

CHAPTER THREE

BATTLES AND DIPLOMACY DURING THE WAR

The Declaration of War

In this chapter I will dwell on the battles of the war to the extent that Ottomans were involved in them, using Ottoman, Russian and European sources in a comparative and critical manner. I will focus on those battles, events and aspects of the war that I see as most important. One of the aims of this chapter is to examine the extent of reforms in the Ottoman army, how it fought, how it was led, organized and supplied. I will also analyse how the Porte carried out its diplomacy in this period, considering the efforts of the great powers and the Porte from the declaration of war in October 1853 until the Treaty of Paris at the end of March 1856.

On 4 October 1853, the Porte's declaration of war was published in the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi*. On the same day official notes were sent to the embassies of the four great powers in Istanbul (France, Britain, Austria and Prussia).¹ The next day a leaflet was published in French, bearing the title "*Manifeste de la Sublime Porte*".²

The declaration was still mild and conciliatory in style. It stated that the Sublime Porte was forced to declare war since Russia had occupied Ottoman territory and had not evacuated it despite various diplomatic efforts. It also announced that, as a last sign of the peaceful intentions of the Porte, the commander of the Rumelian army Ömer Pasha was instructed to allow a period of 15 days for General Mikhail Gorchakov (the Russian commander of the Danubian armies) to evacuate the principalities. Ömer Pasha sent the ultimatum on 8 October 1853, stating that if he received a negative answer or no answer, then hostilities would begin. General Gorchakov replied on 10 October that he was not authorised to remove his armies. Thus from the legal point of view, war was fully declared on the day when General Gorchakov rejected

¹ BOA. HR. SYS. 1189/4. Also see CH, nr. 648, 6 Muharrem 1270 (9 October 1853).

² BOA. HR. SYS. 907/5, 5 October 1853.

the ultimatum of Ömer Pasha.³ This point is important because later Nikolai I and some Russian sources claimed that the Porte did not wait until its own ultimatum expired, when Ottoman artillery opened fire on Russian ships on the Danube on 21 October.

Meanwhile Reşid Pasha was afraid that a sudden Russian attack on Istanbul might take place before the end of the ultimatum period. Therefore he requested the French and the British embassies on 8 October⁴ to bring some part of their fleets from the Dardanelles to Istanbul. He knew that the ambassadors were instructed and authorised by their governments to bring their fleets to Istanbul in case of necessity to protect the Sultan. Despite this, the ambassadors did not hasten to answer. Their notes came only on 16 October. The French note was positive and clear. It stated that Russia had violated Ottoman territorial integrity and the Porte was now by treaty entitled to freedom of action concerning the Straits. It also indicated that the French fleet was ready to come as a sign of friendship.⁵ Further, it stated that due to weather conditions, it was in any case desirable that the fleet enter the Straits. The British response was also positive, though less enthusiastic than that of the French.⁶

On 20 October 1853, the “Emperor and Autocrat of All-Russias” Nikolai I issued his proclamation, finally declaring war on the Porte.⁷ Nikolai distorted the facts in this statement to such an extent that it was as though he assumed his subjects had no source of information other than the document itself. He argued that the Porte had declared

³ Mustafa Budak writes that the Russians rejected the proposal on 17 October, referring to an ATASE document, the contents of which he does not explain. See Budak, *op. cit.* (1993), p. 41.

⁴ This date is given by Lane-Poole (*op. cit.*, p. 309). I could not find Reşid Pasha's note in the BOA; therefore its date is not certain, although I found the replies of the two ambassadors to it.

⁵ Translation of the French note to the Ottoman foreign ministry. Edmond de la Cour to Reşid Pasha, 16 October 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1193/2 enc. 9. I could not find the original of this note.

⁶ Translation of the British note to the Ottoman foreign ministry. Stratford to Reşid, 16 October 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1193/2 enc. 8. I could not find the original of this note.

⁷ For the Russian original, see Zayonchkovskiy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, part two, p. 531. This proclamation was translated into Bulgarian as well and distributed in Bulgaria. The *kocabaşı* of Rusçuk (Ruse) sent it to the governor of Silistria, who forwarded it to Ömer Pasha and to the Porte. The proclamation in Bulgarian, its translation into Ottoman Turkish and the letter of the governor of Silistria Mehmed Said Pasha to the grand vizier, dated 18 March 1854 can be found at BOA. A. AMD. 51/1.

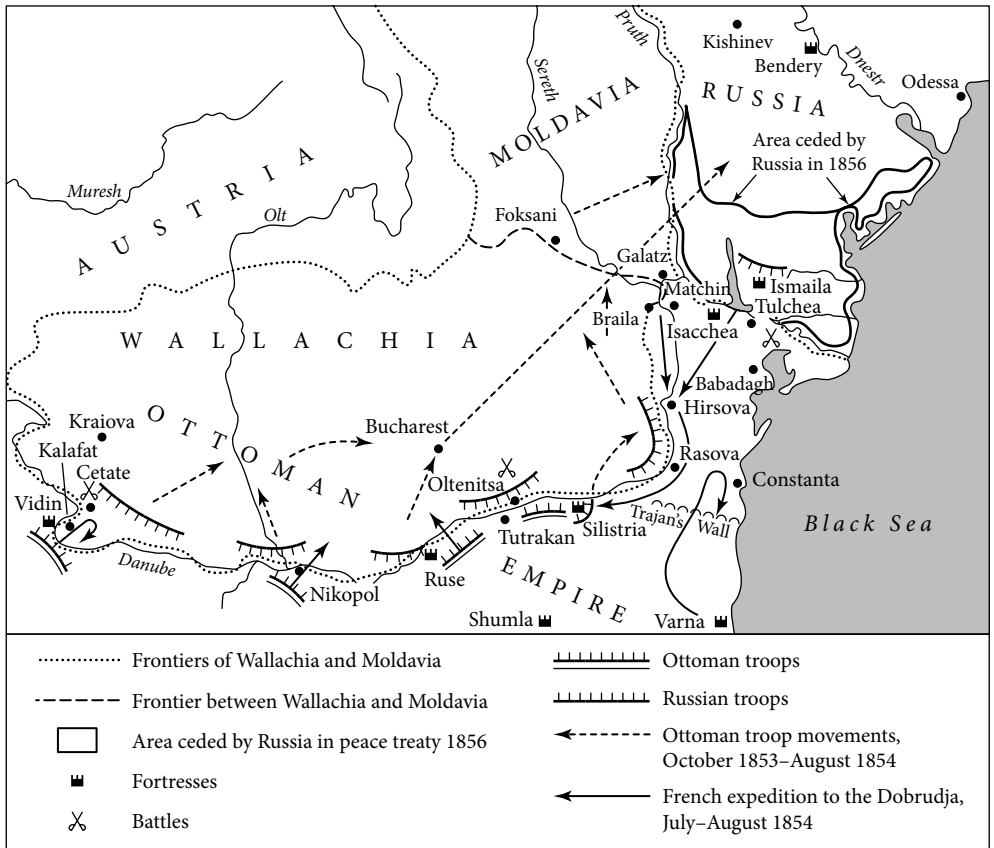
war despite the peaceful efforts of Europe and his enduring patience, pretending that Europe supported him. He added that the Porte had accepted revolutionaries from all countries into its army and initiated military operations on the Danube. He declared Russia now had to defend its sacred cause of protecting the Orthodox faith by arms. But it seems that he had lost his confidence and initiative. Now it was not he who guided events but events that began to direct him. He did not give definite orders to the Danubian army as to what to do against the Ottoman army, other than to act in self-defence. Although war had been declared by both sides, both remained as yet on the defensive. There were still hopes of a diplomatic solution. Emperor Nikolai on his part was still assuring the European powers that his actions would be defensive. Meanwhile, Sultan Abdülmecid assumed the title of *Ghazi* on 3 November 1853.⁸

On 30 October, General Louis-Achille Baraguey d'Hilliers (1795–1878) was appointed to replace Ambassador Edmond de la Cour at the French embassy in Istanbul. The general, who had distinguished himself in Algeria, like so many other French generals, was chosen by Napoleon III to balance the influence of Stratford de Redcliffe on the Porte. The new French ambassador arrived at Istanbul in mid November and served here until 4 May 1854.

The Danubian Front in 1853

Now that war was declared, the Ottoman side was expected to initiate actual hostilities first, because it was Ottoman territory that had been occupied. Actual hostilities between Russia and the Ottoman Empire broke out at the mouth of the Danube, near İsakçı on 21 October 1853. Ottoman shore batteries opened fire on two Russian steamships with eight barges going to Galatz. However, this was only a small skirmish and neither side was as yet ready for a great confrontation. In some of the Russian studies, the Ottomans are accused of beginning the war without waiting for the end of their own ultimatum. However, as mentioned above, this view is not confirmed by the existing documents.

⁸ BOA. HR. MKT. 68/4, 6 December 1853. Also see Lütü Efendi. *Vak'a-nüvis Ahmed Lütü Efendi Tarihi*. C. IX. Yayınlayan Prof. Dr. Münir Aktepe. İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1984, p. 91.



Map 1 The Danubian theatre of war 1853–1854.

The Ottoman Rumelian army was commanded by Müşir Ömer Pasha. The conqueror of revolts in Bosnia, Kurdistan and Arabia, he was at the height of his career and full of energy. He spoke several European languages in addition to Turkish and was considered by both the British and the French as the most talented officer in the Ottoman army. Nevertheless, as described in the previous chapter, Russian military reports sent before the war about his capabilities did not express so complimentary a view. Marshal Saint-Arnaud, the French Commander-in-Chief, evaluated him as a good general but needing guidance. Saint-Arnaud also commented that the Ottoman army had a high command and soldiers, but “no officers and even fewer NCOs.”⁹

⁹ David B. Ralston, *Importing the European Army*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 62.

Ömer Pasha's chief of staff in the Rumelian army and later (from December 1854 on) deputy [*kaimmakam*] was Ferik Çerkez İsmail Pasha (1815?–1861)¹⁰ and another chief of staff was Nazır Ahmed Pasha (?–1860).¹¹ It seems that they did not like each other. According to Hüseyin Avni Pasha, who was a staff officer in the Rumelian army during the war, Ömer Pasha saw İsmail Pasha as a rival and tried to undermine him, while Ahmed Pasha also did not help İsmail Pasha in the battle of Çatana.¹²

On the staff of Ömer Pasha, there were also some Polish and Hungarian refugee officers, veterans of the Polish uprising of 1831 and of the Hungarian uprising of 1848–1849. In November 1853, the Polish émigré Michal Czajkowski, who had converted to Islam and taken the name of Mehmed Sadık Efendi, was promoted to the rank of *mırmıran* and appointed to recruit and command a Cossack (*Kazak* or *Kozak*) regiment from Polish emigrants and the Ignat-Cossacks.¹³ For the Russians, Czajkowski was a “renegade” like any Christian who converted to Islam. About one year later a second regiment was formed under the command of Count Wladislaw Zamoyski, as described in Chapter Two.

The Rumelian army was the best Ottoman army in terms of discipline, training, and quality of officers, arms and provisions. Its supplies of arms and provisions were not inferior to that of the Russian army. The number of troops under Ömer Pasha's command was about 145 to 178 thousand.¹⁴ These troops were stationed along the Danube, from

¹⁰ According to Mehmed Süreyya's *Sicill-i Osmani* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1996, p. 830) he was a Circassian slave of İzzet Mehmed Pasha. He became a *mirliva* in 1838 in Nizip. He was made a vizier in March 1854 after his success at the battle of Çatana. Michal Czajkowski calls him Satan İsmail Pasha (“Szajtan Izmaıl Pasza”), which is rather a doubtful and informal nickname. See Czajkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 44 and the editorial note on p. 292. Veysel Usta gives İsmail Pasha's birth year as 1805. See Ahmed Rıza Trabzoni, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

¹¹ From the documents it is not clear of which army or corps he was a chief of staff. Ahmed Pasha was one of the first graduates of the war academy (*Mekteb-i Harbiye*). He became a *ferik* and the superintendent (*nazır*) of the *Mekteb-i Harbiye* in 1848. He was made a vizier in November 1854 and commander of the Ottoman forces in the Crimea in September 1855. See Mehmed Süreyya, *op. cit.*, pp. 216–217. Ahmed Pasha was sentenced to death by Fuad Pasha for his involvement in the massacres of Christians in Damascus in 1860. See Cevdet Pasha, *Tezâkir* 13–20, p. 111.

¹² See Cevdet Pasha, *ibid.*

¹³ Abdülmecid's *irade*, dated 7 November 1853. BOA. İ. DH. 282/17740.

¹⁴ There are different numbers for the strength of the Rumeli army. While Tarle gives 145 thousand troops excluding the *başbozuk*, (*op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 264), Captain Fevzi (Kurtoğlu) gives 178 thousand with 12 thousand *başbozuk* troops and thus 166 thousand without the *başbozuk*. See Yüzbaşı Fevzi Kurtoğlu, *1853–1855 Türk-Rus Harbi ve Kırım Seferi*, İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1927, p. 8.



Illus. 4 Müşir İsmail Pasha, deputy commander of the Rumelian army. *ILN*, 6 May 1854.

Vidin to Varna, mainly in Şumnu, Vidin, Kalafat, Tutrakan, Rusçuk, Zıştovi, Silistria and Varna. Ömer Pasha's headquarters was in Şumnu with about 40,000 troops.

Field Marshal Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich (1782–1856), the Count of Erivan, Prince of Warsaw, the conqueror of the Persians in 1826–1828, of Erzurum in 1828–1829, of Warsaw in 1831 and of the Hungarian insurrection in 1848–1849, was at that time commanding three Russian armies in Europe from his headquarters in Warsaw. He still held much prestige and authority in the eyes of Emperor Nikolai I, who called him “father-commander” (*otets-komandir*). Yet Paskevich, at the age of 72, had lost initiative and deep in his heart he opposed the war, though he could not say so openly. According to Tarle, he did not use his influence on the emperor.¹⁵ His hesitations and contradic-

¹⁵ Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 255.



Illus. 5 Ferik Ahmed Pasha, commander at Kalafat. *ILN*, 11 Feb. 1854.

tions were to have a negative impact on the Russian war efforts along the Danube. Afraid of ruining his reputation by an unlucky defeat, he behaved with too much caution, although he did not think that the Ottoman army could fight well against the Russian army. In his report to Nikolai, dated 23 September 1853, he wrote that

As is known, the Turks are strong in fortresses, but they cannot hold out against our troops on the field. It is necessary to manoeuvre in such a way as to lure them out of their fortresses and smash them...I do not share the idea that the Turks could dream of causing us great damage from the Asian side. The Turkish cavalry, the Kurds, have always been beaten by our Muslims and line troops...As regards their regular troops, they are not frightening in Europe and even less in Asia.¹⁶ [My translation]

¹⁶ Paskevich to Nikolai, 11 (23) September 1853, Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit. (1912), vol. 2, pp. 105–107.

However, on 6 October 1853, Paskevich recommended to Nikolai that he take a defensive position without crossing the Danube.¹⁷ Then, in contradiction to this defensive posture, he added that Russia had a powerful weapon against the Ottoman Empire in its influence on Ottoman Christians. Therefore Russia could take advantage of a Christian revolt against the “Mussulman yoke”. Paskevich, knowing well Nikolai’s dislike of any revolutionary movements against any “legitimate” monarch, added that this was not a “revolutionary” call to insubordination to a sovereign, but a rightful cause, because Russia could not remain indifferent to the suffering of Orthodox Christians under Ottoman rule. Thus, while the Russian armies would remain behind the Danube, an Ottoman Christian revolt against the Sultan was expected to happen in some fashion, despite the obvious hostility of Austria toward any such revolt.

Did Paskevich really believe what he recommended to Nikolai? It seems doubtful. Paskevich might have simply wanted to please Nikolai I, who heretofore had not been well-disposed towards Slavophiles at all, but now thought that the Slavs could be of use. Paskevich also did not want to move his second army corps from Poland – neither to the Danube nor later to the Crimea – observing the danger of an intervention by Austria. One month later, Paskevich developed his cautious attitude further and recommended maintaining defences in “Europe” to avoid angering the great powers. He argued that even if Russia were to take Edirne, the great powers would interfere and would not permit them to benefit from their conquests. The Russians would suffer many losses from disease and not gain much even if they were victorious. According to him, time was on the side of Russia; it was necessary to wait. Thus he recommended a defensive position on the Danube, but an offensive one in the Caucasus. He suggested that with 16 battalions now in the Russian Caucasus army, it was possible to act offensively, because there the great powers could not interfere and the Russian army could easily beat the Ottoman army when it stood alone.¹⁸

The Russian occupation army in the Danubian principalities numbered about 88,000 in October 1853. The headquarters of this army was

¹⁷ “Vsepoddanneyshaya zapiska knyazya Paskevicha”, Warsaw, 24 September (6 October) 1853, *Russkaya Starina*, August 1876, pp. 698–702. Also see Tarle, op. cit., pp. 262–263.

¹⁸ Paskevich to Nikolai, 24 September (6 November) 1853, Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit. (1912), vol. 2, Prilozhenie 41, pp. 108–111.

in Bucharest. The Commander-in-Chief General Prince Mikhail Dmitrievich Gorchakov, having served twenty-two years as Paskevich's chief of staff in Warsaw, was used to receiving orders and was not noted for resolution and initiative. According to Tarle, from Gorchakov's army only a small portion (about 10,000 men under the command of General Count Anrep) was given the vanguard position to guard against the Ottoman forces until February 1854.¹⁹

Taking the events of the 1828–1829 Russo-Ottoman War into consideration, Ömer Pasha had concentrated a considerable force around Vidin, the westernmost fortress on the Danube. The importance of Vidin also derived from its proximity to Serbia. However, Russia wished to avoid arousing the suspicions of Austria by being too close to the Serbians, and hence did not concentrate troops there.

On 28 October, Ferik İsmail Pasha's forces crossed the Danube from Vidin and occupied the small town of Kalafat with a force of 12,000. The small Russian force in Kalafat retreated. On 30 October Ömer Pasha himself came to Tutrakan, in the middle of the Danube front. An Ottoman infantry battalion with six guns under the command of Kaimmakam Hüseyin Bey crossed the Danube on 2 November and occupied the quarantine house of Wallachia at the village of Oltenitsa. These forces were reinforced by another battalion the next day and some earthworks were built there.²⁰

On the Russian side, Gorchakov's characteristic indecision had passed from him to his generals in command of various positions on the Danube. Thus General Pyotr Dannenberg, commanding the forces in Little Wallachia, had given orders to his forces to the effect that if the "Turks" crossed the Danube, they should not engage in battle with them but should definitely not let them proceed farther. General Pavlov at Oltenitsa, on the left hand (north) side of the Danube was at a loss to understand this order. How could he not engage in war and at the same time not let them pass? When the Ottomans started crossing the Danube at the beginning of November, Dannenberg at first did not believe that it was a serious affair. He was soon proved wrong.²¹

¹⁹ Tarle, *ibid.*, p. 274.

²⁰ See Ömer Pasha's report in Lütfi, *op. cit.*, p. 205. Also see Yüzbaşı Fevzi Kurtoğlu, *op. cit.*, p. 17. Kurtoğlu gives the date as 1 November.

²¹ Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 280.

On Friday, 4 November 1853²² Russian forces commanded by General Pavlov attacked the fortified Ottoman positions in Oltenitsa. The Russian forces were met with a powerful cannonade from the Ottoman positions. Russian and Ottoman sources give different numbers for the strength of both sides, each side arguing that the enemy troops were more numerous. Ömer Pasha's report after the battle and the official chronicler Lütfi Efendi maintain that a few Ottoman battalions fought against 20 infantry battalions and 4 cavalry regiments. Ömer Pasha's report states that, at the quarantine house, the Ottoman forces consisted of 3 companies of infantry, 2 companies of rifles or chasseurs (*şeşhaneci*), 150 cavalrymen and 6 guns, while the Russians attacked with 20 battalions of infantry, 4 battalions of cavalry and 32 guns.²³ On the other hand, the Russian generals Petrov and Kovalevskiy, participants in the Danubian campaign and the Soviet historian Tarle argue that only one Russian brigade (2 infantry regiments consisting of 4 battalions each and 9 cavalry squadrons) attacked the Ottoman forces, which in turn amounted to 8,000 men with 20 cannons.²⁴

In any case, on that day the Ottomans had their first serious victory on the Danube. The Russian force retreated. E. H. Nolan stated that the Cossacks "suffered considerably from the rifle carbine of the Turks, a weapon superior to any which their assailants used".²⁵ However, the Ottoman army did not pursue the enemy. Ömer Pasha was content with having won the battle. According to him, Russian losses were more than 2,000, while the Ottomans lost 30 dead and 150 wounded. Lütfi Efendi, however, writes that the Russians lost about 1,000 dead and twice as much wounded, while the Ottomans lost 18 dead and 83 wounded. Nevertheless, Lütfi then writes that this battle is called the battle of Çatana. He has probably confused the battle of Oltenitsa with the battle of Çatana. Ömer Pasha had remained in Tutrakan during

²² *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 14 Safer 1270 (15 November 1853), transliterated by Hakkı Yapıcı, op. cit., p. 13. For Ömer Pasha's report on the battle see Lütfi, op. cit., pp. 205–207. Kurtoğlu gives the date as 17 November.

²³ Lütfi, op. cit., p. 206. I could not find Ömer Pasha's report after the battle in the BOA, but I found the draft of the *tezkiye-i samiye* of the grand vizier, which refers to it and confirms the above numbers. See BOA. A. AMD. 50/5. As for the Ottoman forces, Lütfi mentions a few battalions with some guns and adds that during the battle another Ottoman battalion was sent from Tutrakan. See Lütfi, op. cit., pp. 89–90.

²⁴ See Eg. Kowalewski, *Der Krieg Russlands mit der Türkei in den Jahren 1853 und 1854 und der Bruch mit den Westmächten*. Leipzig: Verlag von Bernard Schlicke, 1869, pp. 74–79. Tarle, op. cit., p. 281.

²⁵ Quoted by James Reid, op. cit., p. 244.

the battle, together with some foreign officers including the Spanish General Prim.

According to General Yegor Petrovich Kovalevskiy (1809–1868), Russian losses amounted to 236 dead and 734 wounded.²⁶ Russian sources in general argue that the defeat was due to the untimely or unnecessary order of retreat given by General Dannenberg to General Pavlov. However, General Gorchakov endorsed the decision of Dannenberg, for which he too has been criticised.²⁷ Although this battle was not important from a military-technical point of view, the European press exaggerated it as a great “Turkish” success. However small a battle it might have been, Russian pride was certainly stung and Ottoman confidence increased.

The Battle of Sinop and European Public Opinion

The event that started the war in earnest and turned the Russo-Ottoman war into a European one was the naval battle of Sinop on 30 November 1853. The battles on the Danube front until then had not created such a great sensation in Europe.

The Ottoman navy had never recovered its strength after its crushing defeat at the battle of Navarino on 20 October 1827. Not only the fleet but also a whole generation of the best mariners was lost in that battle, when the combined fleet of Britain, France and Russia had destroyed the combined Ottoman and Egyptian fleet during the Greek war of independence. Mahmud II had in 1829 appointed as *Kapudan-ı Derya* or the Kapudan Pasha (marine minister and grand admiral) a certain Pabuççu Ahmed Pasha (?–1830), who was a shipyard sergeant during the revolt of the janissaries in 1826. From 1827 to 1853 little improvement had been achieved.²⁸

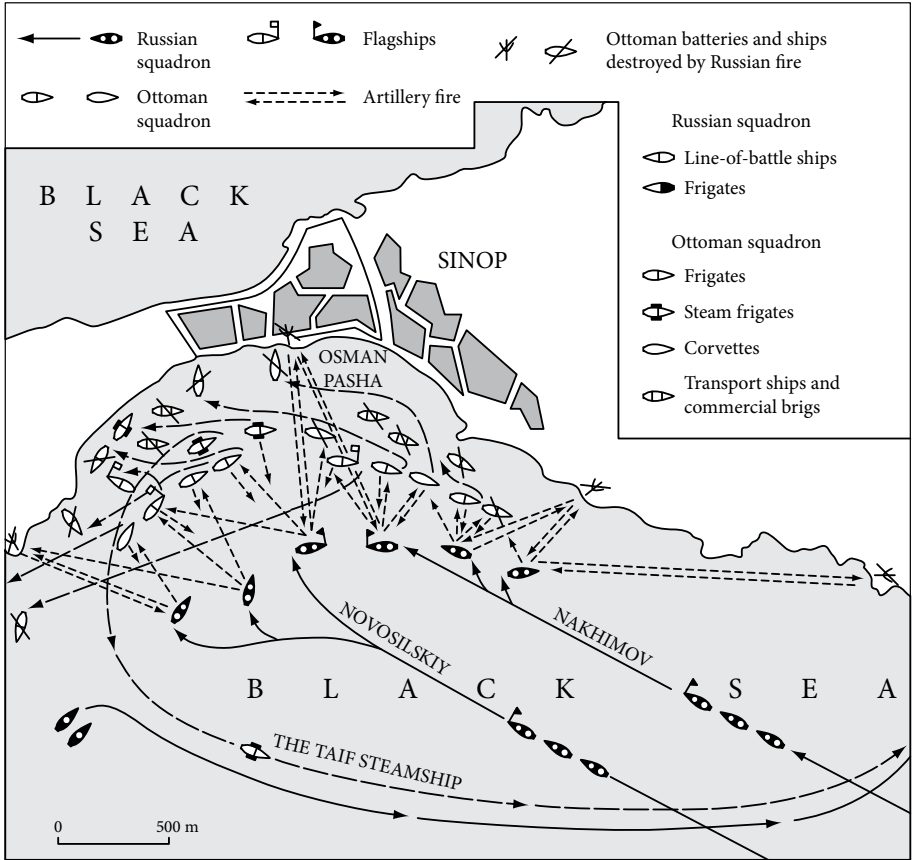
In April 1851, Adolphus Slade reported to Lord Stratford on the condition of the Ottoman navy.²⁹ According to Slade, the navy consisted

²⁶ Kowalewski, op. cit., p. 79. Kowalewski is simply the German version of Kovalevskiy.

²⁷ General Andrey Nikolayevich Petrov, *Voyna Rossii s Turtsiey. Dunayskaya kampaniya 1853 i 1854 gg.* St. Petersburg, 1890, vol. I, pp. 142–144. Also see Tarle, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 283–284.

²⁸ Besbelli, op. cit., pp. 18–25. Süer, *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi. Osmanlı devri. Osmanlı-Rus Kırım Harbi Kafkas Cephesi Harekatı (1853–1856)*. Ankara: Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1986, p. 40.

²⁹ Bernard Lewis, “Slade on the Turkish Navy”, *Journal of Turkish Studies / Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları* 11, Harvard University, 1987, pp. 6–7.



Map 2 Plan of the battle of Sinop.

of about 15,000 men and 68 vessels in more or less good condition. The naval hospital was in good order. The biggest problem was the poverty of the naval chest. The budget of the navy was £400,000, while the cost of coal for a single year was £55,000. The navy was in debt like all the institutions of the Porte. It can be safely assumed that from 1851 to 1853 there was no substantial improvement, because the financial crisis of the Porte had not been resolved (see Chapter 4).

