, as the sole protector of the Orthodox peoples, decided to launch a war with intention to liberate the oppressed Orthodox brethren from “the yoke of the pagans”⁷⁹, to restore churches and to raise crosses in the Balkans.⁸⁰ The Orthodox Christian subjects of the sultan almost in the same expressions in all three manifestoes were invited to join forces with the tsar and reminded that it was their holy duty to fight for their faith, church and freedom “until the last drop of blood”.⁸¹

It was also specified that the liberation of the Balkan Christian peoples remained the only concern of the Muscovite monarch and Peter I did not seek to expand his possessions at the expense of the Balkan peoples. Such a declaration obviously presupposed driving the Ottomans out of Europe as the ultimate aim, though this was rather implied than stated clearly as an immediate practical objective. The manifesto of 14 March ended with a wishful statement that should all the Orthodox Christians unite, “the heirs of Muhammad would be driven back to their old homeland, to the sands and steppes of Arabia”⁸². In practice, the Orthodox Balkanites were just proposed to take up arms against the sultan, fight to the last drop of their blood, and place their trust in Heaven’s help.

Among the incentives used by the Muscovite strategists to bring the Balkan Christians into the war on Moscow’s side, above all else, were the attempts to employ the religious sentiments of people and to invoke in them the strong sense of religious duty. For those whose religious fervour would appear to be insufficient, the fear could serve as yet another reliable means of persuasion. Respectively, the final paragraph of the manifesto issued on 19 May and addressing the population of the Danube principalities along with the rest Orthodox Balkan peoples, warned those Orthodox who would prefer to stay neutral. It stated that they “themselves will be guilty of their own misery

⁷⁸ *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, p. 226.

⁷⁹ Universal phrase, used literally and quite often across the documents

⁸⁰ “σας λυπούμαι, νά σας γλυτώσω από τά χέρια των άσεβων, νά ζωογονήσω ταίς εκκλησίαις σας, νά στήσω τούς σταυρούς σας”, *Ibidem*, p. 152; *Acta et diplomata Graeca*, p. 281.

⁸¹ Manifesto of 14 March: “за церкву и православную веру не токмо воевати, но и последнюю каплю крове пролияти” (*Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, p. 118), manifesto of 3 April: “νά πολεμήσετε, διά τήν πίστιν και διά ταίς εκκλησίαις σας ας χύσώμεν έτος τήν ύστερινήν σταλαγματεϊάν το αίμα μας” (*Ibidem*, p. 152; *Acta et diplomata Graeca*, pp. 280-281.), manifesto of 19 May: “за церковь святую и православную христианскую веру, за отечество свое и за возвращение прав и волностей своих и последнюю каплю крове пролияти” (*Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, p. 226).

⁸² *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, p. 119. The Ottoman Turks are apparently confused with the Arabs, though the phrase well serves to illustrate the innermost thoughts of the Muscovite government

and ruin, and the last and final defeat and destruction by our sword".⁸³ In the end, as a last resort there was the idea of God's fear: "As the enemies of Christianity, they (i.e. the Orthodox Christians, which for whatever reason would not render assistance to the tsar's army, V. M.) will be damned and excommunicated from the holy church, and therefore not only their bodies, but also their souls can perish eternally".⁸⁴

In strategic considerations of Peter I the Danube principalities were to become the immediate theatre of hostilities, where the tsar expected to find both the logistical and military support promised by the Moldavian and Wallachian hospodars. Dimitrie Cantemir engaged to provide a force of 10 thousand men, along with provisions and fodder for the tsar's army. Constantin Brâncoveanu pledged to field 20 thousand men.⁸⁵ Besides, as it has been stated earlier, the Austrian Serbs from the Habsburg Military Frontier assured the Muscovite tsar in their ability to provide 10 thousand men as well (7 thousand cavalry and 3 thousand infantry)⁸⁶ or even 30-40 thousand.⁸⁷ Apart from the Danube principalities and the Habsburg Serbs, high expectations were placed also on Montenegrins at the head with the Metropolitan of Cetinje Danilo Šćepčević Njegoš (1697-1735).⁸⁸ At the same time, there were attempts to initiate the anti-Ottoman operations on the part of some Venetian Greek subjects. In other words, Peter I hoped to form a broad coalition of the Orthodox peoples, including Moldavians, Wallachians, Serbs, Montenegrins and Greeks, which would help to undermine the strength of the Ottoman state.