Therefore in 1853, the Ottoman navy, although probably the fourth or fifth naval power in the world, was not a match for the Russian Black Sea fleet in terms of training and fire power. Most of the Ottoman sailors (the rank and file) were untrained novices. From September 1852 Kapudan Pasha was Mahmud Pasha, a man who had no naval training

or education. He was a protégé of Damad Mehmed Ali Pasha, who had been promoted to the office of the grand vizier from the admiralty. The officers of the navy, like those of the army, were divided into the educated and the uneducated, with many of the latter in high positions. Both groups had their deficiencies in theory and practice. The system of promotion like everywhere else was not professional. While the uniforms of the sailors had been changed, corresponding changes in mentality had not kept pace.³⁰

After the declaration of war by the Porte on 4 October 1853, some necessary defensive measures were taken by the naval authorities. Russian commercial ships were not to be arrested but rather were requested to quit Ottoman waters within 15 days or more in some specific cases. Orders were also given that commercial ships were not to be allowed to lay anchor near Ottoman men-of-war for fear of fire, explosion or sabotage.³¹ Indeed this measure should have been taken immediately after the suspension of relations with Russia, because, as Slade points out, any commercial ship (i.e., a Greek ship) could transform itself into a fire-ship and then anchor among the wooden ships of the Ottoman fleet at Büyükdere. However, the Ottoman captains were helpless against foreign commercial ships, because the Ottoman captains were unable to apply the right of keeping clear water around them (exercised by all other navies), for fear of the representations of consulates and embassies. Even the allies did not respect this right of the Ottoman navy. Thus Slade observed that “notwithstanding repeated representations the co-operation of the European legations could not be obtained to make their respective merchant vessels anchor clear of the lines of the Turkish fleet”.³²

Meanwhile the French and British fleets had anchored at Beykoz on 23 October. The French fleet commanded by Vice-Admiral Ferdinand Alphonse Hamelin consisted of three line-of-battle ships, seven two-deckers (*kapak*), three brigs and three steamers. The British fleet under the command of Vice-Admiral Dundas included two line-of-battle ships, four two-deckers, one frigate and ten steamers. Their combined power was more than sufficient to keep the Russian navy at bay. Thus their presence in the Bosphorus gave the Porte much confidence

³⁰ Rear-Admiral Sir Adolphus Slade, op. cit. (1867), p. 129.

³¹ Özcan, op. cit. (1990), pp. 49–52.

³² Slade, op. cit., p. 96.

that the Russian fleet would not dare leave its port to cruise the Black Sea. Furthermore, the Egyptian fleet consisting of two galleons, three frigates, one corvette, one brig and two steamers under Patrona Halil Pasha had also joined the Ottoman fleet.³³ Egypt's total contribution of troops during the war reached 23,931 men towards the end of 1855.³⁴ Those troops were mainly collected by force from among veterans who had fought in the Greek war of independence and in the army of Ibrahim Pasha against the Porte in the 1830's.

The Ottoman fleet was divided into four squadrons. The commander of the fleet *Bahriye Feriki* (Vice-Admiral) Kayserili Ahmed Pasha (1796–1878) commanded the patrolling ships charged with protecting the merchant ships of the Ottoman Empire, as well as allied and neutral ships. The Egyptian Mirliva Hasan Pasha's squadron was to carry troops to Varna and to patrol the shores of Rumelia. The Egyptian squadron landed the Egyptian troops in Varna and returned to Istanbul on 13 November 1853. A third group, composed of four paddle steamers (*Saik-i Şadi*, *Feyz-i Bari*, *Taif* and *Ereğli*)³⁵ under the command of Ferik İngiliz³⁶ Mustafa Pasha was tasked with patrolling the north-eastern coasts of Anatolia and those of Georgia and Çerkezistan (Circassia). He was required to call on the harbours of Trabzon, Batum, Çürüksu, Sohum and Soğucak (Novorossiysk), gathering information, landing ammunition for the Circassian insurgents against Russia and communicating with Hassa Müşiri Haseki Selim Mehmed Pasha (?–1872), the commander of the Ottoman army in Batum. Mustafa Pasha's flotilla had on board Çerkes İsmail Bey, who carried letters to the emissary (*naib*) of Sheikh Shamil in Circassia.³⁷

³³ Saim Besbelli, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

³⁴ Report of the Ottoman finance ministry to the loan control commission, *Le Moniteur Universelle*, Paris, 8 January 1856. See BOA. HR. SYS. 1355/3.

³⁵ BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 7, not dated, end of December 1853 or beginning of January 1854, cited by Özcan, *op. cit.*, p. 90. To the four steamers in this squadron, Özcan adds the steamer *Mecidiye* and the frigate *Muhbir-i Sürur*. See Özcan, *op. cit.*, p. 81. However, Mustafa Pasha does not mention these two ships in his own statement referred to above. Besbelli also includes the frigate *Muhbir-i Sürur*. See Besbelli, *op. cit.*, Kuruluş 5, p. 44ff.

³⁶ Because he had been to England and knew English.

³⁷ Özcan, *op. cit.*, p. 82. Kapudan-ı Derya Mahmud Pasha to the grand vizier before his dismissal on 17 December 1853. BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 4, written between 4 and 17 December 1853. Özcan mentions this document elsewhere but he does not quote from it.

Sheikh Shamil (1797–1871), the Muslim leader of North Caucasus, had been waging a war of independence against the Russians in Chechnya and Dagestan since 1834. His deputy (*naib*) in Circassia (Muhammed Emin) was also active among the Circassians trying to organize their resistance to the Russian army. This was not an easy task, neither for Shamil nor for the Porte and its allies, as we shall see later.

The fourth group of ships was sent to cruise the shores of north-western Anatolia from Amasra to Sinop under Patrona (Vice-Admiral) Osman Pasha (1798–1860) and Riyale (or *Mirliva*, Rear-Admiral) Hüseyin Pasha on 5 November. In the event of coming across Russian ships, their instruction was to engage in battle only if they were certain of winning.³⁸ This order seems at some variance with the order given to Slade, in which he was instructed to abstain from firing first. These differences stemmed from the contradictory orders of the Porte, hesitating to engage in outright war, yet having declared it, unable to prevent drifting into it. The Porte was also under the influence of the French and British embassies and their admirals, as far as naval affairs were concerned. The Porte also asked the French and the British embassies to bring the rest of their fleets from the Dardanelles to the Bosphorus.

At this time a Russian squadron of three line-of-battle ships,³⁹ two frigates and a steamer was reported to be cruising the north-western coasts of Anatolia, 120 miles away from Istanbul. Having heard this news, Mahmud Pasha gave orders to reinforce the light squadron of Osman Pasha, consisting of frigates and corvettes, with another frigate from the fleet at Büyükdere. Slade (alias the *Mirliva* Mushaver Pasha), reminded him of the superiority of the Russians in nominal force and the dangers of sending a squadron of unequal strength against the enemy. Mahmud Pasha said he could not discuss orders with the Porte but promised to send the second squadron intended to winter at Sinop to be made up of line-of-battle ships and frigates instead of frigates and corvettes. The Kapudan Pasha also gave a written order to abstain from firing first in case of meeting the enemy. “Are we not at war?” asked Mushaver Pasha. “We are, but such is the Porte’s order” replied the Ottoman grand admiral. When Mushaver Pasha protested

³⁸ Kapudan Pasha’s instructions to Patrona Osman Pasha and *Mirliva* Hüseyin Pasha, 17 November 1853. BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 6. Cf. Özcan, *op. cit.*, pp. 74–75, 85.

³⁹ A line-of-battle ship was a two or three-deck ship with at least 70 guns.



Illus. 6 Admiral Sir Adolphus Slade (Mushaver Pasha). From *Donanma Dergisi*, October 1952.

that the first broadside fire from a ship in position might be decisive, Mahmud Pasha was indifferent: “I have given you the order and that suffices me”.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

The Porte decided to send line-of-battle ships to the Black Sea, but when the ships were ready to sail, the order was cancelled. The grand admiral said it was the desire of the British ambassador. It was indeed the desire of the British and French ambassadors, both of whom sent their dragomans to the Porte on 4 November, warning the Porte of the danger of sending the fleet into the Black Sea in the face of the superior Russian fleet, until their vessels had fully gathered in the Bosphorus and even after that. The French ambassador, in his written instructions to his dragoman, stated to Reşid Pasha his readiness to bring the rest of the French fleet to the Bosphorus. But the ambassador also expressed his surprise at the decision of the Porte to send the Ottoman fleet to the Black Sea. He wrote that this measure seemed untimely to him, because he expected the Kapudan Pasha to concert his activities with the admirals of the allied fleets, before taking action.⁴¹

Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, on the same day, also expressed his readiness to bring the rest of the British fleet to the Bosphorus, as it was decided together with M. de la Cour. He wrote that they were impressed by the “*courage et de l’esprit de patriotisme*” manifested by the Ottoman ministers by sending their fleet into the Black Sea, except for the three-deckers. However, he observed that the opinions of both the French and British experts were against this enterprise because of the advanced season and the great danger from the large Russian fleet in Sevastopol. It would be imprudent to risk such a large part of the Ottoman fleet, and a failure at this moment would cause a number of problems for the Porte. He argued that in any case it would be “*une folie*” to send the Ottoman fleet before the allied fleets arrived in full in the Bosphorus. He further commented that according to the opinion of the allied admirals, even after the arrival of the allied fleets, three or four big steamships should be sent instead of sailing ships of the line. He concluded that if the Porte decided to send sail or steam ships to the Black Sea, it should wait until the appearance of the full moon that would diminish the navigational hazards of the Black Sea in November.⁴²

⁴¹ Instructions of the French ambassador Edmond de la Cour to head dragoman Charles Schefer, 4 November 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1193/2 enc. 17 (translation into Ottoman Turkish in enc. 16).

⁴² Stratford de Redcliffe’s instructions to head dragoman Etienne Pisani, 4 November 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1193/2 enc. 15. See enc. 14 for the official translation into Ottoman Turkish. This translation, however, has rendered the expression of “sail ships of the line” (in the original “*vaisseaux de ligne a voile*”) into “*birtakım bayağı kapak-*

On 5 November, the date of departure of the light squadron of Osman Pasha and Hüseyin Pasha, the French ambassador sent another warning to the Porte of the serious disadvantages of sending the fleet and advised the Porte to defer it.⁴³ On the same day Lord Stratford de Redcliffe wrote to Lord Clarendon that he had “succeeded in dissuading the Porte from sending a detachment of line-of-battle ships and frigates into the Black Sea at this moment”.⁴⁴

Sometime later, when the parliamentary papers (the Blue Books) were published, Slade asked the ambassador why he had prevented the sending of line-of-battle ships to Sinop. Stratford replied that he had depended on the advice of Admiral Hamelin of the French fleet and Admiral Dundas of the British fleet. Slade further asked why he had relied on the opinion of men unacquainted with the local conditions; he said that their rank and position given by their governments left him no choice. Lord Clarendon from London on 21 November also approved the decision of Admiral Dundas and his Excellency the ambassador, adding that the Porte would do better by relying on the authority of the British and French admirals.⁴⁵

Five years later, in a letter to the grand vizier Âli Pasha, Slade wrote that at the beginning of the war, when Mahmud Pasha ordered him to cruise with a squadron in the Black Sea, Lord Stratford had ordered him on behalf of the Queen to remain in the Bosphorus. Because Britain was at peace with Russia, his presence in the Black Sea could compromise her. Slade replied that the Ottoman navy relied on the cooperation of Britain and if he did not go, this might have an inappropriate meaning. According to Slade, “His Excellency then threatened to submit a complaint against me to the British government: that he did”. Slade also wrote that “on other occasions during the war my views of my duty to the Sublime Porte led me to opposition to the allies”.⁴⁶ [My translation]

lar”, which means “certain ordinary two-deckers”. It seems that either the concept of the line-of-battle ship was not used by the Ottomans at that time or simply that the translator was unaware of it.

⁴³ Edmond de la Cour to head dragoman Charles Schefer, 5 November 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1193/2 enc. 19.

⁴⁴ Lord Stratford de Redcliffe to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Therapia, Nov. 5, 1853, quoted by Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁴⁵ Slade, *op. cit.*, pp. 136–137.

⁴⁶ Slade to Âli Pasha. Arsenal imperial, le 31 mars 1858. BOA. HR. TO. 429/22 enc. 3.

Stratford de Redcliffe's motives are open to a double interpretation. Those who believe that he wanted to accelerate the war suggest that he deliberately left the Ottoman squadron to destruction in order to involve Britain in the war against Russia. Those who are of the opinion that he had most peaceful intentions can argue that he wanted to prevent a possible collision between the Ottoman and Russian fleets. As an alternative to these views, we can argue that he simply followed the advice of the admirals, without a hidden agenda. But in any case it is difficult to understand the logic of not sending line-of-battle ships in this case. If the danger presented by the Russian fleet was real, it would seem that despatching a light fleet consisting only of frigates and corvettes, rather than a fleet consisting of line-of-battle ships and frigates, would only increase what was at risk. Would it not make more sense to advise not sending any ships at all, or instead to send stronger support? Did Stratford and the admirals think that since the Porte was so determined, and destruction was in any case imminent, then at least line-of-battle ships should be saved? It is hard to come to a conclusion.

That the prevention of line-of-battle ships being sent to the Black Sea was the expressed desire of the allied admirals is also confirmed by Mahmud Pasha in his evidence at his trial after the disaster of Sinop and his dismissal from his post.⁴⁷

In mid-November, Bahriye Feriki Mustafa Pasha with his flotilla returned from Batum and saw the position of Patrona Osman Pasha and Riyale Hüseyin Pasha's flotilla at Sinop, which is closer to Sevastopol than to Istanbul. The Ottoman squadron in Sinop consisted of seven frigates (*Avnillah* (Osman Pasha's flagship, 50 guns), *Nizamiye* (second flag, commanded by Riyale (Mirliva) Hüseyin Pasha, 64 guns), *Nesim-i Zafer* (48 guns), *Fazlullah* (the former Russian frigate *Rafail*, captured in 1829, 48 guns), *Navek-i Bahri* (42 guns), *Dimyat* (42 guns) and *Kaid-i Zafer* (22 guns), three corvettes (*Necm-i Efşan*, *Fevz-i Mâbud* and *Gül-i Sefid*, 22 guns each) and two transports.⁴⁸ They had encountered gales in transit and lost each other, only arriving at the

⁴⁷ BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 4, written between 4 and 18 December 1853.

⁴⁸ Fevzi Kurtoğlu, op. cit., pp. 26–27. Besbelli, op. cit., p. 44f. Slade, on the other hand, in his report to Stratford de Redcliffe, dated HMS *Retribution*, Bay of Sinop, 7 December 1853, gives the following numbers of guns for these ships: *Avnillah* (36), *Nizamiye* (60), *Nesim-i Zafer* (32), *Fazlullah* (38), *Navek-i Bahri* (52), *Dimyat* (54) and *Kaid-i Zafer* (50), *Necm-i Efşan* (24), *Fevz-i Mâbud* (22) and *Gül-i Sefid* (24). See TNA. FO 195/309.

Sinop harbour with great difficulty. Mustafa Pasha also saw the danger of this flotilla being exposed to a Russian attack, but he did not take any measures to prevent it. He left a further two steamers (the *Taif* and the *Ereğli*) at Sinop and on 24 November came to Istanbul, where he reported the vulnerable position of the squadron and the insufficiency of the shore batteries of Sinop. Adolphus Slade interprets his conduct as a result of caution and fear of reprobation from the authorities and enemies or rivals in Istanbul in case the Russians did not attack. It is true that every pasha had enemies in Istanbul, ready to agitate against him at the first opportunity. While at that time many of the Ottoman pashas in general had more cunning than merit, it was also true that working under a weak government open to all kinds of influence was not an easy task either. This uncertainty prevented them from taking any initiative.

On the Russian side, Prince Menshikov was still the Minister of Marine and was now also the Commander-in-Chief of all the land and naval forces in the Crimea. At the beginning of the war, the Russian Black Sea fleet was divided into two squadrons or divisions, commanded by two talented and prominent admirals, Chief of Staff Vice-Admiral Vladimir Alekseyevich Kornilov (1806–1854) and Vice-Admiral Pavel Stepanovich Nakhimov (1802–1855), both of them pupils of Admiral Lazarev (1788–1851). Nakhimov cruised the eastern part of the Black Sea from Sinop to Sohum and Kornilov cruised the western part of it. Nakhimov's first duty was to transport the Russian 13th division (16,393 persons, 824 horses and their load) from Sevastopol to Fort Anakra at the mouth of the river Ingur, and he completed it successfully in September 1853.⁴⁹

Kornilov for his part came as close as the northern mouth of the Bosphorus at the beginning of November. Menshikov had given him instructions to engage in battle with any Ottoman warships. Kornilov cruised the western coasts of the Black Sea from Balchik, Varna, and Sizopol to Burgaz and he did not meet Ottoman battle ships. Finally he sent back most of his squadron to Sevastopol and himself remained on the steam frigate *Vladimir*. At that time the Ottoman-Egyptian steamer *Pervaz-ı Bahri* was sent to Ereğli for coal. On its way it fell in with the *Vladimir* on 17 November 1853. In the battle that followed, the *Vladimir* captured the *Pervaz-ı Bahri*, which lost 22 dead including the

⁴⁹ Yevgeny Viktorovich Tarle, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 294 and p. 371.

Egyptian captain Said Pasha and 18 wounded men and officers. The Russians lost two dead and two wounded; one of the dead was Lieutenant Zheleznov, Kornilov's aide-de-camp.⁵⁰ The Russians returned to Sevastopol with their booty, which was renamed *Kornilov*. This small affair can be considered as the first battle in history between steamships.

From 23 November onwards Osman Pasha knew that a Russian squadron of three line-of-battle ships (three-deckers), two brigs and one steamer was nearby. However, he did not choose to accept battle in the open sea and remained instead in port. According to the report of Captain Yahya Bey and other officers of the *Taif*, submitted after it escaped the enemy and came to Istanbul, the Patrona Pasha gave the following instructions to all the captains:

The enemy's ships are at sea and we cannot cope with them. If we put out to sea we will be lost; the best thing is to fight them, if they come, so long as we have a gun left. If there be any danger of their capturing you, slip your cable, run your ships on shore and let fire to them.⁵¹

As this squadron was not particularly powerful, Osman Pasha could have engaged it, or at least attempted a running fight towards Istanbul. However, he instead sent an alarming report on 24 November to Istanbul asking for immediate help. Meanwhile Admiral Nakhimov sent for reinforcement from Sevastopol. Prince Menshikov sent out another squadron of three galleons and two frigates under the command of Rear-Admiral Fyodor Mihailovich Novosil'skiy. Reşid Pasha in Istanbul informed the British and French embassies on 29 and 30 November, just before and on the day of the fateful battle, that a Russian squadron was cruising the waters of Sinop, Amasra and Bartın.⁵² The ambassa-

⁵⁰ V. Timm, *Russkiy Khudozhestvenny Listok*, no. 3, 20 January (1 February) 1854. In an anonymous report written in Rumanian from Bucharest, dated 16 (28) November 1853, it is stated that Menshikov had reported to the Commander-in-Chief of the (Russian) imperial troops that the *Vladimir* had returned to Sevastopol on 7 (19) November with two ships. One of them was a passenger ship loaded with iron, the other was the Egyptian 10-gun steamer *Pervaz-ı Bahri*, which was taken only after a "strong resistance". The report must be the work of Ottoman spies in Bucharest. See BOA. A. AMD. 51/1.

⁵¹ "Deposition of the Captain & Officers of the Turkish Steamer 'Tayf' [sic], concerning the action at Sinope on Wednesday the 30 November, Constantinople, Dec. 6. 1853. Translation". TNA. FO 195/309. The original Ottoman document, dated 3 December 1853, has been published in OBKS, pp. 138–141.

⁵² Official note to the British and French embassies. BOA. HR. SYS. 1189/54, 30 November 1853.

dors consulted their respective admirals in the Bosphorus and decided that it would not be recommended to send their fleets into the Black Sea. In any case, they did not hurry to answer. The Ottoman Admiralty had also sent some warnings to Osman Pasha just prior to the fateful battle. We shall review these letters after the battle, together with the case against Mahmud Pasha.

On 27 November the squadron of Novosilskiy joined Nakhimov's squadron. Now Nakhimov's power was more than sufficient to destroy the Ottoman squadron, which was still at anchor at the bay of Sinop. On the morning of 30 November Nakhimov gave the order of attack to his squadron consisting now of six battleships: *Imperatritsa Mariya* (flag ship, 84 guns), *Parizh*, (2nd flag, 120) *Tri Svyatitelya* (120), *Velikiy Knyaz Konstantin* (120), *Rostislav* (84), *Chesma* (84), two frigates *Kagul* and *Kulevchi* and three steamers (*Odessa*, *Krym* and *Khersones*). These ships were certainly equipped with more guns of greater calibre than those possessed by the Ottomans.⁵³ The largest Ottoman guns were 24-pounders, while the Russians had 68-pounders. Furthermore the Russian ships had 38 Paixhans guns that used explosive shells.⁵⁴ These shells penetrated deep inside the wooden planking of the Ottoman ships, exploding there and igniting the hulls. Although Paixhans guns had been used before, hitherto they were clumsy and dangerous to use on board ships. The Russian navy had developed an advanced design with a far greater explosive capacity and destructive force than previously available, which were used to sink almost all the ships in the bay of Sinop. Cannon fire had sunk ships before, but the staggering effect of the explosive shells now surprised the entire world.

Although the Ottoman forces could make use of the shore batteries as well, the position of the Ottoman squadron did not allow a full use

⁵³ The exact number of guns of the two sides is difficult to establish. Zayonchkovskiy gives 344 to 237 guns on one side for Russian and Ottoman ships respectively (plus 26 Ottoman shore batteries), Tarle gives 358 to 236 (Saab quotes from him), Besbelli gives 327 to 199 guns, Özcan gives 337 to 196. Slade gives only the number of Ottoman guns as 430, that is, 215 on one side. In any case, if we consider the calibre of the guns as well, Russian firepower was three times greater. Prof. Winfried Baumgart writes that the "Turks" had more guns (about 500 as against 359 guns) because there were a number of batteries on the shore, without however, reference to any source. See Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War, 1853-1856*, London: Arnold; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 97.

⁵⁴ Lawrence Sondhaus, *Naval Warfare, 1815-1914*, London & New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 58. Sondhaus describes Ottoman guns at maximum 32 pounds. Besbelli and Özcan give 24 pounds. Cf. Besbelli, op. cit., p. 44, Özcan, op. cit., p. 110.

of them because, owing to short-sighted disposition, the field of fire of some of the batteries was blocked by the squadron. In any case these batteries were of small calibre, firing shots of 14 to 19 pounds.⁵⁵ It is also not clear why Osman Pasha did not use the guns on the other side of his ships (which could not be brought to bear on the attackers) as shore batteries. Zayonchkovskiy also argues that the Ottoman squadron could have shown better resistance if it had taken up a position not near the city but to the south. Taking into consideration that Osman Pasha was an experienced sailor and a good admiral, Zayonchkovskiy can find no explanation for his carelessness other than senility or the effects of the British delusion that the Russians could not attack fortified positions.⁵⁶

Osman Pasha's squadron was lying in crescent form in the bay. The Russian squadron entered in two columns and demanded the surrender of the Ottoman squadron. Osman Pasha refused to surrender but vacillated about firing first. The Russian ships anchored at some 900 meters from the Ottoman squadron. The signal of *Navek-i Bahri* for leave to fire was disregarded. Then the *Nizamiye* first opened fire and the others followed it.⁵⁷ There began a devastating combat or rather cannonade between unequal forces. At first the Ottoman guns inflicted severe damage on the Russian ships during their manoeuvring. However soon the Russian ships took position and after a while started to make good hits. Then the destructive effects of the explosive shells from the 68-pound guns became clear. The Ottoman ships were burnt and blown up in a few hours (estimates range from one to six hours).

Adolphus Slade, the Mushaver Pasha was on board the *Taif*. At the approach of the Russian ships, he took advantage of the high speed of this steamship and fled the battle scene. Nakhimov had already ordered the *Kagul* and the *Kulevchi* to look after the *Taif*, but they could not overtake it. The *Taif* fired some shots and then turned first towards Gerze to the east, then set course for Istanbul.

At this time Admiral Kornilov had arrived with his reinforcements and, seeing the escape attempt of the *Taif*, he tried to capture it, but it

⁵⁵ Besbelli, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Zayonchkovskiy, *op. cit.*, p. 275. Osman Pasha, like Nakhimov, had participated in the battle of Navarino in 1827. He had served 21 years in the Egyptian navy and during the last ten years in the Ottoman navy.

⁵⁷ Ahmed Rıza Trabzoni (*op. cit.*, p. 77) confirms that the first fire was from Hüseyin Pasha's frigate.

managed to get away thanks to its superior speed. Kornilov was late; Nakhimov had already devastated the whole squadron except the *Taif*. However, Nakhimov did not cease fire even after all the ships were burning. The Muslim quarters of the city were also set ablaze and since the governor and the Muslim population had fled, there was no one to extinguish the fires. Because of this conduct Nakhimov was later criticised for hitting civilian targets; he defended himself by claiming this was a result of the Ottoman fleet's position. After the bombardment stopped, Nakhimov sent an envoy to the city but the envoy found no authorities or consuls. The only resident consul, the Austrian consul, had also fled. The envoy gave to the consulate Nakhimov's explanations that he did not intend to harm the city but had come to destroy the Ottoman squadron which carried ammunition to Circassian insurgents.

According to Slade, Ottoman losses were about 2,700 dead out of the 4,200 personnel of the squadron. However, this figure seems rather exaggerated for the capacity of the eleven ships that were present. According to the written statement of naval commander (Miralay) Mehmed Bey, who was a secretary of the commander at that time, given in a report in 1891 to the chronicler Lütü Efendi, the number of naval personnel in Sinop was 2,989 men and the dead included Bozcaadalı Riyale Hüseyin Pasha, together with 56 officers and more than 1,000 men, while Patrona Osman Pasha together with 4 officers and some men was taken prisoner.⁵⁸ Out of this number (2,989), only 958 men and officers turned up in Istanbul after the battle.⁵⁹ More sailors from the Egyptian frigates had survived, probably because they swam well, while those sailors recruited from Anatolia did not.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Miralay Mehmed Bey's *varaka*, 12 August 1891. Lütü, op. cit., p. 210.

⁵⁹ BOA. İ. DH. 18095, 23 January 1854, quoted by Özcan, op. cit., p. 126. Özcan gives the number of Ottoman prisoners as 125. Zayonchkovskiy (op. cit., 2002, vol. II, part one, p. 287) gives the number of Ottoman prisoners of war as more than 200 and the Russian loss as one officer and 36 sailors. Tarle (op. cit., p. 379) argues that the "Turks" considered that about 3,000 were dead. Slade (op. cit., pp. 144, 148) gives the Ottoman dead at 2,700, with five officers and about 150 men prisoners and 110 wounded.

⁶⁰ Captain Fevzi Kurtoglu (op. cit., p. 28, footnote 1), referring to some unidentified documents, writes that three *kaimmakams* (lieutenant-colonels or navy commanders), one *binbaşı* (navy commander), three *kol ağası*, 20 captains (*yüzbaşı*), four lieutenants and 186 men from the Egyptian frigate *Dimyat* had reached Istanbul. Cf. Slade, op. cit., p. 144; Özcan, op. cit., p. 116.

According to the report of Patrona Osman Pasha, whom the Russians returned to the Porte towards October 1855 together with four other Ottoman officers from his squadron, 156 Ottoman prisoners of war (sailors) were still held by the Russians.⁶¹ If we add this number to the number above, then we get 1,114 survivors or rather those survivors who turned up, without counting the deserters. Thus the total number of Ottoman losses becomes 1,875. Patrona Osman Pasha was wounded in the foot and taken prisoner. Riyale Bozcaadalı Hüseyin Pasha was among the dead. Ali Bey, the commander of *Navek-i Bahri* had blown up his frigate with himself on board. Apart from Osman Pasha, the commanders of two frigates, Miralay Ali Mahir Bey (1820–?), commander of the frigate *Fazlullah* and Kaimmakam Ethem Bey, commander of the frigate *Feyz-i Bari*, the commander of one of the three corvettes, Binbaşı Yalovalı Hasan Bey (1814–?) and Mülazım Halil Efendi, together with at least 156 sailors (as explained above) were taken prisoners.⁶² The Russians lost one officer and 33 to 36 sailors.

At this point a question arises naturally: Did Slade receive explicit orders from Osman Pasha “to get out to sea and carry to Constantinople the news of the imminent danger which menaced the Turkish squadron”?⁶³ Alternatively, did he leave the battle scene at his own discretion? Slade himself is not clear on this question in his book.⁶⁴ Saab argues that the *Taif* “had been ordered to leave the harbour before the fighting commenced”, but she does not rely on any authority.⁶⁵ Ottoman and Turkish historians do not even ask this question. For them,

⁶¹ Kapudan Pasha to the Grand vizier. BOA. HR. SYS. 1354/6, 29 October 1855. These 156 sailors were from the following ships: 28 men from the *Avnillah*, 100 men from the *Nesim-i Zafer*, 22 men from the *Fazlullah* frigates and six men from the *Necm-i Feşan* corvette. In his petition the grand admiral asks these men to be exchanged with the 20 Russian prisoners of war at the *Tersane-i Amire*.