In order to reach such an objective, the tsar's emissaries were sent to the respective areas of the Balkans, with mission to organise and coordinate the subversive activities, to maintain the high image of the faraway Muscovite state, to spread the manifestoes of Peter I and, ultimately, to ignite an uprising against the sultan's government. So, in March 1711, the manifesto of 14 March (3 March, O. s.) was forwarded to the Habsburg Serbians with Captain Bogdan Popović, their envoy previously sent to the tsar, who since May 1710 remained in Muscovy. In a couple of months the Serbian commanders were addressed once again with the same appeal to make a stand against the Ottomans.⁸⁹

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 227.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*

⁸⁵ E. V. Belova, "Pravoslavnye narody Avstriiskoi i Osmanskoi imperii v Prutskom pohode 1711 g." [The Orthodox peoples of the Austrian and the Ottoman Empires in the Pruth campaign of 1711]. *Voprosy istorii*, 1993, no. 4, p. 150.

⁸⁶ *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 12, part 1, pp. 421-422, 424.

⁸⁷ Constantin Brâncoveanu to Chancellor G. I. Golovkin, 8 August (28 July, O. s.) 1709. *Istoricheskie sviazi*, Vol. 3, p. 309.

⁸⁸ See: O. A. Kuzevanov, 'Daniil I'. In: *Pravoslavnaia Entsiklopediia* [The Orthodox Encyclopaedia], Moscow: Pravoslavnaia Entsiklopediia 2006, Vol. 14, pp. 96-97.

⁸⁹ Sava Vladislavić – Raguzinskii to the Serbian colonels Jovan Tekeli, Vulin Potisac and Hadži Mojsije Rašković. 31 May (20 May, O. s.) 1711. *Politicheskie i kul'turnie otnosheniia*, pp. 34-35.

Likewise, Montenegro became another area to which the tsarist authorities paid special attention. Also in March 1711, the secret mission to fuel the anti-Ottoman rebellion in those parts of the Balkans was assigned to the Montenegrin officers in the tsar's service Captain Jovan Lukačević, former Orthodox monk Mojsije Mitanović (who entered the Muscovite army under the name of Jovan Albanez, and was given the rank of Captain), and a native of Herzegovina Mihajlo Miloradović (granted by the tsar the rank of colonel).⁹⁰ Miloradović and Lukačević were to deliver the tsar's call for an uprising to the Montenegrin metropolitan Danilo and to organise the armed resistance in Montenegro.⁹¹ Jovan Albanez would be sent to Herzegovina to fight along with the volunteer from the Illyrian coast, the Venetian subject Slavuj Đaković.⁹²

The secret anti-Ottoman activities of the Muscovite diplomacy extended as far as the Greco-Venetian areas. On 13 March (2 March, O. s.) 1711 Peter I appointed Dimitris Botsis as his commercial consul in Venice.⁹³ Somewhat later, Matvey Caretta was sent to Venice as a political representative of the tsar, with the task to bring the Italian cities into alliance against the Porte, and to smuggle money and weapons to the Balkan Christians.⁹⁴ So far as Botsis is concerned, as it was neatly observed by Bogoyavlenskii, the consular patent of Botsis did not state clearly what the commercial consul had to do in a city with which Moscow did not have any commercial relations.⁹⁵ This becomes clear from the letter written by Botsis to Peter I. Botsis informed the tsar that the leaders of earlier Christian uprisings that took place during the recent Ottoman-Venetian war⁹⁶ in Missolonghi and the regions of Xiromero and Preveza in western and north-western Greece, were still alive. Botsis further reported that he established connection with the chief of the Greek captains that fought on the Venetian side, Captain Ivan Sumila. This captain resided on the Venetian island of St. Maura in the Ionian Archipelago, and was ready to raise the rest of his associates against the Ottomans.⁹⁷ Sumila asked for the tsar's official pat-

⁹⁰ Vladislavić – Raguzinskii to Colonel Mihajlo Miloradović. 15 March (4 March, O. s.) 1711. *Politicheskie i kul'turnie otnosheniia*, pp. 31-32; Belova, p. 149; Bogoyavlenskii, p. 31.

⁹¹ R. Raspopović Perviyе oficial'niye vizity chernogortsev k rossiiskomu dvoru: missiya vладыky Danila v 1715 godu [The First official visits of Montenegrins to the Russian court: the mission of Vladyka Danilo in 1715]. In: K. V. Nikiforov (ed.), *Chernogortsy v Rossii* [Montenegrins in Russia], Moscow: Indrik 2011, p. 11.