⁶² “Kontrol'naya kniga razmena russkikh i turetskikh voenno-plennykh”, RGVIA, fond 481, opis 1, delo 695, 13 December 1856, Odessa. This register contains the names of 8,030 Ottoman prisoners of war, including Patrona Osman Pasha, Hasan Bey, Ali Bey and Ethem Bey from Sinop and Abdülkerim Pasha, Abdurrahman Pasha and Hafız Pasha from Kars together with their ages, seals and signatures. The above Russian register shows Ali Bey as a colonel, whereas Özcan (op. cit., pp. 121, 166–167) describes him as a *kaimmakam* (lieutenant-colonel), referring to a document from the DMA. Ali Bey's title is *miralay* (colonel) in another document. BOA. A. DVN. 109/40, 10 November 1855. Özcan does not cite Kaimmakam Ethem Bey among the prisoners, apparently because his documents from the DMA do not give his name.

⁶³ “The State of the Continent. Russia and Turkey”, *The Times*, Issue 21616, London, 20 Dec. 1853, p. 9.

⁶⁴ Slade, op. cit., p. 146.

⁶⁵ Saab, op. cit., p. 116.

it seems a very normal action. Enver Ziya Karal, for example, writes that the *Taif* was sent to Istanbul by Osman Pasha. But he does not give any reference on this point. He simply repeats the Western secondary literature on this question, as he has done throughout his narrative of the Crimean War.⁶⁶

Russian historians, on the other hand, openly accuse Slade of abandoning his commander at the time of battle and running away. They suggest that had he chosen to do so, the *Taif* could have caused significant damage to the Russian squadron thanks to its high speed and greater capacity for manoeuvring. Tarle even argues that had Slade been a “Turk” instead of a British subject, he would certainly have been hung from a ship’s mast. Then he further insists that the other Ottoman steamer, the *Ereğli* could also have escaped, but it did not do so, because it was commanded by a “Turk”.⁶⁷ However, Ahmed Rıza Trabzoni writes that the “other steamer” could not escape because its engine was not ready due to lack of steam.⁶⁸ Considering the certainty of destruction in the face of a powerful enemy, the question of whether the *Taif* received orders from the commander or not or whether it should have remained and fought with the enemy might seem to be rather a technical detail for some, while others may insist that it should have remained and fought. These interesting questions are difficult to answer.

Nevertheless, the problem of punishment still exists. During the entire war, no Ottoman high ranking (above the rank of colonel, to be precise) officer seems to have been punished seriously, whatever the charges may have been against him. The most received was a temporary exile or a short dismissal, which was usually followed by restoration to his former office or appointment to another office. As we will see, the commanders of the Anatolian army are good examples. In the case of Sinop, Yahya Bey, the captain of the *Taif*, was dismissed from the service but apparently this was not because of his retreat from battle. He had argued in Trabzon at a heated discussion that the employees of the foreign merchant steamers were informing the Russians.⁶⁹ The

⁶⁶ Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi V*, Ankara: TTK, 1995, p. 235.

⁶⁷ See Tarle, op. cit., p. 377 and 379; Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit., p. 277; R. N. Mordvinov, *Sinopskiy Boy*, Leningrad: Obshchestvo po rasprostraneniuyu politicheskikh i nauchnykh znaniy, 1953, p. 17.

⁶⁸ Trabzoni, op. cit., p. 87.

⁶⁹ Ali Haydar Emir. “Kırım Harbinin Safahat-ı Bahriyesine Mütteallik Vesaik-ı Resmîye”, *Risale-i Mevkute-i Bahriye* 4 (11–12), Eylül – Teşrin-i Evvel 1334 [Sept. –

question of the discipline of the Ottoman army and navy is itself an important question, but we shall take up this issue later.

A contemporary critic, Friedrich Engels, in an anonymous leading article published in the NYDT, argued that the battle of Sinop resulted from such an unparalleled series of blunders on the part of “the Turks, that the whole affair can only be explained by the mischievous interference of Western diplomacy or by the collusion with the Russians of some parties in Constantinople connected with the French and English embassies”. Engels then asked the obvious questions:

How it happened that a squadron of some three hundred guns, mostly of inferior calibre, was thus abandoned to the tender mercies of a fleet of three times its force and weight of metal, at that point of the Turkish shore which from its proximity to Sebastopol is most exposed to a Russian attack, while the main fleet was enjoying the tranquil ripple of the Bosphorus, we have yet to learn... How then it came to pass that the Turkish batteries were in such a bad trim, when a couple of days' labour might have done a great deal towards their repair? How did it happen that the Turkish vessels were at anchor in places where they obstructed the fire of the batteries, and were not shifted to moorings more fit to meet the threatened danger? There was time enough for all this...⁷⁰

However, Engels also argued that according to the report of the steamer *Taif*, “the Turks” were taken by surprise, which is not correct, as we have already seen that Osman Pasha knew the danger. Engels then like a naval expert suggested that

Considering the clumsiness of Russian naval manoeuvres, the bad position of the Turkish fleet in front, and in the line of fire, of their own batteries, and above all the *absolute certainty of destruction*, it would have perhaps been better if the whole Turkish squadron had got under weigh and borne down as far as the wind permitted upon the enemy. The ruin of some, which could by no means be avoided, might have saved at least a portion of the squadron. Of course the direction of the wind must have decided as to such a manoeuvre, but it seems doubtful whether Osman Pasha ever thought of such a step at all.⁷¹ [Italics in the original]

Nov. 1918], p. 530. Despite this information, Besim Özcan, referring to the same article, argues (op. cit., p. 118) that Yahya Bey was dismissed because of not fighting in the battle.

⁷⁰ “Progress of the Turkish War”, Leader, NYDT, January 9, 1854. See Karl Marx. *The Eastern Question. A reprint of letters written 1853–1856 dealing with the events of the Crimean War*. London: Frank Cass, 1969, pp. 194–196.

⁷¹ Marx, op. cit., p. 197.

Engels concluded that the victory of Sinop “has no glory for the Russians, while the Turks fought with almost unheard-of bravery, not a single ship having struck its flag during the whole action”. The defeat was entirely due to the “good offices” of Western diplomacy, “which prevented the Turkish fleet from standing out and protecting and fetching home the Sinope squadron”.

From a military-technical point of view, the battle of Sinop did not reflect gloriously on the Russian fleet. A squadron consisting of line-of-battle ships with two to three times greater fire power against a squadron of frigates anchored in the bay was sure to win the battle. Had the Ottoman squadron not fired first, the Russian squadron could have been accused of breaching a naval point of honour that held it despicable to attack frigates with first-raters. There were almost no naval manoeuvres during the battle, so it was more like a siege bombardment. The Ottoman shore batteries were few, small and inefficiently positioned. Yet the battle lasted about two hours during which the Ottoman squadron was still active and the Russian squadron also received serious damage. A more efficient fleet (for example the British fleet) in the place of the Russian fleet in such a situation could have won the battle in much less time. Many historians admit that the Paixhans naval guns and explosive shells used by the Russian ships were very effective against the shot fire of the Ottoman squadron. Nevertheless, with such a superiority of fire power, the Russian squadron could easily have won the battle even with shot fire instead of the explosive shells.⁷²

The Ottoman squadron had fallen into a situation similar to that of the French fleet, which was destroyed by Admiral Nelson at the bay of Abukir on 1 August 1798. Napoleon III took heed of lessons apparent in the battle of Sinop; he understood that wooden ships were vulnerable against such shells and thus ordered armour-plated floating wooden batteries for the French fleet. These floating batteries were used in October 1855 in the seizure of Fort Kilburun (Kinburn), guarding the mouths of the rivers the Bug and the Dnieper in the Black Sea.

Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovskiy (Hovhannes Aivazian, 1817–1900), the famous Crimean Russian Armenian naval painter of the nineteenth century, went to Sevastopol to talk to the Ottoman POWs

⁷² Andrew Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy against Russia, 1853–56*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991, p. 60.



Illus. 7 Patrona (Vice-Admiral) Osman Pasha and Commander Adil Bey, prisoners of war at Sevastopol. Pencil drawing by Aivasovsky, RHL, 1854.

Osman Pasha and Ali Bey and made pencil portraits of them as well. When Aivazovskiy asked Osman Pasha why he did not take line-of-battle ships to Sinop, Osman Pasha replied: "With our sailors it would be the same".⁷³ Poor Osman Pasha had enough cause to deplore his mariners, he was badly injured in his foot during the battle and had been robbed by his own crew while lying unconscious. He might have been justified in not depending on his sailors for open sea operations, because at the beginning of October his experienced crew was given to Bahriye Feriki Mustafa Pasha, while he received newly-recruited peasant boys from Anatolia. They had become seasick on their first voyage.

The *Taif* reached Istanbul on 2 December and delivered the news of the catastrophe. Mahmud Pasha at once reproached the French and British governments for their questionable attitude. "They bade us arm", he said, "and resist Russia, and now in the hour of our need their fleets look calmly on!"⁷⁴ It was necessary to go to Sinop and to check the situation there, but the naval pashas seemed unwilling to undertake the mission. From the office of the Kapudan Pasha, Mushaver Pasha went to the French embassy where the two ambassadors were in conference with their admirals Dundas and Hamelin. The French ambassador Baraguey d'Hilliers saw the event as a normal war incident. Stratford de Redcliffe and the admirals professed they had been ignorant of an Ottoman squadron's presence out in the Black Sea until only a few days before the event. At this point Adolphus Slade bitterly observed that the squadron had sailed from Büyükdere in full view of Therapia and Beykoz, where Stratford and the admirals resided. The ambassadors objected to sending Ottoman steamers alone to Sinop for fear of further disaster, and they also objected to their accompanying the French and British steamers, because they thought that might compromise their governments. Nevertheless, they declared that two steamers, one British and one French, were ready to go to Sinop alone.⁷⁵

⁷³ "Otryvok pis'ma iz Simferopolya, ot 24-go Dekabrya", Vasiliy Timm, *Russkiy Khudozhestvenny Listok* 3, 20-go Yanvary 1854 goda.

⁷⁴ Slade, op. cit., p. 146.

⁷⁵ Baraguey d'Hilliers to Reşid Pasha, 3 December 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1193/2 enc. 13.

The news of Sinop was received by Emperor Nikolai with joy. He wrote to Prince Menshikov that he was happy to see that the Çeşme naval victory (of 1770) was not forgotten in the Russian navy.⁷⁶

On 4 December, Reşid Pasha again applied to the British and French embassies, giving the news and this time asking the allied fleets to join the Ottoman fleet to go into the Black Sea.⁷⁷ Although unaware of the full consequences of the battle, he rightly guessed that the defeat was probably severe. Reminding the ambassadors that the reason for the presence of their fleets in the Bosphorus was to protect the coasts of the Sublime State, he now called them to the task. It was indeed now a direct challenge by Russia and a task for the naval great powers to undertake. The war had now definitely gone beyond a collision between Russia and the Porte. On that day the British steamship *Retribution* with Slade on board and the French steamship *Mogador* departed for Sinop.

At Sinop they found disorder and confusion everywhere, with more than one hundred suffering wounded men scattered in cafes. Six days had passed without proper treatment for the wounded. The governor (*kaimmakam*) of Sinop and the population who had defected at the beginning of the battle had now returned to the city. There were 10 officers, 3 doctors and about 120 seamen in town.⁷⁸ Many officers and about 1000 men had gone into the interior of the country. The governor tried to excuse his defection but to no avail. The steamers took 110 wounded with them and returned to Istanbul. At Tophane they were required to delay the landing of the wounded until evening so that they might not be seen.

Summoned to the Porte the next day to relate the details of the battle, Slade found the Ottoman ministers completely unaffected by the incident:

Their cheerful cushioned apartment and sleek fur-robed persons deepened in imagination, by the force of contrast, the gloom of the dingy cafes of Sinope with their writhing occupants. They listened, apparently unconcerned, to the woful [sic] tale; they regarded composedly a panoramic

⁷⁶ Nikolai to Menshikov, 29 November (11 December) 1853. RGVA. Fond 481, op. 1, d. 8, list 7.

⁷⁷ Official note, 4 December 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1189/55 and BOA. A. AMD. 50/30.

⁷⁸ Adolphus Slade to Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, H.M.S. *Retribution*, Bay of Sinope, 7 December 1853. TNA. FO 195/309.

view of the Bay of Sinope, taken a few days after the action by Lieutenant O'Reilly of the *Retribution*. A stranger, ignorant of the *nil admirari* of Ottomans, would have fancied them listening to an account and looking at a picture of a disaster in Chinese waters. The mention, however, of the flight of the Pasha of Sinope elicited a spark of the old Turkish spirit. Redshid Pasha, in whose household he had formerly served, attempted to excuse his conduct: 'He could not,' he naively remarked, 'be expected to remain in the way of cannon balls.' On which Kiridli Mustafa Pasha gave him a scowl pregnant with meaning.⁷⁹

On 11 December the grand vizier Giritli Mustafa Naili Pasha submitted to Sultan Abdülmecid the results of the investigations into the Sinop affair and the remedies proposed.⁸⁰ By this time he had received the reports of the Mushaver Pasha, the *kaimmakam* of Sinop and the *vali* of the province of Kastamonu with a *mazbata* from the *meclis* of the province. The grand vizier informed the Sultan of the declaration of the Russian admiral given to the Austrian consulate in Sinop as explained above. However, he wrote that this was only a trick to appease France and Britain. In any case, this ruse could not long be credited in the face of informed European public opinion. He observed that if the European states sent cash donations to the victims of the burning of the town who were left without shelter, this would entail harmful effects for the Sublime State (the Porte). Therefore the governor should immediately set out to determine the fire victims and to make appropriate payments to them. He indicated that the governor should also attend to the wounded.

The grand vizier further stated that the Sublime State should be able to protect its shores without aid from others, and that while this could be done in the long run, for the time being it needed to strengthen its navy by purchasing two two-deckers (*kapak*) and three frigates from the Americans or other sources and to pay off the debt owing for the steamship still under construction in London. He pointed out that in a few weeks Namık Pasha in London was expected to contract the loan and then the steamer's cost could be paid. The Sultan approved the petition (*tezkire*) of the grand vizier after two days.

⁷⁹ Slade, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–153. Slade also writes that some weeks after this scornful glance, Reşid Pasha replaced Giritli Mustafa Naili Pasha as grand vizier. However, his memory fails him utterly, for Giritli was only replaced in May 1854 by Kıbrıslı Mehmet Ali Pasha.

⁸⁰ BOA. İ. HR. 105/5133 enc. 5, 11 December 1853. The draft of this report is at BOA. A. AMD. 50/31.

Meanwhile a struggle was going on between the Kapudan Pasha and his officers. The Kapudan Pasha accused Ferik Ahmed Pasha and Ferik Mustafa Pasha as well as other officers of not taking necessary measures and avoiding their duty. The two *ferik* pashas for their part forgot their animosities temporarily and united against the Kapudan Pasha. As Slade remarked, the Kapudan Pasha seems to have made the mistake of uniting his enemies against himself. In the end, most of the officers sided with the *ferik* pashas. Kapudan Mahmud Pasha was dismissed from the admiralty on 18 December 1853 and later exiled to Bolu.⁸¹ He was replaced first by the former *serasker* Hasan Rıza Pasha (1809–1877), and then by Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Pasha (1813–1871) in February 1854. The *kaimmakam* of Sinop Hüseyin Pasha was also dismissed from office, but according to Slade, he was reappointed to a “more lucrative” location the next year.⁸² Mahmud Pasha was also pardoned in 1857 and returned to Istanbul, where he died soon thereafter.⁸³

Although Mahmud Pasha was apparently not fit as Navy minister, the fault did not entirely lie with him. He seems rather to have been chosen as a scapegoat. In his testimony before the MVL during his trial after his dismissal, he showed his instructions to Osman and Hüseyin Pashas dated 26 and 27 November, wherein he had ordered them to leave Sinop immediately with all the ships and to come to the vicinity of the Bosphorus.⁸⁴ At that time Mustafa Pasha had returned to Istanbul and reported the situation of the squadron of Osman Pasha in Sinop. Nevertheless, these orders probably never reached their destination. In any case the carelessness of Osman Pasha and Hüseyin Pasha must bear the greater part of the blame.

There are two documents written by Mahmud Pasha in his defence. One is a letter to the grand vizier some time before his dismissal on 18 December, the other is a report or formal statement (*layiha*) submitted

⁸¹ Abdülmecid. *Beyaz üzerine hatt-ı hümayun*. BOA. İ. DH. 17914, 18 December 1853. Slade (op. cit., p. 158) has turned Bolu into “Borloz”. Besim Özcan (op. cit., p. 153) gives the date of Mahmud Pasha’s exile to Bolu as 3 Rebiyülevvel 1271 (24 November 1853), referring to a document from the BOA. Most probably he misread the month of Rebiyülahir as Rebiyülevvel. Furthermore, he seems unaware of the obvious contradiction of sending Mahmud Pasha to exile before the disaster happened!

⁸² Özcan, op. cit., p. 154. Slade, op. cit., p.

⁸³ Mehmed Süreyya, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 924.

⁸⁴ Kapudan Pasha to Patrona Osman and Mirliva Hüseyin Pashas, 27 and 28 November 1853. BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 5, paragraph two and three.

to the *Meclis-i Mahsus*. However, both documents have been neglected even by those Turkish historians, who have done archival research on this topic and who must have seen them. Thus the voice of Mahmud Pasha, after being suppressed for more than 150 years, will echo here for the first time. Mahmud Pasha's defence statements show the tensions and rivalries within the Ottoman navy. He accuses Ferik Ahmed Pasha and Ferik Mustafa Pasha of long having hostile intentions against him and the desire to replace him. He argues that the two feriks had earlier complained of each other many times but now they had united against him, temporarily forgetting old quarrels between themselves. This account is in line with Adolphus Slade's observations.⁸⁵

In his letter to the grand vizier, Mahmud Pasha writes that following reports of Russian ships being seen around Amasra, it was first decided to send the galleons to the Black Sea against the Russian ships. However, the French and British admirals prevented such ships from being sent, proposing instead the sending of the frigates. After that, Mahmud Pasha gathered his commanders on the galleon *Mahmudiye*, in their presence instructing Osman and Hüseyin Pashas to patrol the waters of Amasra and Ereğli in two separate squadrons but to keep close to each other. If they met Russian ships they would judge their chances of success and if they thought they could win, they should fight them. Otherwise they were to take care of themselves. They were authorised to return to the Bosphorus in case of bad weather or the presence of a superior enemy.

Mahmud Pasha then comments on the task of Mustafa Pasha's squadron. Mustafa Pasha had not visited Sokhumi as planned, excusing himself on grounds of bad weather. However, Mahmud Pasha had learned from captains that the weather was good and Mustafa Pasha acted rather timidly, not venturing to go as far as Sokhumi. He had returned to Sinop but had not taken any measures other than leaving two steamers there. When Mahmud Pasha criticised Mustafa Pasha on his return to Istanbul for leaving those ships open to danger in such an unprotected place, Mustafa Pasha replied that the place was not open to danger and in any case he had strongly recommended that they return to Istanbul.

⁸⁵ "The naval captains, seeing him [Mahmud Pasha] the doomed scapegoat, sided with the admirals [Ahmed and Mustafa pashas]. Accordingly, the forms of inquiry having been complied with, Mahmud Pasha was dismissed..." Slade, *ibid*.

Mahmud Pasha then directs his criticism to Ferik Ahmed Pasha, who allegedly avoided going to Sinop with a squadron of five or six steamers to save the sailing ships there from Russian attack. Ahmed Pasha reportedly replied to him: "You sent Mustafa Pasha and he returned without doing anything. Now you are sending me into danger". To this Mahmud Pasha retorts:

You will go on board the steamers. If you perceive such a danger any time then you can return. Why do you speak like this, are you not ashamed? If you cannot go, then give me an official answer and I will go to the Porte and report the situation. Then God willing I shall go myself tomorrow on board the imperial steamships.⁸⁶

Ahmed Pasha, sensing that now things would go badly for him, stated that he did not object to going to Sinop absolutely, but the matter should be discussed with naval commanders in the naval council (*Meclis-i Bahriye*). Mahmud Pasha, again according to his own statement, criticised Ahmed Pasha for trying to evade the task. "Are you going to take instructions from the commanders? Did you always ask their instructions before going out on an expedition?" Nevertheless, Ahmed Pasha insisted on the meeting of the council and the next day the council was convened.

At the council, Mahmud Pasha addressed all the officers as follows:

Hitherto there have been many conquests in Rumelia and Anatolia thanks to the prophet and the imperial majesty. But we as the navy have not yet achieved anything. I cannot go to visit any person and even if I go, I do not know what to do because of my embarrassment. Isn't this a disgrace? By imperial grace we received these ranks and orders but we have done nothing and whenever we want to send any of you on a mission, you present certain fallacies and demagogueries. I officially state to you that if you won't be able to go and if you are afraid, then tell me, let me go to the Sublime Porte and express these circumstances. Tomorrow I will take from among you the *Reis* Pasha or another and go on board the imperial steamers.⁸⁷

In reply to this reprimand, the officers expressed their apprehensions. They stated that going out with steamers alone would not provide an adequate force against the many enemy ships. The galleons on the other hand would prove difficult to navigate in winter conditions. They

⁸⁶ Mahmud Pasha to the Grand Vizier. BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 4, between 4 and 17 December 1853.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

also said that the allied admirals were of the same opinion. Even those frigates that went out previously (the frigates of Osman Pasha and Hüseyin Pasha) met harsh weather and took shelter in the harbour of Sinop and they could not get out of the harbour. Now it was difficult to go back to Istanbul after passing the waters off Amasra. True, the Russians were out cruising, but sailing from Sevastopol to Sinop and going back to Sevastopol or to Batum and Sohum was much easier than sailing from Istanbul to Sinop and coming back. Russian harbours were closer to those places. Nevertheless, the Russians could not bring their big ships near the Bosphorus. Because in the event of adverse weather, they would be unable to return and would be forced to enter the Bosphorus.

Mahmud Pasha then argued that these officers were not reliable and it was necessary to make them sign their instructions every time, because they would distort his words after a while. He also argued that they always tried to blame their superiors and dreamed of receiving the post of *kapudan* pasha for themselves. They were now spreading rumours among common people and servants that the events at Sinop were due to the Kapudan Pasha.

The other document is Mahmud Pasha's statement (*layiha*) submitted to the *Meclis-i Mahsus* after his dismissal from office. At the beginning of his statement, Mahmud Pasha writes that when he was appointed to the office of the Kapudan Pasha, both the Padishah and the ministers knew that he was not well versed in the naval art.⁸⁸ Thus by his own admission Mahmud Pasha confirms Abdülmecid's appointment of high officials without consideration of their capabilities. In this case Abdülmecid had been under the influence of his brother-in-law Damad Mehmed Ali Pasha or Mustafa Reşid Pasha.⁸⁹

Mahmud Pasha further argues that since he was already dismissed, but the *feriks* remained at their posts, the officers of the navy and the shipyard (*Tersane-i Amire*) were unwilling to testify against the evidence of the *ferik* pashas for fear of the consequences. If these two pashas had also been removed from their posts, the officers would probably find

⁸⁸ BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 1, not dated. Mücteba İlgürel and Besim Özcan must have seen this and the fourth enclosure, because they refer to the same folder (*gömlek*) in the *İrade Hariciye* collection of the BOA. However, they have not made any references to these documents.

⁸⁹ Lütfi (op. cit., p. 113) writes that the reason for Mahmud Pasha's appointment to the post of kapudan pasha was that his elder brother was the kethüda of Mustafa Reşid Pasha.

the courage to tell the truth, he added. The ex-Kapudan Pasha then accuses Mustafa Pasha of not visiting all the places on the Circassian coast. Judging from the information he gathered from the captains of the flotilla, Mahmud Pasha argues that although the weather was fine, Mustafa Pasha did not visit Sohum and did not capture a small Russian ship that he met. In fact, according to the *Kapudan-ı Derya*, the duty of Mustafa Pasha was to circumnavigate the whole Black Sea, patrolling the Crimean shores as well and returning to Istanbul from the Rumeilian shores. Then Mustafa Pasha is accused of seeing the squadron of Osman Pasha undefended in Sinop and, without taking any measures, slipping away to Istanbul. Mahmud Pasha asserts that he had not given any orders to lie at the bay of Sinop; instead he had given permission to return to the Bosphorus in the face of bad weather or superior enemy force.⁹⁰

Against the accusations of Mahmud Pasha, Mustafa Pasha defended himself with a *layiha* that was sealed by six other naval officers as well.⁹¹ He argued that although it was known that Sinop was not a safe harbour, Mahmud Pasha had ordered Osman and Hüseyin Pashas to patrol the coasts of Amasra, Ereğli and Sinop on 4 November 1853. In case of bad weather or going short of drinking water, they were not to return to Istanbul, but to go to Sinop. When Mustafa Pasha together with Ahmed Pasha expressed their concerns for this trip and volunteered instead to go themselves, the Kapudan Pasha rejected this offer, saying that it was not necessary for them to go.

Five days later, Mustafa Pasha was ordered to deliver ammunition to the Circassians with four steamers (*Feyz-i Bari*, *Saik-i Şadi*, *Taif* and *Ereğli*). According to Mustafa Pasha, his only duty was to deliver the ammunition and he was not authorised to give any commands to the squadrons of Osman Pasha and Hüseyin Pasha if he met them on his way. At Sinop, he took coal for his steamers and inspected the fortifications and shore batteries there. Having found them insufficient, he wrote to the Kapudan Pasha on their condition and also informed him that he would send the *Ereğli* back to Istanbul from Trabzon with some news, because it was not in good order and might

⁹⁰ BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 1.

⁹¹ BOA. İ. HR. 106/5182 enc. 17, not dated, around January 1854. Other seals are those of Mehmed Emin, İsmail, Ahmed (?), Mehmed Pir and two other unidentified officers.

hamper his movement. Mustafa Pasha then refers to the secretary of the *Tersane-i Amire* as witness to the fact that his petition had really reached Kapudan Pasha. After Sinop, he cruised the coasts of Trabzon, Batum and Çürüksu, and on his return to Sinop found Osman Pasha lying in the bay with five ships. He saw an order from the Kapudan Pasha to Osman Pasha to keep the *Ereğli* with himself on its return from Trabzon. He advised Osman Pasha to sail into open sea since the harbour was not safe. On his departure from Sinop, the squadron of Hüseyin Pasha also entered the bay. Hüseyin Pasha informed him that the Russian squadron had returned to Sevastopol due to bad weather. Mustafa Pasha advised him as well to keep away from Sinop harbour. At Hüseyin Pasha's request, he left the steamer *Taif* with him and returned to Istanbul, where he begged the Kapudan Pasha to call back the ships from Sinop. Mahmud Pasha, however, did not heed his cautionary advice. Two days later, Mustafa Pasha repeated his request and this time Mahmud Pasha accepted it. Nevertheless, at that time, the *Taif* brought the bad news about Sinop. Now it was too late.

Both Mahmud Pasha's and Mustafa Pasha's statements seem to contain some falsehoods and some calculated uncertainties. For example, since Hüseyin Pasha was dead and Osman Pasha a prisoner of the Russians, it was not possible to check what Mustafa Pasha really told them. It is not possible either to put the whole blame on one person. In any case, these documents provide us with important information.

The Ottoman foreign minister Reşid Pasha in his notes to the French and British embassies dated 29 and 30 November and 4 December 1853 had expressed his hopes of assistance from their fleets lying in the Bosphorus. Lord Stratford in his reply to Reşid Pasha dated 11 December 1853 informs him that "with sentiments of deep affliction" he learnt "the full extent of loss sustained by the Porte's flotilla in its late unfortunate conflict with a Russian force of disproportioned magnitude". Stratford then argues that the destruction might, to all appearance, have been avoided, "if earlier attention had been paid either to the dangers of their position or to the means of protecting them by effective batteries on shore". However he recommends not sending the Ottoman fleet and the allied fleets into the Black Sea:

It can hardly be necessary either for me or for the French Ambassador to assure Your Highness that such measures will be taken by the respective Admirals as the season may permit, and as circumstances may require for giving effect to the instructions, under which they are called upon to act. Their principal object is the protection of the Turkish territory

against any direct aggression, but in the performance of that defensive duty they can not be expected to lose sight of those considerations which are prescribed by the earnest desire of both Governments to render their operations as much as possible conducive to the restoration of peace as well as to the maintenance of the Sultan's rights.⁹²

It is remarkable that Stratford was still talking of "restoration of peace". At that time the four great powers were preparing a note to Russia and the Porte for a ceasefire and peace.