⁹² Bogoyavlenskii, pp. 32-33.

⁹³ Consular patent to D. F. Botsis, 13 March (2 March, O. s.) 1711. *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, pp. 110-111.

⁹⁴ Polnomochiie Matveyu Carette [Credential letter to M. Caretta], 23 April (12 April, O. s.) 1711. *Ibidem*, pp. 169, 460. Caretta already had a rich experience of being engaged in various clandestine activities while serving as a secret agent of the Muscovite ambassador in Constantinople P. A. Tolstoi in 1703-1710.

⁹⁵ Bogoyavlenskii, p. 30.

⁹⁶ Following the Morean war of 1684-99, Venice gained the entire Peloponnese and increased its possessions in Dalmatia

⁹⁷ D. Botsis to Peter I. 29 August (18 August, O. s.) 1711. *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, pp. 422-423.

ents to be sent in his name and the names of other Greek captains⁹⁸ inclined to engage in fight against the Ottomans. Sumila promised that he would be able to organise up to 10.000 men, to spread panic as far as Thessaloniki, and eventually spark a revolt all over Rumelia.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the Orthodox metropolitan of Ioannina Climent also promised Botsis his assistance.¹⁰⁰

In view of the abovementioned activities of the Muscovite agents in various parts of the Balkans, it is of no wonder that Peter I was quite enthusiastic when on 19 June (8 June, O. s.) 1711 he informed the Senate that the Moldavian hospodar "issued the public proclamations against the Turks (and so, praise God, a good start in this affair), and this is what we expect from other Christians (*italics are mine; V. M.*)".¹⁰¹ For all that, all of the planned subversive actions of the Balkan Christians depended on success of the main campaign of the Muscovite forces that entered Moldavia and were to march further towards the Danube. The developments in June-July, which led to the final disaster on the bank of the Prut River in July 1711, did not allow the tsar to realize his ambitious program to destabilize the Ottoman state from within and to deal it a devastating blow.

The remaining written evidence of a contemporary, the British envoy to Muscovy Charles Whitworth¹⁰², testifies to what extent tsar Peter's expedition could be dangerous for the Ottoman Empire, how excited were the Balkan Orthodox peoples waiting for their "new Messiah" and how the Ottomans were happy to get rid of the looming danger (the original spelling is preserved): "the joy is as great as possible in that empire which had in all likelihood fallen into the greatest confusion, if the Czar had managed his opportunity and given time to the intrigues and inclinations of the greeks, whose eyes and hearts were fixed on their new Messiah".¹⁰³ Whitworth points out, however, that the failure of the campaign and the eventual Treaty of Prut, made on 23 July (12 July, O. s.) 1711, "blasted their (the Balkan Orthodox peoples'; V. M.) hopes and lessened their affection, so that in this point alone the shameful treaty has been of incredible detriment to the moscovite affairs".¹⁰⁴

Trapped by the overwhelming Ottoman-Crimean Tatar forces, Peter I

⁹⁸ "Captain Zafir Pozzio, captain Anastasias Chelali, captain Georgios Conemeno, captain Niko Karakhasal, and captain Ivan Karakhasal, and 200 men with them". I. Sumila to D. Botsis, 21 July (10 July, O. s.) 1711. *Ibidem*, p. 424.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*

¹⁰⁰ Metropolitan Climent to D. Botsis, 19 July (8 July, O. s.) 1711. *Ibidem*.

¹⁰¹ Peter I to the Senate, 19 June (8 June, O. s.) 1711. *Ibidem*, p. 282.

¹⁰² Charles Whitworth was the British ambassador to Muscovy in 1704-1712

¹⁰³ Charles Whitworth to the right honourable m. secretary S-t John. Vienna, 2 September (22 August, O. s.) 1711. *Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva (SIRIO)* [Collection of the Imperial Russian Historical Society], St. Petersburg: Tipografia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk 1886, Vol. 50, p. 486.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*

appeared on the verge of complete destruction. The dire prospect of being carried in a cage through the streets of Istanbul already preyed on the mind of the Muscovite tsar. Giving instructions to vice-chancellor Piotr Shafirov, who would lead the peace negotiations with the Ottomans, the tsar was famously ready to accept virtually any conditions set by the grand vizier Baltacı Mehmed Pasha, “everything except slavery” (стаѣь с ними на ѿсе, чево похотят, кромѣ шклаѣства).¹⁰⁵ Although the final terms of the peace were surprisingly benign and the Muscovite tsar miraculously escaped humiliation, the large-scale projects to set aflame all of the Balkans eroded to nothing.

Dimitrie Cantemir had to leave his homeland for good and settle in Muscovy, Constantin Brâncoveanu did not dare to defect to the Muscovite side, and the Habsburg authorities obviously prevented their Serbian subjects from organizing a massive march to join forces with Peter’s army.¹⁰⁶ The Montenegrin uprising did not succeed without the promised support of the regular army of the tsar, and was suppressed. In the same way, the planned subversive actions by some Greco-Venetian corsairs along the north-western coast of Greece could not be of decisive importance even if realized. As the army of the tsar failed to progress further into the inner parts of the Balkans, the Christian subjects of the Sultan stayed all alone and were not able to fight a long protracted war with the Ottoman state.

Conclusions

As a result of its growing territorial expansion from the 15th through 17th centuries, the Muscovite state became increasingly involved in a long struggle with the Ottoman Empire. Having secured control over the lands of Ruthenian/Ukrainian Cossacks in the second half of the 17th century, Muscovy firmly established itself as one of the major powers neighbouring the Ottomans. After the acquisition of the fortress of Azov in 1696, Moscow’s ambitions to proceed further to the south already loomed on the horizon. There was no point in getting hold of a part of the Azov Sea coast without having access to the Black Sea. The signs of this could be seen even before the congress of Carlowitz, when the Muscovite delegates in summer 1698 intended to demand from the Ottomans the city of Kerch.

¹⁰⁵ Peter I to P. P. Shafirov, 22 July (11 July, O. s.) 1711. *Pis'ma i bumagi*, Vol. 11, part 1, p. 317; See also the letter to the Senate, dated 21 July (10 July, O. s.) 1711 and attributed to Peter’s authorship: *Ibidem*, p. p. 314-315. It contains tsar’s anticipations of complete defeat, along with his own potential captivity and even death. Should that happen, Peter I instructed the senators never fulfil any commands which he might give them while in the Ottoman imprisonment, and in case of his death to decide about the tsar’s successor. Discussion on the letter’s authenticity is available at: *Ibidem*, p. p. 572-575.

¹⁰⁶ Instead of the promised tens of thousands Serbian volunteers, only 148 men led by several officers, arrived to the tsar’s Prut camp. Bogoyavlenskii, p. 29.

In a situation of the rising Muscovite-Ottoman confrontation, Muscovy was bound sooner or later to turn attention to the Balkan region, which was mostly controlled by the Ottomans and predominantly populated by the Christian Orthodox peoples. The mission of Grigorii Ostrovskii and the notes of Piotr Tolstoi about the Adriatic coastal areas reflect the increased interest of the Muscovite elites to the Balkans in general and to the South Slavic peoples in particular. As for the Balkan Orthodox Christians, the successes of Peter I in the Northern war against Sweden helped to strengthen the image of the Muscovite tsar in their eyes. The Balkan peoples, who had tense relations with the Ottoman and the Habsburg authorities and remained a religious minority in both these empires, hoped to find in the Orthodox Muscovy protection and support.

The natives of the Balkans urged Peter I to come to their assistance, compared the tsar to the biblical Moses, and promised to lend widespread support to the tsar's army in case of its war with the Ottomans. Some were entering the tsar's service, at the same time maintaining connections with their compatriots back home. A case in point is the career of Sava Vladislavić, who before his arrival to Moscow was closely cooperating in the Ottoman capital with the Muscovite ambassador Tolstoi and the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos. Extensive correspondence with the hospodars of the Danube principalities (C. Brâncoveanu, A. Cantemir, C. Duca, M. Racoviță, and D. Cantemir) further convinced Peter I that should he arrive with his army in the Danube lands, everything would be smooth sailing, a series of popular uprisings would break out in every corner of the Balkans, and the Ottoman state might fall like a ripe fruit into the hands of the Muscovite tsar. Even though in view of the unfinished war with Sweden to start yet another armed conflict looked untimely, the die was cast when the Ottomans themselves decided to declare or, technically, to continue the war on Muscovy (the Treaty of Constantinople (1700) was only a truce concluded for thirty years and not a peace in the full sense of the word).