One day later the French ambassador General Baraguey d'Hilliers also replied to Reşid Pasha's note officially.⁹³ General d'Hilliers expressed his regret over the incident but added that he would not accept any responsibility, as they had earlier warned of the dangers of sailing into the Black Sea with the Ottoman fleet given its material and military condition. These dangers stemmed from the severity of the weather and the possibility of meeting a numerically more powerful enemy squadron. The French ambassador then argued that apart from the political meaning of the presence of the allied fleets in Büyükdere, it also meant a moral assistance in so far as hopes for a peaceful solution were not exhausted. Finally the ambassador stated that they would defend the Bosphorus in case of a Russian attack but did not specify how and when they might go into the Black Sea.

Kostaki Musurus, the Ottoman ambassador in London, wrote to Reşid Pasha that he found Lord Clarendon "*très affecté*":

The news of the deplorable event at Sinope, received by a telegram from Vienna, produced here a most painful impression, a universal sadness and one can say an indignation against the inaction imposed on the fleets moored in the Bosphorus. This feeling of national self-esteem is shared by the Cabinet itself, whatever his efforts for the maintenance of peace...

I pointed out to him [to Clarendon] what he had said to me on one occasion regarding the assistance that the two fleets would lend to the Sublime Porte, which would limit itself to help in the event of aggressive attacks on behalf of Russia, but by no means in an offensive war on our part. Together with His Lordship I remarked that it was certainly in consequence of this promise of assistance that the Sublime Porte had not

⁹² Stratford to Reşid. BOA. HR. SYS. 903/2 enc. 55–57, 11 December 1853. Translation of the note into Turkish is in HR. SYS. 1193/2 enc. 24.

⁹³ BOA. HR. SYS. 1193/2 enc. 25, 12 December 1853. This is the translation of the French note. I could not find the original in the BOA. Nor is it to be found in AGKK, IV/1.

sent, or perhaps had been advised not to send all its fleet into the Black Sea, convinced that such a promise would not have been given without a preliminary engagement of Russia towards the Powers in this respect.⁹⁴ [My translation]

Lord Stratford, in his despatch to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, dated 17 December 1853, again put the blame on the Porte and its advisers. "They alone, or their professional advisers", he wrote, "were cognizant of the miserable state of the land defences of Sinope". They alone were answerable "for the obvious imprudence of leaving so long in helpless danger a squadron exposed to attacks from hostile ships of far superior force". To these accusations, which certainly touched him as well, Slade replied with a proverb common to both Turkish and English:

His Excellency did not think of his own glass-house while throwing those stones. The French and English fleets were more or less under the direction of their ambassadors at Constantinople; and it has not appeared that *previous* to the battle of Sinope a wish had been expressed by them for any French or English ships to enter the Black Sea. The state of the defences, not only at Sinope but in every part of the empire, ought to have been familiar to men who claimed the right to dictate to the Porte its war operations, deeming it superfluous to counsel preliminarily with any of its military or naval officers; and who, with consuls at outports and contingent service money, had ready means for obtaining special information. The Capitan Pasha, the Porte's professional adviser, had recommended sending line-of-battle ships into the Black Sea, to obviate the exposure of a squadron of frigates and corvettes 'to attacks from hostile ships of far superior force;' and his recommendation, approved by the Porte, had been overruled.⁹⁵

The foreign office in London on the same date was instructing Lord Stratford to order the fleet into the Black Sea. However, there was a difference of opinion between the British and French admirals on the question of sailing to the Black Sea. They were quite reluctant to leave their picturesque anchorage at Beykoz.

On 18 and 19 December the Ottoman grand council convened again, this time to consider the conditions for peace offered by the great powers on the basis of a modified Vienna note. The council voted for peace based on the evacuation of the Danubian principalities, recognition of

⁹⁴ Musurus à Son Altesse Rechid Pacha, le 15 Décembre 1853. BOA. İ. HR. 105/5151 enc. 37.

⁹⁵ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

the sovereign rights of the Porte and a guarantee from the four powers.⁹⁶ Reşid Pasha however had some difficulty in persuading the *ulema*. The *softas* again demonstrated against peace. On 21 December they started a boycott of classes, closing down mosques and preventing the call to prayers (*ezan*) from the minarets. “If you want peace now, why did you declare war two months ago?” was their question. The government published a statement in the semi-official *Ceride-i Havadis* newspaper on 22 December 1853. Here is its translation published in the *Times*:

His powerful allies have made known to the Sublime Porte the pacific intentions which the Court of Russia never ceases to testify, and, also, in impelling the Imperial Government in that path, they have demanded what its intentions were on the subject. In consequence, on the 17th and 18th of the present month, the affair was submitted to the deliberations of the Grand Council, convoked immediately for that purpose, and composed of all the Ministers, Viziers, Ulemas, military Pashas of the army and navy, and other dignitaries of the empire. It unanimously decided on replying that, since the Sublime Porte has commenced hostilities to protect its rights and the integrity of its states [sic], it will not reject a peace calculated to guarantee them both for the present and the future. A *fetva* confirmative of this decision has just been drawn up by the Sheik-ul-Islam, and an Imperial order has been published to that effect. Communication of what precedes has been made to the representatives of the four Powers. The affair at this moment only rests on a simple question and answer. The question is not now of peace, and even an armistice has not been declared. The state of war continues, and despatches announcing what has just taken place have been sent to the Pashas, and to the Generals of the armies of Rumelia and Anatolia, in order that the course of the military movements may not be interfered with...

The above-mentioned decision having been come to unanimously, conformably to the glorious provisions of the *fetva*, emanating from the sacred law, any one who shall allow himself to speak against the foregoing shall be considered to have spoken against a decision come to unanimously, and be immediately subjected to the penalties which he will have incurred for this act.⁹⁷

Meanwhile rumours of a massacre of the Christians were spread in Istanbul. A wave of fanaticism was expected and feared, causing some panic and confusion in the European quarters of the city, that is, Galata, Beyoğlu and Therapia. Lord Stratford invited all diplomats and their families to the British Palace. On behalf of the whole *corps diplo-*

⁹⁶ *Mazbata of the Meclis-i Umumi*. BOA. İ. HR. 21334 enc. 1, 21 December 1853.

⁹⁷ “The State of the Continent”, *The Times*, London, 7 January 1854, Issue 21632, p. 7.

matique Stratford wrote to Reşid Pasha to stand firm against the *softas*.⁹⁸ The capital was menaced by *une insurrection immédiate* and Stratford believed that “the government will not hesitate, undoubtedly, to take the measures necessary to maintain order”. However, Reşid Pasha, who was not known for personal courage, had resigned and was hiding in his son’s house at Beşiktaş. Stratford could not reach him. On 22 December Stratford finally found Reşid, but Reşid Pasha did not promise firmness, even saying that the Sultan was indifferent.

Stratford then went to see Abdülmecid and insisted on firm measures. Abdülmecid accepted the proposal and some steamers were brought from Beykoz near the Porte. Then the Sultan told the grand vizier Mehmed Ali Pasha and the sheikhulislam that he would hold a council meeting at the Porte. Mehmed Ali got alarmed and tried to calm down the *softas*. However, they demanded the release of those imprisoned in the seraskeriat. The government this time did stand firm and about 170 *softas* were arrested.⁹⁹ When they were asked to go to the battlefield if they were so warlike, they replied that their duty was to preach, not to fight. Then they were shipped to Crete.¹⁰⁰ The resistance was thus broken. Two days after Stratford’s letter, Reşid Pasha replied that the *softas* were exiled and order was restored in the capital.¹⁰¹

On 26 December the grand vizier submitted the *mazbata* of the Kastamonu *meclis* on the details of the material damages and human losses in the city, dated 14 December and the letter of the *vali* Hamdi Pasha, dated 16 December.¹⁰² According to these documents, from the civilians, five Muslims became martyrs (*şehid*) and sixteen non-Muslims simply died (*fevt*). Seven *mescids*, two schools, 247 houses and 170 shops belonging to Muslims were destroyed and burnt, while the losses of the non-Muslims were 50 shops and 40 to 50 houses. The *mazbata* was signed by the two non-Muslim members (*kocabaşı*) of the *meclis* as well.

The Battle of Sinop disturbed the European balance of power. It was a flagrant denial of Nikolai’s assurances of his non-aggressive intentions, despite war being declared on both sides. However, from a military

⁹⁸ Lord Stratford to Reşid Pasha. Pera, 21 December 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1346/38.

⁹⁹ Lane-Poole, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 333–335.

¹⁰⁰ BOA. İ. DH. 285/17944, 25 December 1853. These *softas* were to be assigned salaries of 30 piastres per month and bread rations during their stay in Crete.

¹⁰¹ Reşid Pasha to Lord Stratford, 23 December 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 905/1 enc. 70.

¹⁰² BOA. İ. DH. 17947, the *irade* is dated 27 December 1853.

point of view, it was a brilliant operation of the Russian navy against a military target. From a legal point of view, it was a legitimate act of war except for its excessive bombardment and the civilian losses. For Britain and France, the most objectionable aspect of the affair was that it was a direct defiance to their fleets anchored in the Bosphorus. The Russians had destroyed a Turkish flotilla lying at anchor almost under the eyes of the great naval powers. This was too much indeed. Thus Admiral Nakhimov by his very victory at Sinop had prepared the ruin of the Russian Black Sea fleet, which was later sunk by the Russians themselves to block the entrance to Sevastopol.

The repercussions of the battle of Sinop were different in Britain and France. While the British public opinion reacted to the event with much excitement, the French public opinion was in general calm. On the other hand, while Napoleon III was "determined to make an issue out of the incident", the British cabinet took it as a matter of course.¹⁰³ British newspapers in general described the battle of Sinop as a "massacre". Especially the damage to the city and its civilian inhabitants caused anger. The number of the dead was given as 4,000. Even the conservative, cautious and pacifist *Times* now turned belligerent. On 13 December 1853 it described a new phase in the war:

The war, hitherto confined to the occupation of the Danubian Principalities and to a few partial encounters of the hostile armies, appears to have assumed on the Black Sea the character of direct aggression, and the Emperor of RUSSIA has thrown down the gauntlet to the maritime Powers precisely on that element on which they are best prepared to meet him. We have thought it our duty to uphold and defend the cause of peace, as long as peace was compatible with the honour and dignity of the country, and we feel no regret that to the very last we have adhered to a course of policy which a just concern for the best interests of England and of the civilized world prescribed. But we have never concealed our opinion that the events occurring in the East might ere long compel us to meet by more resolute measures a sterner alternative; and we have repeatedly urged upon the Governments of England and France the necessity of being prepared with a plan of operations adapted to such an emergency.

In many British cities and towns like London, Manchester, Derby, Hanley, Sheffield, Leicester, Paisley, Newcastle upon Tyne, Rochdale, Southampton and Stafford, meetings were held in the city halls in sup-

¹⁰³ Saab, op. cit., p. 126.

port of the Ottoman Empire. The well-known anti-Russian publicist David Urquhart participated in some of them. In Paisley he spoke two hours and a quarter and ended his words by declaring that “what the people of England have now to do is, to call on their Sovereign to require that either war shall be proclaimed against Russia, or the British squadron withdrawn from the Turkish waters”.¹⁰⁴ Memorials likewise from many cities were being sent to the Queen, asking for a more active British policy. These memorials were usually published in the newspapers such as the *Times* and Kostaki Musurus sent such articles with his despatches to the foreign ministry.¹⁰⁵

Napoleon III wanted to use the incident both to develop his alliance with Britain and to turn the attention of the French public towards foreign issues and away from domestic problems. Therefore he proposed to the British that the two fleets enter the Black Sea and force the Russian navy back to its base. The French foreign minister even declared that if Britain did not enter, France would go alone. This declaration and the agitated British public opinion forced the British cabinet to agree to send the fleet into the Black Sea. The Home Secretary Lord Palmerston, the symbol of the anti-Russian spirit and known for his support of the “Turks”, resigned briefly in December 1853, but soon returned to office. The British public opinion was further excited by rumours of Prince Albert’s being in league with the tsar. The allied fleets were ordered to enter the Black Sea towards the end of December 1853 but they could weigh anchor only on 4 January 1854. However, after a short cruise along the Black Sea coast the allied fleets returned to Büyükdere.

The coverage of the defeat of Sinop was, as could be expected, minimal in the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi*. On 8 December 1853, it announced that a Russian squadron of two three-deckers, four two-deckers, three frigates, three steamers and one *navi* had entered the Sinop bay in a foggy weather and signalled the Ottoman squadron of seven frigates, three corvettes and two steamers for surrender. It was stated that, although the magnitude of the Russian squadron was such that resistance was not possible, the imperial navy did not surrender

¹⁰⁴ See BOA. İ. HR. 105/5151 enc. 36 for the article of the *Times* (December 1853, date not visible) on the meeting in the town of Paisley.

¹⁰⁵ See for example BOA. HR. SYS. 905/1, İ. HR. 108/5293 enc. 37, HR. SYS. 907/18 and İ. HR. 105/5151 enc. 39–40. The last is about a public meeting in Newcastle, published in *The Newcastle Guardian* on Saturday, December 17, 1853.

and entered into battle by virtue of its religious patriotism (*hamiyyet-i diniyye*) and bravery. The *Takvim-i Vekayi* further argued that although the Ottoman ships were destroyed, the Russian squadron was also severely damaged and had lost a lot of men. While there was no mention of the number of Ottoman losses, it was stated that 110 wounded were brought to Istanbul.

Müşir Selim Pasha, the commander of the Batum army, reported to the *serasker* that for the needs of current politics they would spread the news that the Russian ships were repulsed in defeat from Sinop.¹⁰⁶

We must mention here that in the Ottoman official correspondence the disaster or defeat of Sinop is mentioned usually as the “regrettable” or “sorrowful” event of Sinop (*Sinop vaka-i müteellimesi* or *mükeddiresi*).¹⁰⁷ (The same adjectives were later used for the fall of Kars). But we do not see any equivalent of the expression of “the massacre of Sinop” which was much used in the European press, especially the British press. It seems that the Ottoman bureaucracy did not see it as a “massacre”, but something like a natural disaster or something that regularly accompanied war.

The Caucasian Front in 1853

The Ottoman Anatolian army was in a much neglected state in comparison with the Rumelian army. The Anatolian army was under the command of Müşir Abdülkerim Nadir Pasha (better known as Çırpanlı Abdi Pasha, 1807–1883) and this army was deployed in Erzurum, Kars, Ardahan and Bayezid. Abdi Pasha’s chief of staff was Ferik Tacirli Ahmed Pasha (?–1883)¹⁰⁸ and their relations were not good.

¹⁰⁶ Selim Pasha to the *serasker*, 22 December 1853. BOA. İ. HR. 106/5181.

¹⁰⁷ See for example BOA. A. AMD. 50/38, A. MKT. NZD. 110/78, İ. MMS. 3/93.

¹⁰⁸ Necat Birinci in his biographical footnotes on Abdi Pasha and Ahmed Pasha in Salih Hayri’s *Hayrabad* gives completely incorrect information. He mistakes Abdi Pasha for a certain Abbas Pasha and Ahmed Pasha for the other (Nazır) Ahmed Pasha of the Rumeli army. Thus he writes that Ahmed Pasha was executed in 1860 (op. cit., p. 100). See Sinan Kunalalp, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkan ve Ricali (1839–1922)*, Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1999, p. 39. Birinci also writes that Ahmed Pasha became a pasha after the victory of Çatana, which is illogical and impossible because Ahmed Pasha could not have been both in Kars and in Çatana (on the Danube) simultaneously. Apparently he mixes the two different Ahmed Pashas of the Anatolian and the Rumelian armies. But he is wrong even for the other, Nazır Ahmed Pasha, because that Ahmed Pasha became a *müşir* and not a pasha after the battle of Çatana. Mehmed Süreyya and S. Kunalalp record Ahmed Pasha’s death as being in 1883. See Mehmed Süreyya,



Map 3 The Caucasian theatre of war.

There was one division in Ardahan under the command of infantry division commander Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha, and another division under the command of cavalry division commander Ferik Selim Pasha in Bayezid.¹⁰⁹ Another army under Müşir Haseki Mehmed Selim Pasha

Sicill-i Osmani, vol. 1, Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1996, p. 203 and Kunalalp, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁰⁹ Russian military agent in Istanbul, Colonel Count Osten Saken had described Ali Rıza Pasha and Selim Pasha in his report on 24 March (5 April) 1852 as follows: "Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha: Been to St. Petersburg with Ahmed Fethi Pasha. Served in the navy and then appointed at once lieutenant-general to the Anatolian army. Diligent but not

(who held the command of the *Hassa* army as well) was deployed in Batum. The usual dispersed deployment of troops and especially the separation of these two armies would prove to be detrimental to Ottoman war efforts. The headquarters of the Anatolian army was at first in Erzurum, and then it was moved to Kars.

The fortress of Kars was an important stronghold but in the previous war of 1829 the Russians had captured it and had taken Erzurum as well. Therefore those memories were still fresh in the minds of both sides. For the Russians it meant confidence that they could conquer the area again. As for the Ottoman officers, their initial optimism was soon replaced by a lack of confidence, bordering on defeatism, after the first setbacks. However, at the beginning of the war, great hopes were entertained by the Kars army, as expressed so well by the British doctor Humphrey Sandwith, who served in Kars:

“Here”, it was said, “you have the Turks posted on their own soil in the midst of a Mussulman population. At the summons of the fiery crescent thousands of warlike tribes will rush to the standard of Islam. It will be a holy war, and the enthusiasm of religious zeal will rouse the whole population, and amply atone for any deficiencies in tactics or military science”.¹¹⁰

Events, however, proved that “tactics or military science” were not to be overruled by any “religious zeal”.

The weakness of the Ottoman army was not expressed in numbers of men or weapons, at least at the beginning of the war. The Ottoman Anatolian army in 1853 and 1854 had a definite superiority in size against the Russian army located along the Russo-Ottoman border, because the Russians had to maintain a large portion of their army against the forces of Sheikh Shamil. Thus at the beginning of the war the Russians could raise against the Ottoman army only 20,000 to

talented. Ferik Selim Pasha: Originally an Armenian from Georgia, who converted to Islam. Islamist. Not talented, not remarkable. Passed all ranks in the Anatolian army from private to major-general. Promoted to lieutenant-general last year for his success in that year's recruitment". [My translation] See “Donesenie russkogo voennogo agenta v Konstantinopole polkovnika Osten-Sakena o sostave i kvartirnom raspolozhenii IV-go Anatoliyskogo korpusa turetskoy armii.” RGVIA. Fond 450, *opis* 1, *delo* 44.

¹¹⁰ Humphrey Sandwith, *A Narrative of the Siege of Kars*, London: John Murray, 1856, p. 91. Sandwith had lived in Istanbul since 1849. During the war he served first on the Danube and in October 1854 was appointed to the staff of Colonel (General) Williams in Kars. He spoke Turkish as well.

30,000 men.¹¹¹ The Anatolian army or the fourth army received reinforcements from other parts of the Ottoman Empire, from the Arabistan and Iraq armies. Although we do not have exact numbers, we can safely say that at the beginning of the war, there were at least about 30,000 men in Kars, 6,000 in Ardahan, 25,000 in Erzurum, 10,000 in Bayezid and 16,000 in Batum, altogether making 87,000 men.¹¹² Nevertheless, with only a few exceptions, the officers' corps, from the Commander-in-Chief downwards, did not show themselves equal to the task. They did not have a war plan, nor were they supplied with one by the war ministry.

Furthermore, there was much animosity and jealousy between the educated and uneducated officers within the army. The Commander-in-Chief Müşir Abdi Pasha, who had received education in Vienna from 1835 to 1840, belonged to the former group, while his chief of staff Ferik Ahmed Pasha belonged to the latter. During his trial at the end of 1854 in Istanbul, Abdi Pasha stated that he had to give oral instructions to Ahmed Pasha because Ahmed Pasha was illiterate and secret written messages had to be read to him by others.¹¹³ The illiteracy of Ahmed Pasha is confirmed by many other sources as well.¹¹⁴ Thus factional strife among officers started from the top, to a much greater extent than in the Rumelian army. Ahmed Rıza Trabzoni also mentions this rivalry in his *destan*.¹¹⁵ In any case, the fact that an illiterate pasha had become the chief of staff of the second biggest Ottoman army during wartime tells us much about the quality of officers in the Ottoman high command.

¹¹¹ Süer, op. cit., p. 42.

¹¹² See Süer, op. cit., p. 38. However, having given these numbers, the author somehow makes a total of 95,000 troops, instead of the mathematically correct sum of 87,000. Cevdet Pasha, on the other hand, mentions the figure of 70,000 men for the Anatolian army, but it is not clear which year he has in mind. See Cevdet Pasha, op. cit., p. 100.

¹¹³ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 5, page 2.

¹¹⁴ General Klapka describes Ahmed Pasha as "a rough and ignorant Kurd". See Klapka, *The War in the East: From the Year 1853 till July 1855*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1855, p. 43. Mehmed Süreyya (op. cit., p. 203) records him as "illiterate, simple-minded, brave, fierce and harsh". The Russian military agent in Istanbul, Colonel Count Osten Saken in his report on the Anatolian army in 1852 also described the chief of staff Ahmed Pasha as illiterate and having bad relations with the mushir [Gözlüklü] Reşid Pasha, the predecessor of Abdi Pasha, who was also well-educated and well-read. See RGVIA. Fond 450, opis 1, delo 44, list 2.

¹¹⁵ Ahmed Rıza, op. cit., p. 61.

There were many foreign officers in the service of the Padishah as well. In fact from the summer of 1853 many military adventurers had come to Istanbul to offer their services. The Serasker Damad Mehmed Ali Pasha at first believed the testimonials of the applicants in good faith and bestowed commissions liberally. But when the new foreign officers began to apply for money for their preparations, he got alarmed. Hasan Rıza Pasha, who was considered as a French protégé, succeeded him in February 1854. While he was averse to the employment of foreign officers, much harm had already been done, because many worthless first-comer officers were employed and some really good late-comer officers were turned away.

Apart from these adventurers, the Porte had a more reliable source of foreign officers. Many of the Hungarian and Polish officers who had sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire after Russia crushed the Hungarian revolution of 1848 were now serving in the Anatolian army and to a lesser extent in the Rumelian army. The Hungarians and Poles as a rule were not appointed to the Rumelian army to avoid problems with Austria.¹¹⁶ There were a few exceptions such as the Polish officers Michal Czajkowski (Mehmed Sadık Pasha) and Count Antoni Ilinski (Iskender Bey). In fact there could have been a Polish “Legion”, because 799 Polish Democrat emigrants living in France had signed a petition authorizing General Wysocki to act as their representative to the Sultan in requesting the formation of a “*Legion Polonoise*”.¹¹⁷ This proposal was not accepted.

Some of the foreign officers serving in the Ottoman armies were well-trained officers, but others had little or no training and some also engaged in intrigues. Though few of them had accepted Islam, they were given Muslim names and the Ottoman soldiers were led to believe that these officers were Muslims. Nevertheless, except for the Hungarian general György Kmety (İsmail Pasha, 1813–1865), the commander of the *başıbozüks* at Kars, they were not given command posi-

¹¹⁶ İlber Ortaylı has written that General Bem (Murat Pasha) was appointed commander of the forces on the right bank [south] of the Danube. See Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001, p. 245. Ortaylı repeated the same claim in an article in 2006 published in Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, Halil İnalcık (eds.), *Tanzimat*, Ankara: Phoenix, 2006, p. 295. In reality, Bem was not appointed and might not have been appointed anywhere near the Danube due to Austrian and Russian pressures. Accordingly, he was sent to Aleppo, where he died in 1850.

¹¹⁷ BOA. HR. SYS. 1194/1 enc. 1, 5 November 1853.

tions, but employed rather as staff officers. Among such staff officers were Colonel Kollman (Feyzi Bey), the two Polish generals Feliks Klemens Breanski (Şahin Pasha, 1794–1884) and Ludwik Bystrzonowski (Arslan Pasha, 1797–1878), Polish colonels Gościmiński (Tufan Bey), Paczek (Yıldırım Bey), Zarzycki (Osman Bey), majors Grotowski (Sahil Bey), Jagmin, Antoni Wieruski (1804–1870), and the Belgian Baron Schwarzenberg (Emir Bey). The Hungarian (Prussian?) general Maximilian Stein (Ferhad Pasha, 1811–1860) was sent as an inspector to the Anatolian army, but was recalled soon after. Another Hungarian general George (György) Klapka (1820–1892) wrote that the foreign officers, instead of living together on amicable terms, and setting a good example to the men, “seemed to have no higher idea of their mission than the carrying on a constant war of intrigue against each other”. Ferhad Pasha, “the most able amongst them, who from his influence with the Turks might have given a favourable turn to the ensuing operations, was, in consequence of some calumny, recalled soon after his appointment.”¹¹⁸ There were even two American officers, Major Bonfanti (Nevris Bey) and Major Tevis. Although these foreign officers were capable of giving good counsel, there were too many of them and conflicts frequently arose among them. At one time there were 23 staff officers in the Kars army. Therefore their total impact was not altogether healthy or constructive. More will be said later on this point.

The Russian viceroy or vicegerent of the Caucasus (*Namestnik na Kavkaze*, in Turkish *Tiflis Serdarı*), General Prince Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov (1782–1856) was old and ill. He had already requested his removal from his post at the beginning of 1853 because of his health conditions and also because he was worried that he had few forces available to deploy against the Ottomans. He constantly demanded reinforcements and even after receiving the 13th division from the Crimea in September 1853, he was still worried. However, Nikolai I did not share his worries and at the beginning of October 1853 wrote to him that he should now take Kars and Ardahan.¹¹⁹ Vorontsov was a cunning administrator, from 1844 onwards in his fight against Imam Shamil he had pursued a subtle policy of gaining the support of the local feudal class, introducing Caucasian elites into tsarist service,

¹¹⁸ Klapka, op. cit., pp. 44–45.

¹¹⁹ Tarle, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 292–294.

paying attention to indigenous traditions, while supporting the growth of education, literature, and journalism in the native languages.¹²⁰ His deputy was General Nikolai Andreyevich Read (1792–1855). As we have seen in the previous chapter, there were very competent officers in the Russian Caucasian army. Thus we can say that both the Ottoman and the Russian commander-in-chief on the Caucasian front were cautious and did not have offensive plans. Events soon led to both being dismissed from their posts.

Relations with Imam Shamil and the Circassians in 1853

Imam Shamil or Shamuil¹²¹ (1797–1871), the third *imam* and leader of the anti-Russian resistance of Dagestan and Chechnia, had been waging a guerrilla war against the occupying Russian army since 1834. Since he had no chance of winning the war without the assistance of the Ottoman Empire, he appealed to the caliph several times beginning from 1839. However, circumstances did not favour his entreaties. By the Treaty of Edirne of 1829, the Ottoman Empire had relinquished all its claims to Circassia and Georgia in favour of Russia. Russia had supported the Porte against Mehmed Ali of Egypt in 1833 and by the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi the two states had become allies, albeit a half-hearted one in the case of the Porte. Therefore the Porte, now at peace with the court of St. Petersburg, did not want to irritate it by helping Shamil. Furthermore, Shamil's relations with Mehmed Ali of Egypt, with the Halidi sheikhs in Kurdistan and with other local notables who were opponents of the *Tanzimat*, as well as the activity of his messengers on the sensitive north-eastern frontier made Shamil suspect in the eyes of the Sublime Porte.¹²² When Shamil sent his mes-

¹²⁰ Khadji Murat Ibragimbeyli writes that Vorontsov followed a “consistent policy of colonial Russification”. See Ibragimbeyli, *Kavkaz v Krymskoi Voine 1853–1856 gg. i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya*, Moscow: Nauka, 1971, p. 120.

¹²¹ Shamil himself always wrote his name as Shamuil in Arabic letters. His signature in his hand-written letters and in his seal is read clearly as Shamuil. In official correspondence in the BOA both versions are used. For his letters, see Khalat Omarov, *100 pisem Shamilya*, Mahachkale: Dagestanskiy Nauchny Tsentri Rossiyskoi Akademii Nauk, 1997. A Turkish translation (without mentioning Omarov's name!) was published by Dr. Fikret Efe. *Şeyh Şamil'in 100 Mektubu*. İstanbul: Şule Yayınları, 2002. James Reid (op. cit., p. 140) has misread Shamuil, claiming that it is “spelled Shamvil in documents”.

¹²² Moshe Gammer, “Shamil and the Ottomans: A Preliminary Overview”, *V. Milletlerarası Türkiye Sosyal ve İktisat Tarihi Kongresi. Tebliğler. İstanbul 21–25 Ağustos 1989*. Ankara: TTK, 1990, pp. 387–394.

senger Hasan Hasbi to the region of Acara (Ajaria, Muslim Georgia in the vicinity of Batum and Çürüksu) to recruit volunteers in 1845, the Russian embassy protested and the Porte exiled eight of the local notables, collaborators of Hasan Hasbi, to Salonica. Hasan Hasbi himself escaped.¹²³

With the deterioration of relations with Russia in 1853, the Porte had to modify its view of Shamil. The war with Russia could be very helpful for Shamil as well, because he had been lately pressed by the Russian army. He now had an opportunity to receive help from the Ottomans. A joint operation against the Russian army in the Caucasus would obviously pose a real threat to Russian dominance in the Caucasus. Shamil had already written a letter to Sultan Abdülmecid (as the Caliph) in March 1853, asking for help and informing him that they were now producing “cannons, gun powder and Congreve rockets”.¹²⁴ He must have corresponded with the Anatolian army in Erzurum and with the governor of Erzurum, although contacts between Shamil and the Porte were neither steady nor secure, as many messages were being intercepted by the Russians, including the letter mentioned above.

Zarif Mustafa Pasha (1816–1862), the governor of the province of Erzurum (which included Ardahan, Kars and Bayezid) sent a letter to the grand vizier on 12 June 1853, stating that imperial decorations (commissions) and orders should be sent to Sheikh Shamil to ease his co-operation with the Ottoman army. However, the grand vizier Mustafa Naili Pasha, in his petition to Abdülmecid on 9 August 1853, did not approve of sending such orders to “such outside parties as that of Sheikh Shamil” due to some previously mentioned obstacles. We do not know these obstacles or drawbacks, but we can guess that they arose from the hopes of a diplomatic solution to the problem with Russia. The grand vizier wrote that in the future it might be reconsidered

¹²³ BOA. İ. MSM. 26/728, 729 and 739, dated 21 October, 29 November and 27 August 1845, respectively.

¹²⁴ *Shamil' – Stavlennik Sultanskoy Turtsii i Angliyskikh Kolonizatorov. Sbornik dokumental'nykh materialov*. Tbilisi: Gosizdat Gruzinskoi SSR, 1953, p. 367. Moshe Gammer quotes part of this letter, but he does not mention the production of cannons, etc. See Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan*, London: Frank Cass, 1994, p. 267.

in accordance with the situation. Abdülmecid, as usual, approved the decision of the grand vizier.¹²⁵

In a document from July 1853, it is reported that Shamil had mustered a significant force and had come to a place called Çar Kalesi. Shamil had seized Russian mail on 16 July 1853 on the road to Gence and confiscated a large sum of money.¹²⁶

On 5 September 1853, without waiting for a reply to his letter, Shamil appeared around Zakataly, close to Tiflis, with 10,000 men and 4 guns. However, he was too early, for the Ottomans had not yet declared war and therefore he did not hold too long, retreating to Dagestan. His deputy (*naib*) in Circassia Muhammed Emin also started to recruit volunteers from the Circassians and Abkhazians. Muhammed Emin made his intention to advance from Circassia, in the event of the beginning of war operations by the Ottomans, known to the *mutasarrıf* of Lazistan, who reported to his superior, the governor of Trabzon. The governor of Trabzon then reported to the Porte on the situation, but the reply was that the army of Batum under the command of Müşir Selim Pasha did not yet have sufficient strength and it would be reinforced by two battalions.¹²⁷ A complimentary letter was sent to Muhammed Emin.¹²⁸

After the declaration of war by the Porte on 4 October 1853, the Porte at last decided to send a firman to Shamil. Abdülmecid called him to holy war for the defence of Islam, without however using the word *jihād*. The firman was conveyed through Halil and Ibrahim Beys, notables of Dagestan, Kolağası Hacı Hüseyin Bey and Mülazım Kasım. Russia's "obstinacy and persistence" in its demands was said to be "a kind of malevolence and insult" to the *millet* of Islam. Shamil was instructed to subdue the *khans* and *ümera* of Şeki, Kuban, Şirvan, Karabağ, Derbend, Şemhal etc and to attack the Russian armies. He was also instructed to enter into correspondence and coordination with the commander of the Anatolian army Abdi Pasha. Shamil was

¹²⁵ These documents have been published by Mustafa Budak. See Budak, "1853–1856 Kırım Harbi Başlarında Doğu Anadolu-Kafkas Cephesi ve Şeyh Şamil", *Kafkas Araştırmaları* 1, 1988, pp. 52–58, transcriptions pp. 132–137, document photocopies pp. 236–243.

¹²⁶ BOA. A. DVN. 90/15, 23 July 1853. The signature is not readable.

¹²⁷ Masayuki Yamauchi, "Sheikh Shamil and the Ottoman Empire in the Period of the Crimean War. Enlightened by the ATASE Archives in Ankara", *Orient* XXII, Tokio, 1986, pp. 144–145.

¹²⁸ BOA. A. MKT. NZD. 96/38, 24 October 1853.

also informed that all those who fought with good faith for the cause of Islam would be rewarded by the Sultan according to their rank and deeds.¹²⁹

On 17 October 1853, James Brant, the British consul in Erzurum, reported to the British foreign minister that Shamil sent “messengers to assure the Turks that they may depend on his cooperation and that as soon as he learns (that) they are prepared to attack the Russians, he will fall upon them on his side.”¹³⁰ According to a news article in the *Journal de Constantinople*, Shamil had expressed to Abdi Pasha that he was ready with 20,000 men to fight against the Russians.¹³¹

Meanwhile Sefer Bey Zanuko (in Turkish Zanoğlu or Zanzade, “Zan’s son”), a Circassian noble from Anapa who had fought in the Ottoman-Russian war of 1828–29 and had been subject to living in Edirne after the Treaty of Edirne in 1829, was now recalled to Istanbul together with Abdullah Ağa from his retinue in September 1853. For many years Sefer Bey had supplied reference letters for British diplomats and agents going to Circassia, such as David Urquhart, Captain Lyon, Mr Longworth, Mr Bell and others.

In November, Sefer Bey and Behcet Efendi, also a Circassian from the Bureau of Translation, were given the rank of *mirmiran* with the title of pasha and appointed by the Porte to the task of organizing the Circassians and smuggling arms and ammunition to them. A certain Circassian İsmail Bey, a former timariot officer, was also given the rank of *ıstabl-ı amire müdiri* and included in the group. Ostensibly they would be appointed to the Rumeli, Anatolian and Batum armies but in reality they would have a special mission to Circassia.¹³² Sefer Pasha sent two of his agents, Mehmet Efendi and Ahmed Ağa to Trabzon to cross into Circassia. The governor of Trabzon and the commander of

¹²⁹ BOA. İ. DH. 17605 and C. HR. 5454, 9 October 1853. See Budak, op. cit. (1988), pp. 132–133, for the text of the firman. Halil Bey seems to have been made a pasha, for in an undated document he is addressed as “*mir-i ümera Dağıstani Halil Paşa*”. See BOA. A. MKT. NZD. 117/53, October? 1853. In April 1854 he was definitely a pasha.

¹³⁰ Gammer, op. cit. (1990), p. 390.

¹³¹ *Journal de Constantinople*, nr. 476, 19 October 1853, quoted by Ömer Faruk Akün, *Atsız Armağanı*, Erol Güngör et al. (eds.), Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınevi, 1976, p. 34.

¹³² The *serasker* to the grand vizier and the grand vizier to the Sultan. BOA. HR. SYS. 1345/94, Sultan’s *irade* is dated 24 November 1853. Sefer and Behcet Pashas were also assigned a salary of 12,500 piastres each with the rations of a brigadier general and 50,000 piastres each for travel expenses. İsmail Bey would receive a salary of 5,000 piastres and the same rations.

the Batum army Müşir Selim Pasha were given instructions to assist them.¹³³

Shamil sent a letter to Abdi Pasha on 13 December 1853 apparently in reply to Abdi Pasha's letter. He seems to be unaware of the battle of Başgedikler of 1 December, which had ended with defeat for the Ottomans. In his letter Shamil writes that he heard that the Ottoman¹³⁴ army had besieged the fortresses of Gümrü, Erivan and Üç Kilise (Echmiadzin) of the infidel. He further informs Abdi Pasha that he had come to Georgia with his Dagestani army and entered the "country of the tsar" after a violent battle. Nevertheless, rain and snow fell on the mountains and he was forced to retreat to Dagestan. Then Shamil warns of the deception of the Russians, who might offer peace.¹³⁵

This letter from Shamil was only sent to Serasker Hasan Rıza Pasha on 5 May 1854 by the new commander of the Anatolian army Mustafa Zarif Pasha, a protégé of the *serasker*.¹³⁶ Probably it was lost somewhere and found by chance. The *serasker* sent the letter to the grand vizier on 3 July 1854 and finally it was submitted to the sultan on 9 July 1854. This delay in correspondence is interesting in itself, but we do not know what caused it. What is more interesting is the fact that the commander of the Anatolian army, the *serasker* and the grand vizier all wrote in their letters as though there were no unusual delays and they do not offer any explanations. This may also be a result of their indifference to Shamil and to the Caucasus in general.

¹³³ Yamauchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–148. However, Yamauchi gives the date of the letter of governor of Trabzon as 27 Muharrem (30 October). Either this date is wrong or Sefer Bey had already sent his agent before his official appointment. Also see Mustafa Budak, "1853–1856 Kırım Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Devleti ile Şeyh Şamil Arasındaki İlişkiler", *Tarih Boyunca Balkanlardan Kafkaslara Türk Dünyası Semineri*, 29–31 Mayıs 1995. *Bildiriler*, İstanbul: İ. Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1996, p. 90.

¹³⁴ Budak writes (*op. cit.*, 1988, p. 56) that the Russians had besieged these fortresses, as if they would besiege their own fortresses! This mistake is repeated in his PhD thesis (*op. cit.*, 1993) and in his symposium paper/article, published eight years later (*op. cit.*, 1996, p. 85).

¹³⁵ The Imam of Dagestan, El Gazi Shamuil to Abdi Pasha, commander of the Anatolian army, 13 December 1853. BOA. İ. DH. 19277 enc. 3.

¹³⁶ Budak writes that it was sent by Abdi Pasha (*op. cit.*, 1988, p. 56). However, at that time Abdi Pasha and his successor Ahmed Pasha had already been dismissed and Mustafa Zarif Pasha had become the new commander. See BOA. İ. DH. 19277 enc. 2, Zarif Pasha to the *serasker*, 5 May 1854.

The Battle of Şekvetil

Selim Pasha, the *müşir* of the *Hassa* army (the imperial guards in Istanbul) and also the newly appointed commander of the Ottoman army in Batum, made a plan to capture the Russian fortress of Şekvetil located north of Batum. This small fortress was defended only by a small Russian garrison.¹³⁷ Selim Pasha's superior forces, three or five battalions including the *başibozuks*, commanded by Hasan and Ali Beys and Dede Ağa, natives of Çürüksu, captured the post after a pitched battle on 25 October 1853.¹³⁸ According to Selim Pasha, more than one thousand Cossack cavalrymen were killed and 80 men were taken prisoner in this battle.¹³⁹ Ottoman losses were 32 dead and 59 wounded. It seems that Selim Pasha has rather exaggerated the number of the Russian dead in his letter to Ali Rıza Pasha in Ardahan. If we accept that, only two Russian cavalry companies and two or three guns were there, then their number cannot be more than one thousand. Prince Menshikov in his report to the tsar stated that the *başibozuks* had committed grave atrocities, killing and torturing civilians, women and children.¹⁴⁰ These *başibozuks* and even some of the regular men and officers also took many boys and girls into slavery from the neighbouring Georgian villages. It was also alleged that even Selim Pasha did not consider it beneath his dignity to retain some of these slaves for himself, probably as bribes to be sent to Istanbul.¹⁴¹

These acts naturally turned the Georgian population against the Porte, including even those Muslim Georgians who were at first well disposed. In February 1854, Lord Stratford reported to Lord Claren-

¹³⁷ General Hikmer Süer (op. cit., p. 72) writes that Şekvetil was defended by a Russian force of two battalions of infantry, three companies of Cossack cavalry and one artillery battery. Tarle (op. cit., vol. 1, p. 294) on the other hand, argues that the Russian forces consisted only of two incomplete companies and two guns. Allen and Muratoff (op. cit., 1999, p. 60, footnote 2) also write that the fort was held by two companies of infantry.

¹³⁸ This Ali Bey must be a Georgian Christian apostate. Georgian Soviet historian Yermolay Burchuladze calls him "Ali Bey Kobuletskiy (Tavdgiridze)". See Burchuladze, "Krushenie Anglo-Turetskikh Zakhvatnicheskikh Planov v Gruzii v 1855-1856 godakh", *Voprosy Istorii* 4, Moscow, 1952, p. 14.

¹³⁹ Müşir Selim Pasha to Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha in Ardahan, 27 October 1853 and the *kaimmakam* of Çıldır to the grand vizier, 4 November 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1345/53. Reply of the grand vizier at BOA. A. MKT. UM. 1963/63. Tarle gives the date of the battle as 28 October.

¹⁴⁰ Yevgeny Tarle, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 294.

¹⁴¹ General George Klapka, op. cit., p. 50.

don that the “desultory forces” (the irregulars) “have made the Turkish name odious among the Georgians, who at first gave a cordial welcome to the Sultan’s troops.”¹⁴² Ferhad Pasha (General Stein) wrote in June 1854 that the Georgians hated Circassians for their pillaging, the Ottomans for the behaviour of their *başibozuks* and the British for their treatment of the Circassians as their reserve forces. Instead he recommended that French troops join the Batum army.¹⁴³ When Selim Pasha summoned all the Georgian notables to submit to Ottoman power, only one of them came to his headquarters. This was Demetrius, who stated the true feelings of the Georgians. Selim Pasha however, charged him with treachery and had him put to death. When the Porte, around one year later, urged by the allies, tried to regain the sympathy of the Georgians by returning the enslaved boys and girls, it was too late. The Georgians had become staunch allies of Russia. We will dwell more on the Black Sea slave trade in Chapter 5. We must record here the fact that this issue has not been dealt with in the Turkish or other histories of the Crimean War.

After the capture of Şekvetil by the Ottomans, the Russian forces in Ozurgeti tried to recapture it but they were defeated and forced back. Meanwhile Selim Pasha reinforced the fortress with the Tunisian contingent, consisting of 7,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 artillery men.¹⁴⁴ The marshy coast of Batum and Çürüksu was fertile ground for many diseases and Salih Hayri writes that 4,200 Tunisian troops had died of disease in Batum.

The Russians again attacked the fortress from the sea using four frigates on 18 November, but this attack was also repulsed, as were other attempts by the Russians. Thus the fortress became a formidable stronghold and remained in the hands of the Batum army until the end of the war. The Ottomans could not make any efficient use of it to reach out to the Circassians. The Russians for their part started to evacuate the whole coast line from Şekvetil to Anapa.

¹⁴² Stratford to Clarendon, 3 February 1854. AGKK III/2, pp. 195–196.

¹⁴³ Hamiyet Sezer, “Ferhat Paşa’nın Kırım Savaşı Sırasında Kafkas Cephesindeki Osmanlı Ordusuna Dair Düşünceleri”, *Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri*, I, Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2003, p. 79. Sezer is unaware that this Ferhad Pasha was the Prussian general Maximilian Stein. Instead she uses the *Sicill-i Osmani* biography of another Ferhad Pasha, who was one of the slaves of Hüsrev Pasha.

¹⁴⁴ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 176. As we have seen, Kızıltoprak (*op. cit.*, p. 49), writes that 7,000–8,000 troops came from Tunis. Salih Hayri (*op. cit.*, p. 146) writes that Ahmed Pasha the governor of Tunis sent three regiments.

The Battles of Ahışha, Bayındır and Başgedikler

After the capture of Şekvetil, the Ottoman forces in Kars and Ardahan decided to move toward Ahılkelek, Ahışha and Gümrü. Nevertheless, there was no harmony among the high officers and officials such as Müşir Abdi Pasha, the governor Zarif Pasha, Ferik Ahmed Pasha, Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha and the *müsteşar* (paymaster general) of the Anatolian army Rıza Efendi. From the accounts of Zarif Pasha's memoirs and other pashas' testimonies during their trials, it is understood that the *müsteşar efendi* was an influential figure; he interfered in military decisions and independently sent reports to the Porte regarding military affairs and containing his views on the pashas as well. While Abdi Pasha was cautious the others favoured an engagement with the Russians. Hurşid Pasha and other European officers had not yet come to serve in the staff of the Anatolian army by the autumn of 1853.

The Ottoman forces in Ardahan included 8 battalions of infantry, one regiment of cavalry, 12 cannons and the *başbozüks* of Çıldır.¹⁴⁵ Captain Fevzi gives this force as 10,000 *redif* and 2,000 *nizamiye* infantry with 13 cannons, one regiment of cavalry and about 6,000 *başbozüks*.¹⁴⁶ There were two brigadier-generals under Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha: Mirliva Ali Pasha and Mirliva Mustafa Pasha. The fact that the majority of the forces in Ardahan were *redif* troops was to prove fatal for the Ottoman forces. Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha would later complain that he had asked Abdi Pasha for more *nizamiye* troops but he was not given such troops. To this accusation Abdi Pasha would reply that those *redif* troops were the best of the *redif* from Taşköprü and also that it was not possible to send more *nizamiye* troops to Ardahan because they were necessary elsewhere. Ali Rıza Pasha had also asked for an artillery major with war experience, but the *müşir* had not given him such an officer. To this complaint, Abdi Pasha replied that the military *meclis* in Erzurum had sent Captain Şakir Ağa, promoting him to major. All other officers were stationed elsewhere.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 5.

¹⁴⁶ Kurtoğlu, op. cit., p. 100. Kurtoğlu calls the *redif* "muavine askeri" and gives the number of guns as 3. According to İbragimbeyli (op. cit., p. 193) there were 8,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry with 13 guns and 7,000 irregulars. Allen and Muratoff (op. cit., p. 61) write that there were about 18,000 men in Ardahan, half of whom were Laz and other irregular formations.

¹⁴⁷ Ali Rıza Pasha's statement at the military court in Istanbul. BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 4.

The Ottoman forces defeated the small Russian forces around Ahılkelek and Ahısha, capturing many villages of the region from 5 November to 25 November.¹⁴⁸ The governor of Erzurum Zarif Pasha, who had come to Kars from Erzurum with 2,000 *başıbozüks*, went to Ardahan together with these irregulars to encourage the troops and organize provisions.¹⁴⁹ According to Abdi Pasha, Zarif Pasha and Müsteşar Rıza Efendi had urged the high ranking officers in Kars to attack the Russians. However, Abdi Pasha thought that winter had come and the war season was over, therefore no offensive operations could be made. Furthermore, the aim was to join forces with Sheikh Shamil and at this season this was impossible. Abdi Pasha also stressed in his statement to the military court that since he had received military education, he based all his actions on the “military sciences of strategy and tactics”. Thereby he implied that his chief of staff Ahmed Pasha did not possess such education, mentioning at the same time Ahmed Pasha was illiterate.

The newly appointed *müsteşar* Rıza Efendi had interfered in military matters by giving instructions to Ferik Abdülkerim or Kerim Pasha (?–1863), whom he met in Yeniköy (between Kars and Erzurum) while he was travelling to Kars. Rıza Efendi had asked Ferik Kerim Pasha not to go to Erzurum but to wait in Yeniköy because Rıza Efendi would have him summoned back to Kars. Arriving at Kars, the *müsteşar* started urging the officers for action, arguing that there had been successive victories in Rumeli and the Anatolian army was lagging behind. Abdi Pasha stressed that although the *müsteşar* was kind, honest and hardworking, he was like a foolish friend in military questions because he was unversed in military science and therefore the *müsteşar* interpreted Abdi Pasha’s caution as cowardice. According to Ahmed Pasha, Zarif Pasha had reprimanded him (Ahmed Pasha) in front of other officers for not going to war, to which Ahmed Pasha answered that he had his superior commander, meaning the commander Abdi Pasha. Rıza Efendi had even told Abdi Pasha that if Abdi Pasha did not move against the enemy, he would summon the population using town criers and go himself. Upon this declaration Abdi Pasha asked the *müsteşar*: “If things go bad, will your word save me?” Rıza Efendi replied yes,

¹⁴⁸ Budak, op. cit. (1993), pp. 51–53.

¹⁴⁹ Zarif Pasha’s memoirs, see Karal, op. cit. (1940), pp. 477–478. Cf. Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 53.

but Abdi Pasha was not satisfied. Abdi Pasha added that even those officers who thought that the war season was over could not say so openly for fear of being considered cowards. Later during the interrogation of the pashas in Istanbul by a military commission at the war ministry, Abdi Pasha complained that Rıza Efendi had “changed the minds of everybody” in favour of battle, while it became apparent from a letter of Rıza Efendi dated 27 November 1853 that Rıza Efendi had charged Abdi Pasha with “laxity and hesitancy”.¹⁵⁰ Finally the warlike attitude affected the rank and file as well and Abdi Pasha was forced to take some action. Meanwhile the weather also improved a bit and Abdi Pasha decided to engage in what he called *petit guerre*, using the original French term.¹⁵¹

Ferik Veli Pasha was posted as *avant garde* in the Subatan village to the east of Kars with 5 battalions of infantry, one regiment of cavalry and a sufficient number of irregular cavalry. Abdi Pasha sent his chief of staff Ferik Ahmed Pasha with 6 battalions of infantry, one regiment of cavalry and the remaining *asakir-i muvazzafa* together with the forces under Veli Pasha to Baş Şüregel (15 km from Gümrü), which was opposite the Bayındır (Bayandur) village (10 km from Gümrü). Mirliva Mustafa Pasha from the Arabistan army was sent to Baş Şüregel with 4 infantry battalions, 5 cavalry squadrons and 4 guns. *Başıbozuk* troops stationed in the villages of the *kazas* of Şüregel and Zarşat were also ordered to come to Baş Şüregel. According to Abdi Pasha, Ahmed Pasha’s task was to deploy the regular troops behind the hill there and to drive away the Russian irregular cavalry in Bayındır with his own irregular cavalry. Ahmed Pasha was allegedly instructed not to cross the river Arpaçay that formed the border with Russia. However, Ahmed Pasha stated that the instructions given him did not mention the hill or the ban on crossing the Arpaçay. According to him, Abdi Pasha had just instructed him to go to fight in order to silence the population clamouring for war.

Thus Ahmed Pasha came to Bayındır on 13 November and easily captured the village, driving away the Russian Karapapak irregular cavalry (more than 2,000 men) under the command of Taştımur.¹⁵² Although

¹⁵⁰ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 6.

¹⁵¹ Abdi Pasha’s statement and answers to questions together with Ahmed Pasha and Ali Rıza Pasha. BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 5.

¹⁵² Ahmed Pasha’s statement, BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 2. Budak (op. cit., 1993, pp. 56–57) has named this skirmish as the “Battle of Bayındır”, and the battle next day as

Ahmed Pasha also stated that his *başıbozüks* chased the enemy as far as Gümrü and also defeated a Russian cavalry regiment there and forced them to enter the fortress of Gümrü, this seems doubtful. In the opinion of Abdi Pasha, removing a small Russian unit had emboldened Ahmed Pasha. Some 1,000 *başıbozüks* under the command of Meded Bey the *müdür* of the *kaza* of Şüregel were sent to the Russian village of Tuhaber (or Tukaber?) where some 300 Cossack cavalry were reported. These *başıbozüks* later returned with 20 prisoners.

Meanwhile the Russian Armenian commander in Gümrü, General-Lieutenant Prince Vasiliy Osipovich Bebutov (1791–1858) had sent a force of 7 battalions of infantry, 4 squadrons¹⁵³ of cavalry with 28 guns and more than 1,000 Muslim Azerbaijani (or Karapapak) irregular cavalry under the command of General-Major Prince Iliko (Ilya) Orbeliani towards Bayındır on reconnaissance and for the protection of Armenian villages from the Kurds and other *başıbozüks*.¹⁵⁴ Ahmed Pasha, however, argued that the enemy had 10 battalions of infantry, 2 regiments of cavalry with 40 guns and more than 2,000 Karapapak irregular cavalry on the battle field.¹⁵⁵ Orbeliani's forces were met by surprising fire from the Ottoman guns deployed on the heights of the village of Bayındır (Bayandur) on 14 November 1853.¹⁵⁶ Orbeliani had fallen into a dangerous position: He could neither attack the strong Ottoman positions nor retreat without risk of being attacked by the Ottoman cavalry and the *başıbozüks*. Orbeliani lost about 1,000 men but Ahmed Pasha did not take any further initiative. Ottoman losses included 23 dead, 47 wounded among the regular troops and an approximately equal number from the *başıbozüks*, according to Ahmed Pasha.

the "Battle of Gümrü". However, I agree with those Russian historians who accept only the second as the Battle of Bayındır.

¹⁵³ Usually 6 squadrons make up a cavalry regiment.

¹⁵⁴ Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit., vol. II, part I, p. 390. Ibragimbeyli (op. cit., p. 112) does not mention Orbeliani's guns and the 4 squadrons.

¹⁵⁵ Ahmed Pasha's statement, BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 2.

¹⁵⁶ The *serasker* to the grand vizier. BOA. İ. DH. 285/17910, 1 December 1853. Arif Efendi, *1270 Rus Seferi*, manuscript, pp. 16–17. The *Takvim-i Vekayi* of 7 Rebiyülevvel 1270 (8 December 1853) and other Ottoman sources also give the date of the battle as Monday, 13 Safer 1270, which might correspond to 14 or 15 November 1853. Since it is a Monday, it must be 14 November. However, many modern Turkish historians have mistaken this date for 15 November. See, for example, Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 57. Hikmet Süer (op. cit., p. 78) also gives the date as 13 Safer 1270 but converts it even farther into 16 November. Also see Zayonchkovskiy, *ibid.* Tarle, op. cit., vol. I, p. 295.