In the upcoming confrontation with the Porte Peter I for the first time attempted to play the Balkan card and use the fighting potential of the Balkan Orthodox peoples for his own ends. The Orthodox people across the Balkans were expected to help the tsar by joining the Muscovite troops as well as by conducting diversionary attacks behind the Ottoman lines. Before the campaign, Peter I sent his emissaries to the Habsburg Serbs and Montenegrins, tried to bring aboard some of the Venetian Greeks, counted on Moldavians and Wallachians, and issued three manifestoes addressing the South Slavs, the inhabitants of the Danube principalities and the Balkan Orthodox peoples in general.

While requesting the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans to take part in the anti-Ottoman campaign, the manifestoes put special emphasis on religion. Orthodoxy and the religious feelings of the Balkan peoples became a very useful tool that could be employed by Moscow to promote its interests in the region. The tsar positioned himself as the “only protector of the Orthodox religion” and rising against the Porte was presented as a religious duty of every Orthodox Christian. Those who might not agree to join the fight were warned that in that case they would be considered the “enemies of Christianity”, and reminded about the possibility of being excommunicated from the church and that “not only their bodies, but also their souls could perish eternally”. In fact, the Balkan peoples were invited to fight “until the last drop of blood” (a commonly used expression in Peter’s proclamations) face-to-face with the overwhelming Ottoman forces without any explicit obligations on the part of Moscow. In particular, this was the case with the Montenegrin uprising in 1711, inspired by the tsar’s emissaries and soon suppressed by the Ottoman state.

In light of the defeat on the banks of the Prut the plans of the tsar to mobilize the Christian population of the Balkans went down in flames. Balkan peoples’ confidence in the tsar was shattered and hopes crumbled. As regards the Ottoman direction of his policies, Peter I suffered such a humiliating blow that his successors had to start all over again. However, the trend was set. For the first time the image of the “protector of the oppressed Orthodox peoples” was put to the test and the first practical experience for using it in the future was acquired.

The image of the Muscovite monarch as the champion of Orthodoxy was further maintained among the Balkan Orthodox peoples, who tended to admire the faraway and scarcely known Muscovy. Hardly any of the Balkanites felt much concerned about the fate of the Orthodox Ruthenians/Ukrainians that were at that point falling under Moscow’s political control and for whom the same-religion slogans turned into the loss of national independence for many years to come. To sum up, in times of Peter I the tsardom of Muscovy discovered the strategic importance of the Balkan region, and over the course of the next couple of centuries Muscovy/Russian Empire would regularly use the Balkan card in its confrontation with the Ottoman state. With all religious fervour and enthusiasm set aside, the Orthodox faith objectively proved a convenient justification for the Muscovite state, rationalizing its own strategic interests by the need to protect the Orthodox coreligionists living in the Balkans.

Öz

“Kanın Son Damlasına Kadar”: I. Petro Döneminde Moskova Devleti’nin Erken Balkan İlerleyişi

I. Petro'nun yönetim dönemi boyunca sonradan Rus İmparatorluğu olarak bilinen bir devlete dönüşmekte olan Moskof Çarlığı, 17. yüzyılın sonlarından itibaren Balkan bölgesine gittikçe daha fazla ilgi duymaya başladı. Dönemin orijinal belge kaynaklarına dayalı bu çalışma, Moskovya'nın Balkan politikasının ilk adımlarının ne gibi koşullar içinde geliştiğine bakıp Çarlık hükümetinin Balkan hıristiyanlarını kendi tarafına çekmek için geliştirdiği ve uyguladığı stratejilere ışık tutmaya çalışmaktadır. Belgelerin analizi, Çar'ın tarafından bölgedeki çıkarlarının sağlanması için ortak Ortodoks dinini ile Balkan nüfusunun beslediği yaygın Moskova sempatismini çok etkili ve en güvenilir bir araç olarak kullandığını söylemek mümkün kılmıştır. Dikkate değer ki, I. Petro döneminde Prut kıyılarındaki Çar'ın başarısızlığa uğramasına rağmen, Balkan Ortodoks halklarının ilk defa Moskova'nın stratejik savaş planlamasında doğrudan yer aldığı görülmektedir. Bir kez keşfedildiğinde, Balkan kartı sonraki iki yüzyıl boyunca Moskof Çarlığı/Rus İmparatorluğu tarafından kullanılmaya devam edilecekti.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı-Rus savaşları, Balkan Ortodoksları, Eflâk ve Boğdan, Çar I. Petro, Prut Seferi, Moskof, Rus İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Şark Meselesi

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