Towards evening Prince Bebutov came to help Orbeliani from Gümrü with the remains of the Russian army there (3 battalions of infantry, 6 squadrons of dragoons and 12 guns).¹⁵⁷ Abdi Pasha had also come as far as Baş Şüregel with 6 battalions of infantry, one regiment of cavalry and 12 guns to help Ahmed Pasha. Although Abdi Pasha argues that his forces went into battle, it is not certain to what extent they participated. Ahmed Pasha argues that Abdi Pasha did not immediately send help to him and did not encourage the troops by appearing on the battlefield. Both sides retreated after sunset. In any case, the Ottoman army (as usual) did not follow up its gains against the defeated enemy, being content with the initial success of the artillery only. In fact artillery was the only efficient Ottoman class of arms. W. E. D. Allen and Paul Muratoff justly observe that

Bebutov had been lucky in extricating the ineffectual Orbeliani from a very dangerous situation, and Abdi Pasha had missed the opportunity of destroying the principal Russian field force in Transcaucasia at one blow in the first week of the campaign. Never was the inadequacy of the Turkish high command at this period more dramatically demonstrated.¹⁵⁸

Prince Vorontsov reported the battle of Bayındır as a victory to Nikolai I and the Russian emperor even conferred the Order of Stanislaw First Class upon General Orbeliani.¹⁵⁹

After the battle, Abdi Pasha did not retreat because he feared that the Russians, as a “technically well-informed enemy”, might guess that his army had run out of ammunition and follow him up. Therefore he waited in Bayındır for 12 days building fortifications and he asked for ammunition from Kars. Meanwhile one battalion and two guns came from Subatan, three battalions of *redif* and one battalion of *nizamiye* under the command of Mirliva Hafız Pasha also joined the forces in Bayındır. On 21 November the *şeshane* battalion of the Hassa army came to Bayındır. Thus according to Ahmed Pasha, their forces in Bayındır reached 22 infantry battalions, two and a half regiments of cavalry, 800 artillery men with 38 guns and more than 3,000 irregular cavalry. Abdi Pasha also states that the Ottoman army in Bayındır (including his forces) consisted of 22 or 23 infantry battalions, 3 cavalry

¹⁵⁷ Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit., vol. II, part I, p. 390–391. Ibragimbeyli, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁵⁸ Allen and Muratoff, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁵⁹ Ibragimbeyli, op. cit., p. 115.

regiments and more than 30 guns.¹⁶⁰ During the 12 days in Bayındır, Ahmed Pasha urged Abdi Pasha concerning three different options of actions against the Russians in Gümrü or Ahışa, but Abdi Pasha did not accept any of them. Abdi Pasha accepts this and even adds that more than three variants were discussed but that in the end none of them seemed useful.¹⁶¹

Since the Russian army did not appear during these twelve days, Abdi Pasha decided to retreat towards Kars because in his opinion he did not have enough troops, provisions, ammunition and means of transport for an offensive. He moved to the village of Başgedikler on 25 November while Veli Pasha with his forces was posted again to the village of Subatan as *avant garde*.¹⁶²

Meanwhile the Ottoman forces were experiencing minor victories against small Russian forces near Ahışa and Ahılkelek and took positions in the villages near Ahışa. Miralay (Colonel) Hasan Bey was sent as *avant garde* with two squadrons of regular cavalry and about 2,000 irregular cavalry (*asakir-i muvazzafe*). These *başbozüks* had taken some prisoners and decapitated five to ten persons. Ali Rıza Pasha states that since the orders not to cut off heads and ears had not yet reached them, he sent the decapitated heads and ears together with the prisoners of war to the *müşir*.¹⁶³ While Ali Rıza Pasha does not state whether he rewarded these *başbozüks* for the heads and ears brought to him, most probably he did so, because this was the custom.

Since Ali Rıza Pasha did not have siege artillery to attack the fortress of Ahıska, he asked for two battalions of infantry and some guns from Abdi Pasha but Abdi Pasha sent them very late. On 26 November 1853 the Russian forces of the Ahışa fortress received a reinforcement of 5 battalions of infantry, one squadron of cavalry and 7 guns from the 13th division in Ozurgeti under the command of Lieutenant-General Prince Ivan Malkhazovich Andronikov or Ivane Andronikashvili (1798–1868).¹⁶⁴ General Andronikov attacked the forces of Mirliva Ali

¹⁶⁰ Abdi Pasha, *ibid.* Zayonchkovskiy (op. cit., vol. II, part I, p. 391) and Ibragimbeyli (op. cit., p. 113) describe the strength of the Ottoman army in Bayındır as 30,000 men with 40 guns. However, after a few pages (p. 115) Ibragimbeyli gives this number as 40,000 men. This must be a typing mistake.

¹⁶¹ Ahmed Pasha's statement. BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 2.

¹⁶² Abdi Pasha's statement. BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 5.

¹⁶³ Ali Rıza Pasha's testimony at the MVL in Istanbul. BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 4.

¹⁶⁴ Ibragimbeyli (op. cit., p. 195) wrote (like some other Soviet sources) that General Andronikashvili was an ethnic Georgian. An article in the *Times*, however, reports

Pasha around the village of Sufliş with a force of 7 and a half battalions of infantry with 14 guns, 9 Cossack squadrons and about 2,000 Georgian and Ossetian irregular cavalry early in the morning on 27 November 1853.¹⁶⁵ Mirliva Mustafa Pasha commanded the Ottoman right wing in the village of Ab (or Abashi) including 3 infantry battalions with 5 guns and more than 1,000 *başıbozüks* and Mirliva Ali Pasha commanded the left wing in Sufliş, consisting of 3 infantry battalions with 7 guns and one cavalry regiment. Two infantry battalions and about 2,000 *başıbozüks* were deployed in neighbouring villages around Sufliş at a distance of a quarter of an hour. Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha remained behind in the village of Bamık (Yemak?) somewhere in the middle at the distance of one quarter hour. This traditional scattered deployment of troops contributed to the Ottoman defeat in this battle. The distance of a quarter of an hour among these villages seems to be an understatement even without any knowledge of the territory, because Ali Rıza Pasha tries to justify his deployment of troops and argues that they were not dispersed. In fact, the military *meclis* in Erzurum in reply to Inspector Hayreddin Pasha's questions stated this distance as half an hour to three quarters.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, during his trial together with Ahmed Pasha, Zarif Pasha and Ali Rıza Pasha at the MVL and the DŞA, Müşir Abdi Pasha also stated that Ali Rıza Pasha had dispersed his forces in villages contrary to the rules of warfare.¹⁶⁷ Abdi Pasha added that although Ali Rıza Pasha acted against his orders and against the warnings of Zarif Pasha, he (Abdi Pasha) could not have foreseen such a disaster because according to his intelligence the Russians had only 5 battalions there, while Ali Rıza Pasha had 8 battalions of infantry, one regiment of cavalry and the irregular cavalry of Çıldır and those with Zarif Pasha, so that his available forces far exceeded those available to the Russians. To this comment Ali Rıza Pasha replied that although his forces were distributed among villages

that the Greeks took pride in his being a Greek from Odessa, "who has changed the final "kos" of his name into "koff". See *The Times*, London, 19 August 1854, Issue 21824, p. 8. The Crimean Armenian historian V. E. Grigoryants, on the other hand, argues that Andronikov was of Armenian origins from a princely family at the court of the last Georgian king. See Grigoryants, "Vostochnaya (Krymskaya) voyna i armyane", *Istoricheskoe Nasledie Kryma* 6–7, Simferopol, 2004, p. 136.

¹⁶⁵ Ali Rıza Pasha, *ibid.* Ibragimbeyli, *op. cit.*, p. 195. Ibragimbeyli gives the date of the battle as 14 November, which corresponds to 26 November according to the Western calendar.

¹⁶⁶ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 3, page 3.

¹⁶⁷ Abdi Pasha's statement. BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 5.

they all came together when the battle began. He also argued that he made all his moves with the approval of Abdi Pasha and he did not receive any help from Zarif Pasha.

According to Ali Rıza Pasha's own statement, the Ottoman forces on the battlefield included 6 battalions of infantry and one regiment of cavalry with 7 guns. In addition, 2 battalions of infantry and 5 guns remained on the reserve. The cannonade of the two sides lasted for four hours.¹⁶⁸ Then they attacked each other. While the Russians shouted "Ura!" the Ottomans shouted "Padişahım çok yaşa!" (Long live the Padishah!). The *redif* battalions and the *başıbozüks* in the army of Ali Rıza Pasha could not resist the massive attack of the Russian regular troops and only the Ottoman artillery fought to the end. Ali Rıza Pasha also stated that he saw some of the *redif* troops from Harput retreating. He ordered their retreat to be prevented, but the officers were unable to stop it. Then he ordered to beat the signal to rally. Nevertheless, the officers were again unable to gather the troops. He shouted at those *redif* soldiers a hundred steps away from him fleeing towards a mountain: "You have read the law. Why are you fleeing? Come back!". However, the soldiers did not listen to him. Ali Rıza Pasha shouted at the *başıbozüks* as well: "You have come voluntarily and why do you flee now? You have also affected the (regular) troops, I will shoot you!". He then fired a shot towards them and said: "If you do not return, I will let the artillery fire on you". However, the *başıbozüks* did not listen to him either. Then he was informed that Mirliva Ali Pasha was wounded. Ali Rıza Pasha took Ali Pasha to the village of Bamık (Yemak?) in order to conceal him from the view of the troops and then returned to the battlefield.

However, by this statement alone, Ali Rıza Pasha puts himself under suspicion: Why should he himself go with the wounded Ali Pasha and leave the troops without command at the most crucial moment of the battle? However, no such questions (which seem obvious) are recorded in the interrogations. Ali Rıza Pasha then states that he rejects the accusations from Hurşid Pasha that he fled at the beginning of the battle. However, there are other sources that do accuse Ali Rıza Pasha of fleeing the battlefield.

According to a report from the French consulate in Erzurum to the French embassy in Istanbul, Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha had retreated from

¹⁶⁸ Ali Rıza Pasha's testimony, *ibid.*

the battle on 27 November with five battalions, instead of coming to the assistance of Hüseyin Bey who commanded three battalions of regular infantry and the *başbozuk*. The French consul stated that Ali Rıza Pasha not only gave the order to retreat but he himself deserted, leaving the troops alone. When it was heard that the commander had gone, the soldiers retreated in panic and disorder.¹⁶⁹ The French consul added that although Mirliva Veli Pasha had fought bravely and tried to resist, he had been unable to control the troops and he was also forced to retreat. However, he seems to have confused the battle of Başgedikler with the battle of Ahışa, because Veli Pasha was in Kars. The report also stated that the Ottoman troops had abandoned not only 14 guns, but also all provisions and other supplies in order to run away as fast as possible. Consequently, it was stated that the Russian force, consisting of 6 battalions of infantry and one regiment of cavalry, had completely routed the Ottoman army corps of 15,000 men (regular and irregular together) within two hours. Ardahan and its villages were now left to the mercy of the enemy.

Furthermore, the report described another of Ferik Ali Pasha's deeds. He had sent his servants together with the treasury of the army to the village of Badele and joined them two hours before the defeat of the Ottoman troops. Some soldiers came to the said village and when he asked them why they had come, they answered that they hastened together with other troops to catch up with their ferik. Upon this answer, Ferik Ali Pasha took out his pistols and fired at them, killing two and severely wounding five of them. In another village near Badele, a *müdür* of a *kaza* came up to him and asked him to take measures to protect the Ottoman villages on the border from the Russians. Ali Pasha however answered that this was not possible and he should go to the army headquarters. The *müdür* then said that it was not appropriate to abandon one's religious brethren in Islam. This answer angered the pasha, who again took out his pistol and shot the *müdür* in the chest. The report then stated that Zarif Pasha had come to Erzurum on the date of the report with about 2,000 troops that he could collect in Ardahan. The sadness of the soldiers affected the people of Erzurum

¹⁶⁹ Translation of a report from the French consulate in Erzurum to the French embassy in Istanbul, dated 10 Kanun-ı Evvel 1853 (10 December? ■■1853), forwarded to the Ottoman foreign ministry on 30 December 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 1190/32 enc. 14.

as well. The report also covered the battle of Başgedikler which we will consider below.

In any case, the defeat of the Ottoman forces was so decisive that the event was called the “Ahıska rout” (*Ahışha bozgunu*).¹⁷⁰ Ottoman losses included 1,500 dead, 2,000 wounded and 120 prisoners with 11 guns and ammunition, while the Russians lost one officer and 51 men dead, 311 wounded.¹⁷¹

The anonymous military analyst of the *NYDT* (Friedrich Engels), wrote the following on the Russian victory in Ahışha in the same article where he discussed the battle of Sinop:

The Russians declare that with about 10,000 men they have routed 18,000 Turks. Of course we cannot rely upon such statements, but must confess that the great number of irregulars in the Turkish Anatolian army and the almost total absence of European officers, particularly in the higher commands and on the staff, must make them but a poor match for an equal number of Russians... [The Russians] confess they have made only 120 prisoners. This amounts to a confession that they have massacred almost all the wounded on the field of battle, they being necessarily left in their hands. Besides, they prove that their measures for pursuit and intercepting the retreat of at least part of the enemy, must have been wretchedly planned. They had plenty of cavalry; a bold charge in the midst of the fugitives would have cut off whole battalions...¹⁷²

Khadji Murat Ibragimbeyli refers to the same article of Engels, but he quotes only the last two sentences from the passage above. Although he is very critical of the tsarist policies in general and particularly in the Caucasus, he does not quote from Engels that which is not good for the reputation of the Russian army. This is a rather typical attitude among Soviet historians after Pokrovskiy. We may assume that if the Russians massacred the wounded Ottoman soldiers, most likely it was the work of the Georgian *başıbozüks*, the militia or the *druzhina*, who must have been particularly enraged by the acts of the Ottoman *başıbozüks* in Şekvetil and their kidnapping of Georgian children into slavery from Georgian villages. As Ibragimbeyli tells us, there were

¹⁷⁰ Kırzioğlu, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁷¹ Ibragimbeyli, op. cit., p. 196. Allen and Muratoff (op. cit., 1999, p. 62) give similar numbers. Mustafa Budak, who had access to the ATASE, also refers to Allen and Muratoff on this question in his PhD dissertation (p. 55). There are references to some detailed tables of Ottoman losses in the evidences of Abdi, Ahmed and Ali Rıza Pashas, however, I could not find these tables in the BOA.

¹⁷² Engels, article cited above. See also Marx, op. cit., p. 199.

about 2,000 sabres of Georgian and Ossetian cavalry *druzhdina* and 900 Cossacks in the army of General Andronikashvili.¹⁷³

At Bayındır, towards the end of November, Abdi Pasha heard that the Russians were coming. He sent Miralay İsmail Bey for reconnaissance and that colonel brought the information that a Russian army of 12 battalions of infantry, 2 regiments of cavalry and some irregular troops had passed the Arpaçay and was coming closer. Abdi Pasha then states that the advent of Russians in such a composition was a rare opportunity for them and he took preparations to meet them. Veli Pasha and Kerim Pasha's forces were also summoned. However, the Russian forces did not appear. Meanwhile on 29 November, Abdi Pasha received the news of the defeat of Ali Rıza Pasha in Ahıska. He had also heard that Rıza Efendi had written to the Porte citing Abdi Pasha's retreat from Bayındır as a cause of the disaster in Ahıska. According to Ahmed Pasha, Abdi Pasha told him:

We left Bayındır on Friday [25 November] and the defeat of Ahışa is reported to happen on Saturday. How could it be possible that the Russians in Ahışa learnt so quickly of our departure from Bayındır that the defeat might be attributed to it?¹⁷⁴ [My translation]

At this point Abdi Pasha argues that Ahmed Pasha urged him to go to Kars because he was needed there and also assured him that he (Ahmed Pasha) would inform him immediately if anything happened. Abdi Pasha consequently asserts that he went to Kars, instructing Ahmed Pasha to bring the army to Subatan in a few days after him. Ahmed Pasha, on the contrary, argues that he told Abdi Pasha that the enemy was there, had remained in its position and that Abdi Pasha should not leave the army. Ahmed Pasha then produces some letters from *başibozuk* commanders (*sergerdes*) about the presence of the Russian army in the vicinity as well as a letter from Abdi Pasha sent on Tuesday instructing him to wait until Thursday. Abdi Pasha does not answer these arguments and it seems that Ahmed Pasha was correct on this point. In any case, Abdi Pasha decided to go to Kars. In his statement he also asserts that he had instructed Ahmed Pasha to send him news four times a day under normal circumstances and immediately in the case of a noteworthy event. According to Abdi Pasha, Ahmed Pasha did not send him news when the Russians were seen coming,

¹⁷³ İbragimbeyli, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

¹⁷⁴ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 5.

because Ahmed Pasha wanted to prove his worthiness by gaining a victory under his own command.

As we saw above, the Ottoman army corps at Başgedikler and around it included 22 infantry battalions, two and a half cavalry regiments, 800 artillerists with 38 guns and more than 3,000 irregular cavalry in neighbouring villages.¹⁷⁵ However, not all of these troops and guns were actually used in the battle, because some of them were in the neighbouring villages. Most of the *başıbozüks* had fled towards Kars before the battle even started. Ahmed Pasha detached 3 infantry battalions with 6 guns under the command of Mirliva Hafız Pasha as reserve troops. Then he detached 5 infantry battalions (including 2 companies of chasseurs), one regiment of cavalry, 6 guns and 500 irregular cavalry under the command of Veli Pasha to the neighbouring village on the left to protect his flank. Five battalions (including 6 companies of chasseurs) out of the remaining 13 battalions, together with one regiment of cavalry with 8 guns and the irregular cavalry of Hasan Yazıcı, were detached on his right flank under the command of Mirliva Hüseyin Pasha. Finally, 5 battalions (including 6 companies of chasseurs) with 8 guns, commanded by Mirliva Mustafa Pasha, were deployed somewhat to the right of centre. Altogether there were 32 guns on the battle field. Ahmed Pasha also states that because staff officers had gone to Kars, he could not receive help from them and so deployed the guns in a hurry. In response, Abdi Pasha observed that in any case there was only one staff officer in the army who was qualified to deal with this (Faik Bey) and he did not know where Faik Bey was at that time. Ahmed Pasha in turn replied that Faik Bey had gone to Kars.

In any case, however, the Ottoman army exceeded the Russian army in numbers, even though Abdi Pasha would later argue that he had only 17,000–18,000 troops, regular and irregular, when he was asked why he did not send two battalions and some guns to Ali Rıza Pasha in

¹⁷⁵ Allen and Muratoff (op. cit., p. 63) give the total number as 36,000 men, including 20,000 regular infantry and one brigade of cavalry, the rest being “*başıbozüks* and Kurds of doubtful value”. Cf. Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 58. General Bebutov reported after the battle to Prince Vorontsov that the Ottoman forces included 20,000 infantry, 4,000 regular cavalry with 42–46 guns and more than 12,000 Kurdish and other “militia”. See Tarle, op. cit., vol. I, p. 297. Ibragimbeyli (op. cit., p. 198) cites 27 battalions of regular infantry. Averyanov (op. cit., 1900, pp. 87–88; op. cit., 1995, p. 52) mentions 20,000 regular infantry, 3,000 regular cavalry with 46 guns and 14,000 irregulars, including 4,000 Kurds.

Ardahan.¹⁷⁶ The irregulars were the *başıbozüks* under the command of Hasan Yazıcı of Damascus and the nomadic Kurds under the command of their tribal chiefs, who were more interested in pillaging Armenian villages than in the war. The number of these *başıbozüks* seems to have been exaggerated by Russian sources. Ahmed Pasha states that when he asked Hasan Yazıcı how many cavalry he had, Hasan Yazıcı answered he had 2,000 men. Upon a close view of them, however, Ahmed Pasha found out that there were only about 800 horsemen, of which more than half were youngsters and riff raff.¹⁷⁷ It is certain that these *sergerdes* as well as the pashas were engaged in muster roll fraud, receiving pay and rations for more troops than were actually employed. We will see more on this matter.

On the Russian side, upon the news of the success of Andronikov, Bebutov decided to attack the Ottoman army, even though his force consisted only of 10 and a half battalions of infantry (7,000 bayonets), 10 squadrons of cavalry and 15 irregular cavalry hundreds (*sotnya*) (together 2,800 sabres) together with 32 guns.¹⁷⁸ Ahmed Pasha, however, during his trial in Istanbul, gave much exaggerated figures for the Russian army at Başgedikler: 24 battalions of infantry, 6 regiments of cavalry, about 3,000 irregular cavalry and 60 guns. Of these, he further argued, 6 battalions had remained in the rear near their wagons, the rest having taken up a position in front of the Ottoman army, with one regiment of cavalry and 4 guns opposite Veli Pasha. Abdi Pasha on the other hand stated that he heard the Russians had 12 battalions.¹⁷⁹

On 1 December 1853, when the Russians advanced from Şüregel towards Başgedikler, Ahmed Pasha also decided to attack them, relying upon his numerical superiority, notwithstanding his later understatement of his forces and overstatement of Russian forces. The problem was that an open field battle requiring high manoeuvrability and tight coordination of infantry, cavalry and artillery was apparently beyond

¹⁷⁶ In the interrogation of Abdi Pasha, Ali Rıza Pasha and Ahmed Pasha, the *müşteşar* of the Anatolian army produces a document where the forces before Gümrü are described as more than 40,000 men including both regulars and irregulars. Abdi Pasha, however, argues that he had only 17,000 to 18,000 men and he even argues that the number of troops at that time around Gümrü can be found in the reports to the office of the *serasker*. Budak has used the ATASE archive extensively, but he does not mention any such reports or Abdi Pasha's claim. See BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 6, 17 December 1854. Cf. Budak, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁷ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Zayonchkovskiy, *op. cit.* (2002), vol. II, part I, p. 404. Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 297.

¹⁷⁹ Ahmed Pasha's statement. BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 2.

the competence of the Ottoman army. Furthermore, Ahmed Pasha did not have a battle plan, therefore the officers under his command did not receive any orders as to how to begin the battle, what to do and where to retreat if the enemy should prove stronger and retreat become necessary.¹⁸⁰ The military *meclis* in Erzurum also stated that Ahmed Pasha had hidden behind a rock during the battle and had not issued proper commands. Many soldiers were absent from the battalions, because they had been sent after barley, hay and tezek and for washing clothes. Thus even the 19 infantry battalions and 10 cavalry squadrons that actually participated in the battle were not complete and they were formed into one line without the second line and the reserve. Ahmed Pasha in fact confesses that he did not give specific instructions to his troops. He himself states that he had collected the pashas and told them: "Here is the enemy in front of you. It is high time to serve our religion and community. Let everybody act accordingly and take care of his own command!"¹⁸¹ Ahmed Pasha did not accept the other charges and claimed that he found it harmful to announce beforehand where to retreat in case of defeat because this would have discouraged the troops.

In this battle the Ottoman army was routed and collapsed into a disorderly retreat towards Kars, with heavy losses. Ahmed Pasha reports that at one point there were no Ottoman officers on the field above the rank of captain. Hafiz Pasha and his reserve battalions and guns also fled. The Ottomans lost 24 guns and a total of 6,000 (8,000?) men, of whom about 1,500 men including 8 officers were killed and the rest were wounded or taken prisoner. Russian losses amounted to about 1,300 men, including 9 officers killed.¹⁸² General-Major Iliko Orbe-

¹⁸⁰ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 3, page 3, answers to question [13]. Budak briefly mentions this document, but does not quote from it. Cf. Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 58. In fact, Budak has devoted, somewhat surprisingly, very meagre space (one and a half pages) to this battle, in comparison with his coverage of other less important battles.

¹⁸¹ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 3, page 3, answers to question [13].

¹⁸² Despite his research in the ATASE and the BOA, Budak (op. cit., 1993, p. 59) does not provide Ottoman figures for losses in this battle. Instead he quotes from John Curtiss. Thus he claims that Ottoman losses included 26 guns and 8,000 dead, while the Russian commander Bebutov reported Ottoman losses as 24 guns and more than 6,000 men. See Tarle, *ibid.* Although there is reference to certain detailed tables of losses in the interrogation of Abdi and Ahmed Pashas, I could not find them in the BOA. Zayonchkovskiy (op. cit., vol. II, part I, p. 414) gives total Ottoman losses as 8,000 men, including more than 1,500 dead in the field, including a certain Ibrahim Pasha, 2 regimental and 5 battalion commanders.

liani died of his wounds soon after the battle.¹⁸³ According to Ahmed Pasha, Ottoman losses included more than 500 dead, more than 700 wounded and 7 prisoners, while the Russians lost about 3,000 dead (of which 120 were officers from lieutenant to general), more than 4,000 wounded and 5 prisoners. Obviously these figures have nothing to do with reality: One can hardly believe that the Russians drove away the Ottoman army and captured 24 guns although they suffered about 6 times more losses! The Kurdish *başbozüks* plundered the Ottoman headquarters during their retreat and dispersed to their homes. On the relations of Kurds with the Russians, more will be said in Chapter 5 on the revolt of Yezdanşer. The *başbozüks* of Hasan Yazıcı also did not participate in the battle.¹⁸⁴

According to the French consul in Erzurum, wounded soldiers from the battle of Başgedikler who had been brought to Erzurum stated that there were about 1,200 wounded in the hospitals of Kars. It was also reported that the Russian army had captured 28 guns and 500 to 600 prisoners. It had occupied the villages between Kars and Arpaçay. The troops of the Anatolian army had been demoralized and they were deserting every day in groups. The consul added that Zarif Pasha had returned to Erzurum and asked him to request the French ambassador to help dismiss the current army commander and to find an able person for the job. Zarif Pasha even said that since it was difficult to save the Anatolian army without the help of the French, it was desirable that the French emperor appoint a general or at least a few high-ranking officers to the Anatolian army.¹⁸⁵

On the day following the destruction of the Ottoman squadron at Sinop, the Ottoman army had now suffered a great defeat on land as well. These Russian victories more than compensated for early Ottoman victories on the Danubian and the Caucasian fronts. According to Russian military reports, the Ottoman army had shown some progress in comparison with previous wars, especially the artillery was worthy of praise. Artillery officers and soldiers did their duty very well. The infantry also showed signs of being well trained in movements but in

¹⁸³ Ibragimbeyli, op. cit. (1971), p. 200.

¹⁸⁴ Salih Hayri, op. cit., pp. 102–103. Salih Hayri gives the Ottoman losses in this battle as 1,200 dead and wounded with 24 guns and provisions. He blames Ahmed Pasha for the defeat. Ahmed Rıza Trabzoni (op. cit., pp. 59–60) also blames the commanders of the army.

¹⁸⁵ BOA. HR. SYS. 1190/32 enc. 14.

the open field it was not steady. The cavalry was the worst part of the Ottoman army.¹⁸⁶

The news of Sinop, Ahışa and Başgedikler quickly changed the first impressions of the capabilities of the Ottoman army. Now France and Britain were definitely convinced that the Porte needed help, otherwise it would be defeated. The Russians had now gained the initiative in the Caucasian theatre of war. The Ottoman army had lost much confidence and had become demoralised. From this point on, desertions from the army in Kars increased. The *müşir* and his *feriks* accused each other. Ahmed Pasha was indeed in a difficult situation, because he had disobeyed his commanding officer and had been defeated. However, Ahmed Pasha had enough money to bribe the authorities in Istanbul. He sent his agents to Istanbul with a great deal of money and became the winner of this struggle.¹⁸⁷ Abdi Pasha was recalled to Istanbul and Ahmed Pasha took his place, with Ali Pasha as chief of staff. Meanwhile the commander of the Rumelian army Ömer Pasha proposed his chief of staff Ferik İsmail Pasha to be appointed as commander of the Anatolian army. He also suggested as chief of staff to the same army Ferhad Pasha (General Stein) who was residing in Aleppo.¹⁸⁸

Ahmed Pasha's command was probably the worst that the Anatolian army had ever seen during this war. He was also probably the most corrupt and venal of the pashas at that post. Doctor Sandwith has the following to say of him:

The fate of the miserable army under Ahmed Pasha is among the darkest records of war. His whole faculties were bent upon making money. He had in the first place to recover the sums he had already expended in bribes at Constantinople, and he had, besides, to make his fortune. I could not exaggerate the horrors the poor men suffered under his com-

¹⁸⁶ See Zayonchkovski, op. cit., vol. II, part I, p. 415. One year later, the British Vice-Consul in Trabzon would also report of the inferiority of the Ottoman cavalry in his report on the Battle of Kürekdere. See Vice-Consul Stevens to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, Trebizond, August 12, 1854. PRMA, p. 6.

¹⁸⁷ Sandwith, op. cit., pp. 93–94. Mehmed Süreyya (op. cit., vol. 1, p. 202) in his biographic entry on Ahmed Pasha interestingly notes that he had become a *mirliva* (brigadier general) in a short time and also earned a lot of money in Tripolis (Libya) before 1846. He does not specify how he earned so much money, but in any case it must be certain that he was rich. Doctor Sandwith (op. cit., p. 93) also writes that Ahmed Pasha had formerly enriched himself by plunder in the Kurdish campaign. This is possible and probable, because Ahmed Pasha was appointed to the Anatolian army in 1846, at the time of the insurrection of the Kurdish Bedirhan Bey.

¹⁸⁸ Ömer Pasha to the *serasker*, Şumnu, 22 January 1854. BOA. HR. SYS. 904/1 enc. 58.

mand, for no chief can plunder without allowing a considerable license to his subordinates, so that the poor soldier was fleeced by every officer higher than the Major.¹⁸⁹

Ahmed Pasha's intrigues and corruption are confirmed by Russian sources as well. Ibragimbeyli, referring to some documents in the Georgian archives, writes that Ahmed Pasha made intrigues against Abdi Pasha in Istanbul to receive the command and that he robbed the army to such an extent that it was ruined by misery, hunger and mass diseases.¹⁹⁰ The British consul in Erzurum James Brant also reported to Stratford de Redcliffe on Ahmed Pasha's rule. Stratford forwarded this report to Lord Clarendon, who in turn wrote a strong worded letter to Lord Stratford, intended for the consumption of Reşid Pasha. Clarendon made it clear that the "rapacity, ignorance and neglect of Ahmed Pasha" were not to be tolerated, adding that

If the Turkish government has not the will or the the [sic] power to punish this man, and to make him refund the wealth which he has amassed by defrauding the soldiers, others will follow his criminal example, and the Allied Armies will look in vain for that support from the Turkish Troops that they have a right to expect while engaged in defending the Sultan's cause.¹⁹¹

Abdi Pasha's evidence in Istanbul also worked against Ahmed Pasha and, in February 1854, Ahmed Pasha was replaced in his post by Zarif Mustafa Pasha, the governor of Erzurum.¹⁹² Zarif Pasha arrived at Kars to take over the command of the army on 6 March 1854.¹⁹³ Abdi Pasha and Ahmed Pasha's trials in Istanbul began only at the end of 1854 following pressure from Lord Stratford. Abdi Pasha was finally acquitted in 1855. Ahmed Pasha was found guilty and first exiled to Cyprus in 1855. However, like so many other Ottoman pashas, he was pardoned after conviction and a period of unemployment. Thus we see that in December 1859, he was made the *mutasarrıf* of Adana with the rank of *mirmiran*. His last office is recorded as governorship of Yemen from 1867 to 1869.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Sandwith, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁹⁰ Ibragimbeyli, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁹¹ Clarendon to Statford de Redcliffe, 11 April 1854. BOA. HR. TO. 222/27.

¹⁹² Karal, op. cit. (1940), p. 484.

¹⁹³ Hayreddin Pasha to the *serasker*, 8 March 1854. BOA. İ. DH. 298/18801 enc. 2.

¹⁹⁴ Mehmed Süreyya, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 202–203. Kuneralp, op. cit., p. 60.

Karl Marx's article in the NYDT, published on 15 November 1853, had described the future prospects of the Anatolian army prophetically:

A short time ago it might have been believed that the Turks, if weaker in Europe, enjoyed a decided superiority in Asia. Abdi Pasha, who commands the Asiatic army, was said to have collected 60,000 or 80,000, nay 120,000 men, and swarms of Bedouins, Kurds, and other warlike irregulars were reported to flock daily to his standard. Arms and ammunitions were said to be in store for the Caucasian insurgents; and as soon as war was declared, an advance was to be made into the very heart of these centres of resistance to Russia. It may, however, be as well to observe that Abdi Pasha cannot possibly have more than about 30,000 regular troops, and that before the Caucasus is reached, with these, and with these alone, he will have to encounter the stubborn resistance of Russian battalions. His Bedouins and Kurdish horsemen may be capital for mountain warfare, for forcing the Russians to detach largely and to weaken their main body; they may do a great deal of damage to the Georgian and Colonist villages in the Russian Territory, and even open some sort of an underhand communication with the Caucasian mountaineers. But unless Abdi Pasha's regulars are capable of blocking up the road from Batum to Erzurum, and can defeat whatever nucleus of an active army the Russians may be enabled to bring together, the success of the irregulars will be of a very ephemeral nature... In 1829 the Russian forces in Asia amounted, before Erzerum, to 18,000 men only, and considering the improvements that have since then taken place in the Turkish army (although that of Asia has least participated in them), we should say the Russians would have a fair chance of success if they could unite 30,000 men in a body before the same place now.¹⁹⁵

Indeed the Russian army did take Kars again when its number reached this figure. By then the Ottoman army had fallen behind in numbers.

Thus the year 1853 ended on the Caucasian front with a Russian superiority. The Ottoman army had suffered a powerful blow to its self-confidence at the battles of Ahıska and Başgedikler. Disorganised and demoralised, its high command no longer thought of any attack or advance. The need for a remedy in the Anatolian army was obvious for the allies as well. The British embassy had been urging the Porte to send the Hungarian refugee general of British origin Richard Debaufre Guyon (1813–1856), who lived under his new Ottoman name Hurşid Pasha in Damascus. In fact, Hurşid Pasha himself had already applied to the Porte to serve in the Rumelian or Anatolian army even before

¹⁹⁵ "The Holy War", NYDT, Leader, November 15, 1853. See Karl Marx, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–156.

the declaration of war and he was ordered to go to Erzurum soon after the declaration of war.¹⁹⁶ (As was said before, the Porte did not want to send Hungarian refugee officers to the Danubian front due to Austrian pressure.) The order of appointment of Hurşid Pasha to the Anatolian army did not, however, specify his position. From the wording of the *tezkire*, it seems that he was meant to serve on the staff of the army in Erzurum.

Hurşid Pasha arrived at Erzurum in early December. According to a British consular report from Erzurum, dated 23 December 1853, Hurşid Pasha had reportedly said to the *müşir* and to the members of the *meclis* of the city, that he had an imperial order to take up matters in the Anatolian army and if his advice went unheeded, he would at once return to Istanbul and report accordingly to the Porte. Thereupon the governor and the *meclis* assured him that his advice would be listened to. Again according to this report, he inspected the fortifications of the city and ordered new ones to be built. He also inspected the military hospitals, provisions and the troops. He found that the salaries of the soldiers were 12 to 18 months in arrears, while the pashas were usually one month or in some cases 3 months in arrears of pay. Then he reproached the pashas for not caring for the men under their command while protecting their own comfort very well. He told them that they could have given up their salaries for one year instead of leaving the soldiers without salary and this would not be a great burden for them. Then he ordered the payment of two months' salaries to the soldiers. The consular report also states that Hurşid Pasha had thus gained much popularity among the soldiers and they pledged to follow him to the last step.¹⁹⁷ This is interesting information, but unfortunately we do not have a confirmation from another source, preferably an Ottoman source. If the contents of this report are true, then we can safely assume that the seeds of dissension between Hurşid Pasha and some other pashas had already been sown by this act. Indeed, we will see later that Hurşid Pasha did not get along well with Zarif Pasha, the former governor and the new Commander-in-Chief of the Anatolian army beginning from March 1854.

¹⁹⁶ Sultan's *irade*, 13 October 1853. See BOA. İ. DH. 281/17617. Also see instructions (*tezkire*) from the grand vizier to the *serasker*, 16 October 1853. BOA. A. MKT. NZD. 95 /82.

¹⁹⁷ Translation of an extract from a report from the British consulate in Erzurum to the British embassy. BOA. HR. TO. 219/84, 23 December 1853.

According to Hurşid Pasha's own letter from Kars, dated 27 December 1853, he departed from Damascus and arrived at Kars on 9 December 1853.¹⁹⁸ In this letter, he does not mention Erzurum at all. Hurşid Pasha writes that he could have arrived earlier had he not been kept waiting for two weeks to receive his travel money. He was soon appointed chief of staff of the Anatolian army, but from his first letter from Kars it is clear that he did not yet know his exact position in the army. The tone of this letter does not coincide with the consular report mentioned above, where he boldly states to all pashas and other officials in Erzurum that he holds an imperial order and his advice should be heeded. Stratford de Redcliffe wanted him to practically command the army. Nevertheless, Hurşid Pasha was to face the opposition of both the Ottoman and the Polish parties in the Anatolian army.

In his letter Hurşid Pasha stated his opinion on the causes of the defeats of the Anatolian army. First, he wrote that the artillery had ammunition enough for only 200 shots for each cannon whereas it had been 400 shots previously. Secondly, he argued, two corps had been detached from the Kars army to Ahışa and Bayezid; as those places were far away from Kars, they did not receive help from Kars and they were uselessly placed in danger. Thirdly, it was a mistake to march with 28,000 men upon such a well-fortified fortress as Gümrü. The army should instead march upon Tiflis. Furthermore, he argued that, at the battle of Bayındır, the Russian army was half the size of the Ottoman army and thus it provided a good opportunity for the Ottoman army. Although the Russians suffered big losses, the battle consisted only of 4.5 hours of cannonade and neither the Ottoman cavalry nor the infantry were sent against the enemy, even the retreat route of the enemy towards the fortress (of Gümrü) was not blocked. Fourth, in the battle of Ahışa, the Russian forces were equal to Ottoman forces in number but the Ottoman battalions were separated from each other, therefore the compact Russian forces were superior to the Ottoman battalions. Furthermore, the commander Ferik Ali Pasha had himself "retreated" from the battle scene, leaving the troops to disorder and total defeat with the loss of 14 cannons. Fifth, in the battle of Başgedikler, the *Reis*

¹⁹⁸ Translation of Ferik Hurşid Pasha's letter from Kars to the foreign minister Reşid Pasha, dated 27 December 1853. BOA. HR. SYS. 904/1 enc. 49 and BOA. HR. MKT. 68/42. (The second document is not a full translation). This translation gives the date of Hurşid Pasha's arrival at Kars as 9 *Kanun-ı Evvel*, which by the Julian calendar corresponds to 21 December. However, it might mean 9 December as well.

(Chief of Staff) Ahmed Pasha should have retreated in orderly fashion towards Kars, waiting for the 8 battalions of infantry, 18 cannons and 3 regiments of cavalry from the Arabistan army in Kars, then the Ottoman forces would have had a definite superiority against the Russians. Hurşid Pasha asserted that the Ottoman losses in this battle were not only 26 cannons but also demoralisation of the army, which variously retreated in confusion, deserted, or showed signs of distrust towards its commanders.

Hurşid Pasha suggested that by the next spring the number of the Anatolian army should be increased to 50 or 60 thousand and the number of cannons up to 100 or 130. Then the army should leave a corps around Gümrü and march against Tiflis, trying to urge the Russian Muslims to insurgence and to meet with the forces of “Shamil Bey”, meaning Sheikh Shamil, the Imam of Dagestan. Hurşid Pasha also observed that the Anatolian army did not have any proper maps of the region. He suggested that the French ministry of war had a good map of the Caucasus in Paris, the grand vizier might ask the French for a copy. Hurşid Pasha wanted more money allowance for spies and better administration of the provisions.

Hurşid Pasha considered Abdi Pasha to be the most competent officer in the Anatolian army but he wrote that Abdi Pasha shared his authority with Ahmed Pasha, who was totally unfit for large scale army operations and unexperienced in commanding an army. However, in his report from Kars to the British embassy, dated 17 January 1854, Hurşid Pasha wrote that he got on very well with Ahmed Pasha and he hoped to get on better when his firman arrived. On the other hand, the mushir was trying to get things out of his hands “by forming a medjlis for the wants and operations of the army”. Hurşid Pasha also wrote that Staff Colonel Faik Bey was intriguing against him. Having heard that Ferhad Pasha was coming to the Kars army, Hurşid Pasha was vehemently against Ferhad Pasha. “With stupidity on one side, and treachery on the other, I shall have a nice berth of it”¹⁹⁹ Hurşid Pasha also wrote that the government owed the troops 11 million (piastres) in salaries.

¹⁹⁹ Extract. Kars, 17 January 1854. BOA. HR. SYS. 904/1 enc. 55. Translation into Ottoman Turkish is in enc. 54. Although this extract of a letter is not signed, its form and contents leave no doubt on its authorship.

The Danubian Front in 1854 and the Declaration of War by France and Britain

The year 1854 opened with another Ottoman victory on the Danubian front. The commander of the Ottoman forces in Kalafat (opposite Vidin), Ferik Çerkes İsmail Pasha attacked the Russian forces near the village of Çatana to the north of Kalafat on 31 December with a few thousand cavalry and infantry. The attack was repulsed, but on 6 January, the Orthodox Christmas day, a large Ottoman force of about 18,000 men attacked a smaller Russian force under the command of Colonel Aleksandr Baumgarten near Çatana. A second small Russian force was in a nearby village under the command of Brigadier General Belgard. Thus the total number of these two units (according to Tarle and other Russian sources) was about 7,000.²⁰⁰ On the other hand, according to the report of the Ottoman Commander-in-Chief Müşir Ömer Lütfi Pasha, the Ottoman force that took part in this battle consisted of 11 infantry battalions, 4 batteries (24 guns) and 3 cavalry regiments, while the Russian forces included 15 infantry battalions, 24 guns and 3 cavalry regiments, that is to say, the Russians had 4 battalions more of infantry.²⁰¹

These Russian units were under the command of General Anrep, who stayed in Boloeshti, not far from Çatana. In this battle, the Russians lost about 2,300 men and officers, killed and wounded, according to Tarle.²⁰² According to Ömer Pasha, Ottoman losses were 300 dead and 700 wounded, while the Russians lost about 4,000 dead and many wounded. He also wrote that the Ottoman soldiers had bayoneted many Russian prisoners of war in their rage and anger, bringing only a few of them alive to Kalafat.²⁰³

Serasker Mehmed Ali Pasha, however, in his report to Grand Vizier Mustafa Naili Pasha, wrote that, although it was reported that this bayoneting of live prisoners was a result of the soldiers' rage, and while it was understood that they were reprimanded for this act, this was not in fact an act of spontaneous fury as stated by Ömer Pasha, but the result of the soldiers' awareness of Russian atrocities during the battle

²⁰⁰ Tarle, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 289.

²⁰¹ Ömer Pasha to the *serasker*, Şumnu, 13 January 1854. BOA. İ. HR. 114/5554-09 enc. 1.

²⁰² Tarle, *ibid.*

²⁰³ Ömer Pasha, *ibid.*

of Sinop, when the Russians had continued to shell the Ottoman sailors who had jumped into the sea trying to reach the shore, and had fired about one thousand cannon shots on the corpses on the shore. Thus, the *serasker* continued, he had heard that the Ottoman soldiers had intentionally killed the prisoners and the wounded. He acknowledged that this act was indeed illegitimate and was in itself a harmful thing, being also contrary to earlier directions, and it was necessary to announce and to confirm once again that such actions were not to be repeated.²⁰⁴

At the battle of Çatana, the Russians had captured two cannons from the Ottomans due to the desertion of some squadrons from the 4th cavalry regiment. For this reason, Lieutenant-Colonel Sadık Bey and Major Ahmed Bey of the said 4th cavalry regiment were later found guilty of desertion and expelled from the army by decision of the DŞA.²⁰⁵ However, Ömer Pasha does not mention this fact in his first report above, nor does he seem to have reported it in his three other reports submitted during January 1854.²⁰⁶ In any case, this is just another example showing that the regular cavalry, like the irregular cavalry, was one of the least efficient components of the Ottoman army.

On the Russian side, most Russian sources (both tsarist military historians and Soviet historians) accuse General Anrep of not coming to the assistance of his units, although the cannonade could clearly be heard in Boloeshti. They also argue that due to the incompetence of General Gorchakov, the small Russian forces in Little Walachia were sacrificed to the Ottoman army.²⁰⁷

Thus the Ottomans closed the winter campaign on the Danube with victory. In his report dated 14 January 1854, Ömer Pasha informed the Serasker that Cetate would indeed remain as the most significant battle on the Danube front. However, the Ottomans did not follow the enemy and retreated to Kalafat. In both cases they had luck on their side,

²⁰⁴ Serasker Pasha to the grand vizier, 22 January 1854. BOA. İ. DH. 18116. However, the grand vizier in his petition (*arz tezkiresi*) does not relate this event to the Sultan. The *serasker* pasha mentions three attached letters from Ömer Pasha dated January 1854. However, these letters are not found in this file.

²⁰⁵ BOA. İ. DH. 21265, 31 August 1855.

²⁰⁶ BOA. İ. DH. 18116.

²⁰⁷ For example, see Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 284–290. Also see Modest Ivanovich Bogdanovich, *Vostochnaya Voina 1853–1856 godov*. St. Petersburg: Tip. M. Stasiulievicha, 1877, Glava VII. Winfried Baumgart (*op. cit.*, p. 96) gives the Russian losses as 831 dead and 1,190 wounded.

while the Russian command was inefficient. Overall, like many battles of the Crimean War, this was an unfinished and indecisive battle.

The rest of January and February was quiet on the Danubian front. Sultan Abdülmecid conferred on Mushir Ömer Pasha the title of *Serdar-ı Ekrem* (generalissimo) on 15 February 1854. Ömer Pasha also retained his post of the commander of the Rumeli army.²⁰⁸

While these battles took place, diplomatic missions continued their work. During this time, both Russian and Western diplomacy focused on winning Austria and Prussia as allies. Towards the end of January, Nikolai sent Count Aleksey Orlov to the young Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph (1830–1916), whom he saw as a son and almost like a vassal. Orlov was one of the favourites of Nikolai and unlike Meshikov, had the reputation of being a good diplomat. Although he was the brother of Mikhail Orlov, one of the leaders of the Decembrist revolt in 1825, his behaviour as the commander of a cavalry regiment during the revolt had made him a favourite of the tsar. According to Tarle, Orlov did not believe that he could come to an agreement with Franz Joseph and his foreign minister Count Ferdinand Buol.²⁰⁹ However, he could not object to Nikolai's request, so he went to Vienna. His task was to convince Franz Joseph to be neutral for the moment, but to enter the war on the side of Russia if France and Britain declared war against Russia. In return he was promised Russian help against all enemies and internal revolutions, and Russia also promised not to make any decision regarding the fate of the Ottoman Empire without agreement from Austria. In Vienna however, the pro-Russian party had lost ground. Franz Joseph and Buol did not want to commit themselves to the policy of Nikolai. Thus Orlov's mission was unsuccessful.²¹⁰

Towards the end of January 1854 Napoleon III wrote a letter to Nikolai I, which was published in the French official newspaper *Le Moniteur Universel* and the *St Peterburgskie Vedomosti* together with Nikolai's reply on 9 February. The French emperor stated that "*Notre attitude vis à vis de la Turquie était protective mais passive*".²¹¹ Napoleon proposed the withdrawal of the French and British fleets from the Black

²⁰⁸ BOA. Í. DH. 18072. Also see Lütfi, op. cit., pp. 211–212.

²⁰⁹ Tarle, op. cit., vol. I, p. 409.

²¹⁰ The details of this mission are to be found in Tarle, "Missiya grafa Aleksey Orlova k Frantsu-Iosifu i pozitsiya Avstrii pered perekhodom russkikh voysk cherez Dunai", op. cit., vol. I, pp. 405–428.

²¹¹ A copy of this letter is at BOA. HR. SYS. 905/1 enc. 82.

Sea and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldavia and Wallachia. Nikolai in return proposed that the Franco-British fleets should only prevent the Ottomans from carrying weapons and ammunition to Russian coasts and that the Porte should send its representative to St Petersburg for negotiations on the basis of these conditions. Diplomatic relations between Russia and France and Britain were severed in February 1854. The Russian ambassadors (Count Kiselev in Paris and Brunnov in London) left for Russia. The British and French ambassadors in St. Petersburg also returned home.²¹²

Towards the end of February 1854, Britain and France gave an ultimatum to Emperor Nikolai to withdraw from the principalities. Nikolai did not give an official answer and unofficially made it known that he would not reply to such an ultimatum. Therefore Britain and France concluded an agreement of alliance with the Porte on 12 March 1854. On 27 March, France and Britain finally declared war on Russia. On 31 March the first French and then British troops landed in Gallipoli. By this time Lord Aberdeen had dealt another blow to Nikolai: He approved of the publication of Sir Hamilton Seymour's conversations with Nikolai in January-February 1853. The publication of these conversations was especially harmful for Russo-Austrian relations, because Franz Joseph and Count Buol were indignant at Nikolai's disrespect and patronizing attitude towards Austria in his talks with the British envoy, when Nikolai had made it clear that he felt Austria need not be considered as an independent actor, and had taken Austrian consent for granted. The Russian government's objections were published in Russian newspapers, stating that Seymour had misunderstood Nikolai. "The Emperor has never thought of any partition, he directed attention to the future and not to the present, he had in mind only future possibilities", it was announced.²¹³ But these excuses were, of course, not convincing in the eyes of European diplomats or the public.

It would be interesting to know whether the Porte knew of the Nikolai-Seymour conversations before their publication. It seems that it did not. Kostaki Musurus's despatch dated 17 March 1854 mentions the intention of the British cabinet to disclose these conversations, but very interestingly he argues that the Petersburg cabinet itself had dis-

²¹² Paris Ambassador Veli Pasha to the foreign minister, 10 February 1854. BOA. HR. SYS. 905/1 enc. 97.

²¹³ Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 494.

closed in a Petersburg newspaper the offers of Nikolai I to the Queen regarding the partition of Ottoman Empire with the purpose of setting France and Britain against each other.²¹⁴

Thus the efforts of the Russian ambassador in Vienna (Baron Peter von Meyendorff) to gain Austria as an ally came to nothing. The French and British ambassadors in Vienna finally managed to sign a protocol of four points with Count Buol.²¹⁵ This protocol came to be known as the “four points”. The first point stated that the Russian protectorate over Serbia, Wallachia and Moldavia should be ended and these principalities should be placed under the guarantee of the great powers. Secondly, the mouths of the Danube should be free for navigation. The third and probably the most important (but also the vaguest) point stipulated that the Straits Treaty of 1841 should be revised “in the interest of the European balance of power”. The fourth was the only point related to the immediate cause of the war: Russia should abandon its claim to protect the Orthodox population of the Ottoman Empire and the Christians of the Ottoman Empire should be placed under the protection of the great powers, without violating the sovereign rights of the Sultan. A secret fifth point, agreed between France and Britain only, clarified the third point to some extent: Russia should give up its “preponderance” in the Black Sea, by reducing its navy to four ships of war and by demolishing and not re-establishing the Sevastopol naval base.²¹⁶

Meyendorff, who was a brother-in-law of Buol, tried to obtain the text of this protocol but he was rejected. He then almost threatened Count Buol: “Remember that Russia has a 700,000-strong army and it should not be approached as a second-rate state”.²¹⁷ Nevertheless he had gained some unofficial and vague information about the protocol. According to what he heard, the agreement concerned maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, evacuation of the principalities by Russia and improving the status of Christians in the Ottoman Empire.

²¹⁴ Translation of Kostaki Bey’s despatch to Reşid Pasha, dated 17 March 1854. BOA. HR. TO. 52/59.

²¹⁵ Gavin Henderson has called this event and the consequent alienation of Austria from Russia as a diplomatic revolution in the Concert of Europe. However, he claimed that the four points came into being in July 1854. See Henderson, “The Diplomatic Revolution of 1854: I The Four Points”, *The American Historical Review* 43(1), October 1937, p. 27.

²¹⁶ Baumgart, op. cit., p. 19.

²¹⁷ Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit., vol. II, part one, p. 511.

It seems that he did not manage to learn the full contents of all the four points. He also observed that prices in the Vienna stock exchange had risen. He felt that the stock exchange fluctuations reflected the opinion that the greater the number of enemies of Russia, the greater the chances for a peace. On 20 April, Austria also signed a “defensive and offensive” agreement with Prussia.²¹⁸

Meanwhile the first clash between the allies and Russia happened at Odessa. On 9 April the British frigate *Furious* came to Odessa to take onboard the British consul there. A sloop was detached from the frigate with a white flag. The port authorities then told the officer in the sloop that the consul had already left, and the sloop then returned to the *Furious*. At that time, or some time before, the Russian port battery fired a few shots which were not aimed at the sloop or the frigate. The Russian authorities later claimed it was intended as a warning only. They argued that the frigate had come too close to the shore. In any case no damage was done. As Adolphus Slade remarked, a boat flying a truce flag should wait at a distance, until another boat came to meet it from the shore.²¹⁹ The allied admirals took offence and sent a squadron of sail ships of the line and steamers to demand the release of neutrals and the surrender of all British, French and Russian ships at anchor in the port as reparation for the breach of international law. The governor of Odessa, Count Osten-Sacken released the neutral ships but refused to give up the Russian ships. Then the allied fleet on 22 April bombarded the harbour and its facilities. Although they claimed that they did not aim at the city and the civilians, the city was also damaged. Slade is very critical of such acts, arguing that “war is never aided by needless severity or destruction of domestic property”.²²⁰ Though this was a skirmish, the allied navies had now sent a clear message that they were the masters in the Black Sea.

Austria continued its armed neutrality; mobilizing its army and effectively becoming more and more anti-Russian. It even informed Russia that if Russian troops crossed the Danube then Austria would respond with force. For fear of a Serbian uprising that would upset its own Serbs, Austria concentrated troops on the Serbian frontier. Emperor Nikolai I was still undaunted; he thought he could

²¹⁸ Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit., vol. II, part one, pp. 510–511.

²¹⁹ Slade, op. cit., p. 215.

²²⁰ Slade, op. cit., p. 218.

still go on with his plans without Austria. The Greeks had revolted in Thessaly and Epirus. Nikolai now harboured the illusion that the Serbs and Bulgarians would also rise against the “Turkish yoke”. The Greek government secretly supported the insurgents, while the Greek newspapers openly called for an uprising. However, in April and May the Greek insurrection was suppressed by the Ottoman army under the command of Fuad Efendi, with the help of the allied fleets threatening Athens and Piraeus.²²¹

Nikolai’s plans for the spring campaign included crossing the Danube to Vidin, Rusçuk and Silistria and the siege of these cities together with Galatz and Brailov in the north. Russian troops, in accordance with this plan, occupied the whole Dobruca region during 23 to 29 March. The Russian army across the Danube numbered 45,000 men under the command of General Aleksandr Lüders.²²² For Nikolai, Silistria was to be the stronghold from which to attack the allied expeditionary force which he assumed would be landed at Varna. Indeed his assumption was proven to be correct.

In Silistria there was an Ottoman force of 12,000 men under the command of Ferik Musa Hulusi Pasha (?–1854). There were also about six British officers in Silistria, among whom Captain James Butler and Lieutenant Charles Nasmyth are best remembered.²²³ In the Russo-Ottoman war of 1828–1829, the Ottoman army in Silistria had held out against Russia for six months. The fortress there had subsequently been strengthened by the addition of outer fortifications. Russia laid siege on 5 April. The commander of the siege forces was the aged General Karl Andreyevich Schilder (1785–1854), who had taken Silistria in 1829 by mining operations. One of his aides was military engineer Lieutenant-Colonel Eduard Ivanovich Totleben (1818–1884) responsible for fortification and sapper works. Later, Totleben was to undertake the fortification of Sevastopol. Meanwhile, Field Marshal Paskevich came

²²¹ See Cevdet Pasha, *Tezâkir 40-Tetimme*, pp. 67–68. Interestingly, Fuad Efendi signs a letter to Cevdet Pasha as “*Ceneral-i orduy-ı Yanya ve Narda*”. This is probably because he had become temporarily a general but not a pasha. Also see Besbelli, *op. cit.*, p. 59, Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 248–253.

²²² Baumgart, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

²²³ Both had served in the East India Company army. Butler has left a “journal”. These six British officers received the Mecidiye order. See BOA. İ. DH. 19455, 14 August 1854. However, as we have seen in the introductory chapter, Lane-Poole has quite exaggerated their role, arguing that without them “the garrison might have surrendered”.

from Warsaw to Bucharest to take direct command of the occupation army. Paskevich arrived at Bucharest on 22 April. Ottoman reinforcements also began to arrive at Silistria. By May, the garrison muster-roll rose to 18,000 troops of all types.²²⁴

Paskevich had only grown more sceptical of the Danubian campaign. He was worried by the concentration of Austrian troops (said to have reached 280,000 men) along the borders of Wallachia and Moldavia.²²⁵ They posed a real threat as Austria had already warned Russia not to cross the Danube. Paskevich now tried to convince Nikolai to evacuate the principalities. He said that the Bulgarians and the Serbians were not to be expected to rise. By the evacuation of the principalities, Paskevich argued, Russia would gain time, which would work against the allies. Meanwhile Russia could reinforce its armies. But Nikolai did not heed his advice.²²⁶ Retaining Paskevich, who simply did not believe in his plans, was indeed one of Nikolai's biggest mistakes.

By May 1854, the Russian forces around Silistria had reached 90,000 men with 266 cannons.²²⁷ This was, at the time, the single largest Russian siege force ever deployed against an Ottoman fortress. It soon started siege works around the fortress and the Russian bombardment of Silistria began in the middle of May.²²⁸ But Paskevich hesitated to make a decisive assault on the fortifications and Ferik Musa Pasha energetically continued to improve the fortifications. On 4 May, Paskevich wrote a second letter to Nikolai, this time more clearly proposing to retreat. He wrote that, surrounded by the French and the "Turks" from the front, and by Austria from the rear, they did not have a chance. On receipt of this letter on 11 May, Nikolai felt offended and angry. After all their efforts, losses and expenses, now his Commander-in-Chief was proposing to leave the principalities with shame! On the next day he wrote his reply, stating that he had received the letter with "extreme grief and no less astonishment" and he would not accept his

²²⁴ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

²²⁵ Baumgart, *ibid.*

²²⁶ Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 486–487.

²²⁷ Zayonchkovskiy, *op. cit.*, vol. II, part 2, p. 272. Tarle gives 210 cannons. Cf. Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 500.

²²⁸ Captain Nafiz Efendi, who was an Ottoman artillery sergeant-major at that time, gives the date of the beginning of the siege as 12 May 1854. M. Bogdanovich (editor of the article), however, remarks that the bombardment began on the night of 17–18 May. See Nafiz Efendi, "Krepost' Silistriya v 1854 godu", *Voenny Sbornik* 106(12), 1875, p. 502. Captain Butler on the other hand, as quoted by Reid, wrote in his journal that the Russian bombardment began on 16 May. See Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

proposals because they were “shameful” for him. He emphasized that Austria could not enter the war against Russia, and that there was no reason to be afraid of the allies.²²⁹

Meanwhile on 18 May, the allied commanders Marshal Armand-Jacques Leroy de Saint Arnaud (1801–1854) and General Fitzroy James Henry Somerset, Lord Raglan (1788–1855) together with Serasker Hasan Rıza Pasha came to Varna from Istanbul and on 19 May they held a war council with Ömer Pasha who had come from Şumnu. Ömer Pasha was very worried about the Russian siege and offensive. His hopes lay with the allied troops. The allied commanders agreed with Ömer Pasha’s request to bring their troops to Varna as soon as possible. St. Arnaud promised to send 55,000 troops. However, these troops would not arrive at Varna before June and before they were ready to help, the Russians raised the siege of Silistria.²³⁰

Ömer Pasha remained in Şumnu with 40,000 to 45,000 troops, but he hesitated to come to the rescue of Silistria or to make a diversionary operation. In fact he did not want any open field encounter with a large Russian army. All he did was to send the Cossack regiment of Sadık Pasha and 5,000 irregulares from Razgrad to take positions at some distance around the Russian forces. He also allowed Behram Pasha (General Cannon) to make a manoeuvre before the city with a brigade of infantry.²³¹

On 28 May the Russians made an assault on the Arab Tabia in Silistria, but they were repulsed, losing 22 officers (dead and wounded) and 315 dead and 596 wounded rank and file.²³² General Selvan was among the dead. Ottoman losses were about 68 dead, 121 wounded.²³³ On 2 June Musa Pasha was killed by shrapnel while preparing for prayers. His heroic death further increased the spirit of the defenders.²³⁴ Hüseyin Rifat Pasha came from Şumnu to take the command of the defence. He also brought from Ömer Pasha the news that Silistria

²²⁹ Tarle, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 488–489.

²³⁰ Baumgart, op. cit., p. 109. Also see General Andrey N. Petrov, op. cit., as quoted by Staff Captain A. Tevfik Gürel, 1853–55 *Türk-Rus ve Müttefiklerin Kırım Savaşı*. Istanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1935, p. 56. Also see Tarle, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 502.

²³¹ Gürel (op. cit., p. 66) has taken General “Kannon” and “General Behram” for two different persons.

²³² See Tarle, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 505.

²³³ Bogdanovich, op. cit., vol. II, glava XIII, footnote 17.

²³⁴ See Yüzbaşı (Captain) Fevzi Kurtoğlu writes that Musa Pasha was killed when he got out of his room to perform ablution before the noon prayers and while he was talking with an officer. However, Slade (op. cit.,

should not expect relief for about two weeks, until the allies arrived.²³⁵ Meanwhile the provisions of the city were almost at their end. The Russians made a few further indecisive attacks without result. Paskevich in his reports to Nikolai stated that the Ottomans were defending the city with much energy and good strategic knowledge, assisted by foreign officers. However, he could just as well have been concealing his own indecision and vacillation.²³⁶ The French General Pierre F. J. Bosquet also found it strange and wrote that he did not understand what paralysed the Russian army: “This is strange and I feel reluctant to explain it by the impotence of the Russians. There is another thing, like a demoralization, a concern, I do not know what, which paralyses this army” [my translation].²³⁷

On 9 June Paskevich suffered a real (or pretended) contusion and left the command of operations again to Gorchakov, himself returning to Jassy. On 13 June General Schilder was severely wounded and died shortly afterwards. On 21 June the Russian army was prepared to storm the main fortress. At this point, hours before the commencement of storming, Gorchakov received an order from Paskevich to raise the siege and retreat to the left of the Danube. Thus the Russian army retreated but the Ottoman army, as usual, did not follow.²³⁸ The reason for Paskevich’s order of retreat was Austria’s menacing position and the concentration of allied forces in Varna. On 3 June Austria demanded that Russia evacuate the principalities otherwise it would join the allies to force Russia out.²³⁹

On 14 June, the Porte and Austria signed the convention of Boyacıköy, whereby Austria received the right to occupy the principalities temporarily.²⁴⁰ Alarmed, Nikolai decided to retreat. Nesselrode finally responded to the Austrian demand for a retreat on 29 June when the Russians began to evacuate Dobrudja. There were skirmishes between Russian and Ottoman forces at Yergöğü on 5–7 July, but the Russians continued to retreat. In order to save face Russia called its retreat a strategic withdrawal. On 1 August the Russian army left Bucharest.

p. 251) argues that Musa Pasha was killed while he was stepping on to his *seccade* (small carpet) for the evening prayers.

²³⁵ Captain Butler’s journal, quoted by Reid, op. cit., p. 257.

²³⁶ Baumgart, op. cit., pp. 99–100.

²³⁷ Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit., vol. II, part 2, p. 290.

²³⁸ Tarle, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 515–516.

²³⁹ Baumgart, op. cit., p. 101.

²⁴⁰ BOA. I. HR. 111/5445.

The Ottoman army entered Bucharest on 8 August under the command of Halim Pasha and on 22 August Ömer Pasha came to the city.²⁴¹ The Austrians and the Ottomans started to occupy the principalities. The Austrians were careful not to meet the retreating Russians and on 7 September the principalities were completely evacuated by the Russian army.

At the beginning of July the allies decided to embark their armies for the Crimea. They wanted to destroy the Russian navy at Sevastopol. According to Slade, Austria sent a military envoy to Varna to urge the allied generals to a joint campaign in Bessarabia, while Cevdet Pasha, on the contrary, argues that the allies later admitted their mistake and said that they were misled by the Austrians. Cevdet Pasha also writes that the proposal for a campaign in Bessarabia came from Ömer Pasha.²⁴² In any case, France and Britain, too confident of their military might and not wanting to share their victory with anybody, even with the Ottoman Empire, started preparations for embarkation from Varna on 14 August. They relied on their steam frigates and screw-propelled line-of-battle ships to defy distance, facilitate logistic support and destroy the Russian fleet. They had planned to finish the Crimean campaign by Christmas.

The allied fleets had come to Varna and anchored off Balçık. They did not want the Ottoman fleet to have any active role in the Black Sea. Rather, they wanted it to protect the Bosphorus and cruise between Varna and Istanbul. While the Ottomans and the allies could not or did not want to conquer Bessarabia, a brave Russian war steamer called the *Bessarabia* left Sevastopol on 19 July and steamed among enemy shipping across the Black Sea up to the north-western coast of Anatolia, capturing two Ottoman merchant vessels, one off Kerempe, the other off Amasra, laden with maize and coal. The *Bessarabia* then took the coal, burned the vessels and disembarked their crew at Ereğli, retaining only their captains and scribes as evidence. She then returned to Sevastopol. When the *kaimmakam* of Ereğli reported the situation to Istanbul, he was met with suspicion. The Russian navy had once again showed its contempt for the allied fleets.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Baumgart, op. cit., p. 104.

²⁴² Slade, op. cit., p. 253. Cf. Cevdet Pasha, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁴³ Besbelli, op. cit., p. 66. Özcan (op. cit., 1990, p. 93) mentions only one merchant vessel, *Medar-ı Ticaret* and states that the steamer *Şehper* was attacked off Kerempe by Russian pirates but managed to come to the harbour of Sinop intact.

Varna had become a hub of activity, brimming with ships, troops, stores of provisions and ammunition. The best houses and private shops had been occupied by the allies without any payment to the owners. A year later these owners, Muslim and non-Muslim, were sending petitions to the Porte, complaining that they had not received any rent.²⁴⁴ Foreign residents alone were exempt from this free quartering. The inhabitants were also irritated by the drunkenness of the allied soldiers. On one occasion, French soldiers went to a Muslim café and demanded wine. When they were told wine was not sold there, a quarrel ensued and consequently one person was killed and several wounded. On 10 August a fire broke out and lasted six hours burning many wooden houses, the bazaar and military stores. Slade then remarks: “As on other occasions when honour or loot was to be obtained, the Turkish soldiers and sailors were not invited to join: they neither robbed nor rioted.”²⁴⁵

The city *meclis* held a stormy meeting after the fire. Many notables were angry with the allies, even comparing them unfavourably with the Russians who had besieged Varna in 1828. “The Muscovites”, they said,

came to Varna after the irritation of a double siege; they remained there two years, gave nobody reason to lament their conduct, and left the town better than they had found it. The Franks have scarcely been at Varna three months; they have taken our dwellings and store-houses compulsorily, have covered us with opprobrium, and now the place is ruined by their carelessness.²⁴⁶

The governor of Varna and the military commandant said that they had warned the allies of the danger of fire. They also complained that the allied generals were like sultans; it was difficult to obtain an audience with them. They did not answer their letters either.

Meanwhile cholera had started to ravage the allied troops and fleets, from the beginning of July 1854. For this reason the embarkation was constantly delayed. The French made an incursion into Dobrudja in

²⁴⁴ BOA. HR. SYS. 1353/12 enc. 1–8, June–July 1855. Osman Nuri Bey, head of the “Varna commission”, also reported to the Porte several times on this point. See BOA. HR. SYS. 1356/8, 31 March 1855, HR. SYS. 1353/73, 5 September 1855 and HR. SYS. 1354/46 enc. 4, 5 November 1855.

²⁴⁵ Slade, *op. cit.*, pp. 258–259, 261.

²⁴⁶ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 262. Tarle (*op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 27) has quoted this passage apparently with much pleasure.

August, but they lost nearly 7,000 men from cholera, fever, drought and heat. The British also lost about 700 men from diseases. Furthermore 12,000 to 15,000 French and about 1,900 British troops were hospitalized. Sanitary and logistics problems now made themselves strongly felt and they did not cease to be felt during the war. At last the departure for the Crimea was set for 2 September, but it was again delayed until 7 September. The formidable armada consisted of 350 ships carrying 30,000 (24,000?) French, 25,000 (27,000?) British and about 5,000 or 6,000 Ottoman troops (10 infantry battalions).²⁴⁷ Another 11,000 French troops were to follow later. Among the Ottoman troops, 8 battalions were selected from the *esnan*, that is, new recruits that were 20 to 25 years of age and the remaining two battalions from the *redif*, that is, the reserve, middle-aged soldiers with families to be worried about. The *esnan* had received only three months of drilling in Üsküdar. They had with them only three weeks of provisions, after which the Allies were to feed them. The Ottoman commander chosen for the expedition, Mirliva Süleyman Pasha, was not a distinguished officer; he had spent the last 12 years of his life as the superintendent of Beykoz tannery. To encourage him for the mission, he had been promoted from colonel to the rank of mirliva. Other officers had shunned the mission, expecting neglect from the Allies.²⁴⁸ Events proved that they were right to have been wary.

While the allied forces left for the Crimea, Ömer Pasha was contented with himself in Bucarest and was not in a hurry to go forward. In October 1843, he wrote to Istanbul that the time was late for a forward movement. There were problems of provisions. Therefore he had postponed his forward march towards Pruth until early spring. A telegram from Vienna (from the Ottoman embassy or Austrian government?) gave him freedom of movement in the direction of Braila and Galatz, but he had to negotiate with the Austrian General Coronini for any movement beyond the Pruth. In practise, Ömer Pasha had spent ten days corresponding with General Coronini even for establishing

²⁴⁷ Calthorpe, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 122–123. Calthorpe gives the number of Ottoman troops as 6,000. While Slade argues (*op. cit.*, p. 273) that the Ottoman force consisted of 10 battalions of more or less 800 men each, totaling 8,000 men, Besbelli (*op. cit.*, p. 71) gives the number as 5,000. The grand vizier had written to the *serasker* that 10,000 regular troops should be given to Marshal St. Arnaud and Lord Raglan by 15 August 1854. See BOA. İ. MMS. 2/61, 3 August 1854.

²⁴⁸ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

a sentry station near Galatz.²⁴⁹ Seeing that there was little to do in Bucharest, Ömer Pasha asked for a leave to come to Istanbul. Like most Ottoman pashas, he wanted to spend the winter in Istanbul. The grand vizier however, reminded him of the existence of still some Russian forces near Tolçı, İsakçı and Maçın and of the scattered deployment of the Danubian army and Ömer Pasha gave up the idea of coming to Istanbul on leave.²⁵⁰

The Caucasian Front in 1854–1855

After the defeat of Başgedikler, the Porte sent the minister of the police (*Zaptıye Müşiri*) Mehmed Hayreddin Pasha (?–1869) in January 1854 to inspect the Anatolian and Batum armies and to enquire into the deeds of Abdi Pasha and Ahmed Pasha. Upon arrival at Erzurum and then at Kars, Hayreddin Pasha reported the guilt of both pashas in robbing the soldiers and they were recalled to Istanbul for trial.²⁵¹

The Ottoman armies in Kars, Erzurum and Batum spent the winter of 1853–1854 in very unhealthy conditions. They were scarcely fed and badly clothed, quartered in poorly heated, unventilated, filthy, crowded inns (*khans*) or houses in conditions ripe for the spread of contagious diseases like typhus. Therefore 18,000 to 20,000 soldiers died from diseases and malnutrition.²⁵² Zarif Pasha confirms this situation and states that when he took over the command of the Anatolian army in March 1854, there were 17,000 troops in Kars, of which 11,000 were in the hospitals.²⁵³ On the day of his arrival at Kars, 50 soldiers died of diseases. When he asked the doctors what was to be done, they wanted some of the troops to be sent to villages to leave more room for others, opening holes in the barracks for better ventilation and supplying the hospitals with clothing, beds and linen. He writes that the daily

²⁴⁹ Ömer Pasha to the grand vizier, Bucharest, 22 October 1854. BOA. HR. SYS. 1336/24 enc. 14.

²⁵⁰ Ömer Pasha to the grand vizier, Bucharest, 19 November 1854. BOA. HR. SYS. 1336/24 enc. 17.

²⁵¹ Duncan, op. cit., vol. I, p. 111.

²⁵² Clarendon to Redcliffe, 29 November 1854, PRMA, p. 51.

²⁵³ See Zarif Pasha's memoirs, Karal, op. cit. (1940), p. 485. Also see Zarif Pasha's answers to questions in the MVL. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 9, paragraph 2. The second part of Zarif Pasha's memoirs, related to the period of his command of the Anatolian army is also available at BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 10. Zarif Pasha had submitted it as part of his evidence during his trial.

death-toll fell by half afterwards. The Batum army was also reduced to a few thousands. However, reinforcements began to be sent as early as February 1854. Two steamers under the command of Bahriye Feriki Mustafa Pasha, escorted by an allied squadron, brought 5,000 troops to Trabzon (for the Anatolian army) on 10 February and 3,000 men to Batum on 11 February 1854.²⁵⁴ Although the Russian fleet still patrolled the coasts, it did not dare to confront the allied fleet.

Likewise, Doctor Humphrey Sandwith writes that during the winter of 1853–1854, some 20,000 men had died of disease and hunger, being deprived of proper food and clothing, and “crowded into the dark, ill-ventilated hovels” of Kars. The great mortalities from diseases were not reported in the muster-rolls sent to Istanbul, “for the pay, food and appointments of dead men went to fill the coffers of the Pasha and his myrmidons”.²⁵⁵ Sandwith also writes that Abdi Pasha was a “poor and honest man”, but then he tells of a curious story related to Abdi Pasha’s journey from Kars to Istanbul, when he was removed from his post and called back to Istanbul. According to the story, on the road between Erzurum and Trabzon, when one of the mules of Abdi Pasha’s large-train of heavily-laden baggage-mules slipped and fell over a precipice, the load was smashed and a treasure of gold and silver rolled out, which was plundered by the muleteers and the peasantry.²⁵⁶

At the beginning of 1854, Damad Mehmed Ali Pasha lost the office of the *serasker* and Hasan Rıza Pasha replaced him. The new *serasker* did not like the existence of so many foreign officers in the Ottoman armies. He controlled the appointment of the new commander of the Anatolian army. Thus with Hasan Rıza Pasha’s backing, the governor of Erzurum, Mustafa Zarif Pasha, was appointed the *müşir* of the Anatolian army in February 1854. This was to prove the second most unfortunate appointment after that of Ahmed Pasha. Although Zarif Pasha had been successful as the governor of Erzurum, he was unfit for the post of the Commander-in-Chief, because he had never commanded an army or even a regiment. As seen from his memoirs, his army life had been spent chiefly in the capacity of a regimental secretary.

²⁵⁴ *Tezkire of Kapudan-ı Derya*, 21 February 1854, BOA. İ. DH. 18414 enc. 1, quoted by Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 68. Budak writes that the *tezkire* belonged to Kapudan-ı Derya Mahmud Pasha. However, Mahmud Pasha was at that time dismissed. Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Pasha had become the grand admiral. See Cevdet Pasha, *Tezâkir* 40–*Tetimme*, p. 67.

²⁵⁵ Sandwith, op. cit., p. 48.

²⁵⁶ Sandwith, op. cit., p. 47 and p. 49.

Actually Zarif Pasha had already sensed the possibility of this post being offered to him as early as December 1853, when he reported on the incompetence of Abdi Pasha.²⁵⁷ In his letter to the grand vizier he had asked to be saved from such responsibility, and he was saved by the appointment of Ahmed Pasha. However this time he could not evade the appointment. He also writes in his memoirs that he had not wanted to be appointed mushir.

The post of the governor of Erzurum was given to the *kaimmakam* of Çıldır, Zaim Feyzullah Pasha. Lütfi Efendi, the official chronicler, makes one of his rare criticisms in his chronicle on these three appointments. About Ahmed Pasha he writes that he knows little, but he says that Ahmed is famous for his bravery. However, he argues, bravery alone is not enough for a commander. As for Zarif Pasha, he has no compliments and sees him as incompetent while he cannot conceal his contempt for Feyzullah Pasha, and altogether he considers their appointments in such a delicate time as matters of curious business.²⁵⁸ But Lütfi might better have recorded whether any prominent pashas were willing to take the governorship of Erzurum upon themselves. We must note that poor Feyzullah worked more energetically in his post than his predecessors.

Zarif Pasha was indeed a typical non-slave²⁵⁹ origin Ottoman pasha and governor of the mid-nineteenth century. Since he has left his memoirs, albeit very scanty, we have more information about him than about many of his contemporaries. Therefore we can dwell at some length on his memoirs to understand the mentality and world-view of the pashas. Problems arise immediately; Zarif Pasha in his memoirs, written for his children and not for publication, does not comment

²⁵⁷ Mustafa Zarif Pasha to the grand vizier, 11 December 1853. BOA. HR. MKT. 68/46.

²⁵⁸ Lütfi, *op. cit.*, p. 93. While Lütfi calls Feyzullah an *ağa*, he is called a pasha in the documents. For example Zarif Pasha calls him pasha in his memoirs: See Enver Ziya Karal, "Zarif Paşanın Hatıratı", *Belleten* IV, 1940, pp. 480–481. The grand vizier in a letter dated 25 November 1853 to the *serasker* also calls him a pasha. See BOA. A. MKT. NZD. 104/28.

²⁵⁹ Charles Duncan, the British war correspondent for the newspaper *Morning Chronicle* in the Kars army, argues that Zarif Pasha "passed in early youth through that imperial road to success in Turkey – the slave market". Duncan seems to have taken a stereotype for granted. See *A Campaign with the Turks in Asia*, vol. I, London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1855, p. 180. He must have read Captain Charles White's book *Three Years in Constantinople* (1846). Nevertheless, there were other pashas of slave origins, such as Vasif Pasha, who became the commander of the Anatolian army in 1855.

on the political and social events of his time, which was indeed the interesting period of the *Tanzimat* reforms. These memoirs are a great disappointment, as pointed out by Enver Ziya Karal, their editor. They are full of personal details, with a lot of information on how much money he earned and where he put his money. Thus, as the Ottoman saying goes, he describes his speculation as if it was an accomplishment or an act of bravery (*Şecaat arzederken merd-i Kıpti sirkatin söyler*).

Zarif Mustafa was given by his father to an accounting office in the ministry of finance as a scribe at the age of twelve. Two years later, at fourteen, he became by chance the secretary to a regiment in lieu of the son of an accountant, Hamdi Bey, who had just been promoted from a secretary to the rank of major in the army. From Zarif's account, it appears that this Hamdi Bey received his brevet rank out of the blue, without military training or education. Then Zarif himself became both a secretary and a lieutenant, and even a deputy captain at the age of sixteen. He was also received by Sultan Mahmud II. This is interesting because it shows both the degree of Mahmud II's interest in his new army, and also the degree of liberty in the distribution of military ranks. Afterwards Mustafa Zarif was appointed to many campaigns as regimental secretary and quickly rose in rank. His accounts of the behaviour of his colonels reveal much ignorance and gambling on their part. However, some of them "give" a lot of money to our Zarif (for what?) and he mentions them with gratitude, while a certain Şerif Pasha still owes him forty to fifty thousand piastres (again for what?).

Mustafa Zarif became a *ferik* (division general) in 1845 at the age of 29 without commanding any units in battle. He worked first at the head of some military production then in the military tribunal. At all steps he records his salary and his side earnings. Thus we learn that as a *ferik*, he received a salary of 25,000 piastres, which is more than the usual salary of this rank (15,000 piastres). Then in 1847 he was appointed *mutasarrıf* of Jerusalem, with a salary of 27,500 piastres. A British doctor there was beaten by some Arabs for entering the great mosque. When the British authorities insisted on the punishment of the culprits, Zarif Pasha temporized with them, eventually returning to Istanbul under pressure. At that time also Stratford Canning was the British ambassador in Istanbul. (Thus when Zarif Pasha was arrested in 1854 for his misconduct in the Anatolian army, he saw this as the work of the British ambassador.) In 1852 Zarif Mustafa Pasha was appointed governor of Erzurum.

Mustafa Zarif Pasha in his memoirs tries to relate all his services as governor and as commander of the army. He claims that in the present war he spent 2,000 purses²⁶⁰ from his own pocket for the sake of the state. But then the question arises naturally: Where did he get this money from? (2,000 purses were equal to 40 months of a *ferik's* pay). During his interrogation at the MVL, Zarif Pasha again says that he gave more than 100,000 piastres (200 purses) as *bahşiş* to soldiers who worked in the construction of fortifications.²⁶¹ Salih Hayri in his *zafername* states that Zarif Pasha had “hoarded” much money for his own benefit.²⁶² Likewise, Charles Duncan argues that Zarif Pasha had appropriated 15,000 purses when he was still a *bey* in the civil administration of an army.²⁶³ Thus, according to Charles Duncan, at that time Zarif Pasha had been removed from his post for this act. He had also repaid some portion of the embezzled money. However, the current Serasker Hazan Rıza Pasha protected him and soon he returned to state service.²⁶⁴ While we do not know the accuracy of this specific information, it is entirely possible, because many corrupt pashas, even those convicted, eventually returned to their posts. Damad Mehmed Ali Pasha is the best-known example of this.

While the new campaign season approached, the Porte tried to reinforce its armies, including the Anatolian army, which had been greatly reduced during the winter by deaths from disease and desertions (especially by the *başıbozuk* and the *redif*). New forces of recruits, *redifs*, and *başıbozüks* were pouring in from Arabistan and Anatolia to Erzurum. Provisions and ammunition were being sent from Istanbul to the port of Trabzon, but from then onwards it was a very difficult journey on mules and camels. The Russian army was also receiving reinforcements since the allied fleets had not yet blockaded the Black Sea.

²⁶⁰ See Karal, *op. cit.* (1940), p. 472. 2,000 purses make 10,000 Ottoman pounds, equal to about 8,000 pounds sterling at that time, which is approximately 480,000 pounds sterling at current prices. The *Sicill-i Osmani* records Zarif Mustafa Pasha as “possessor of great wealth”. See Mehmed Süreyya, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 1706.

²⁶¹ Zarif Mustafa Pasha's answers to questions in the MVL. February 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 9.

²⁶² Salih Hayri, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

²⁶³ Duncan, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

²⁶⁴ In April 1857 Zarif Pasha was entitled to a salary of unemployment of 15,000 piastres. See BOA. İ. HR. 375/24803, 21 April 1857 and BOA. A. MKT. NZD. 223/65, 3 May 1857. Then, in October 1857, he became president of the DŞA. See Mehmed Süreyya, *ibid.*

The allied fleets finally entered the eastern part of the Black Sea in April. The Russians had evacuated all the coastline from Anapa down to Redutkale, because they knew that they stood no chance against the combined allied fleets. Towards the end of May, the commander of the British fleet Admiral Dundas informed his Ottoman colleague Ahmed Pasha that “from Kertch to Batoum the only fortresses in the possession of Russia are Anapa and Soujak”.²⁶⁵ Soon those two fortresses were also captured by the allies.

While the Porte wanted to attack Russia in the Caucasus, the allies showed little interest. Both Britain and France had as primary objectives the destruction of the Russian Black Sea fleet and the naval base at Sevastopol. Any other targets were secondary for them. Nevertheless they had sent officers to Batum, Circassia, Trabzon, Erzurum and Kars. The prospects of a combined Ottoman-Circassian-Shamil offensive did not look bright to them. As we have seen above, the Ottoman armies had experienced a harsh winter and nearly half of the troops in Kars and Batum had died of diseases like typhus and malaria. The Circassians were divided among themselves and the *murids* of Shamil were easily kept at bay by the Russians. The Christian population of most of Georgia was united under the Russian command.²⁶⁶

Relations with Shamil and the Circassians in 1854–1855

By the beginning of the 1854 campaign season, Shamil had accomplished the task given to him by the caliph, namely the task of uniting and subduing most of the khans and *ümera* of the Caucasus in the name of the Ottoman cause. According to the testimony of Mahmud Efendi, who had been sent to Shamil by the former Serasker Damad Mehmed Ali Pasha and returned to Istanbul in April 1854, Shamil stated that he had secured the loyalty of many Caucasian Muslim khans to the Porte. They were Major-General Cemedi (?) Khan, General Ebuselim Shemkhal Khan, General Ağalar Khan, General Yusuf Khan, General Hasay Khan and General Danyal Sultan. These khans, who were all given the rank of general by Russia, all stated their loyalty to the caliph and

²⁶⁵ Vice-Admiral Dundas to Vice-Admiral Ahmed Pasha, the *Britannia* off Baljik [Balçık], 25 May 1854. BOA. HR. SYS. 1348/73 enc. 1.

²⁶⁶ İbragimbeyli, *op. cit.*, pp. 353–354. Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol 1, p. 292. Budak (*op. cit.*, 1993, p. 80) also writes that not all Georgians were committed to the Ottoman state.

readiness for joint action against Russia. However, unless the Anatolian army attacked and took the fortress of Gümrü, they would not feel safe and would not openly declare their support for the Porte. Therefore they had not yet declared their support of the Porte and they were waiting for action from the Ottoman army. Otherwise they would be vulnerable to Russian vengeance if the Ottoman army did not move against Gümrü and Tiflis.²⁶⁷

Meanwhile Halil Pasha of Dagestan had also returned from Dagestan. He suggested conferring rank upon these khans of Dagestan. Consequently, a provisional council (*Meclis-i Muvakkat*) convened on 15 May 1854 and proposed to give the following ranks and titles: Sheikh Shamuil Efendi would receive the rank of vizier and the title of *Dağistan Serdar-ı Ekremi* (Commander-in-Chief of Dagestan), his son Gazi Muhammed would be *Mirliva* (Brigadier-General), Ebu Selim Shemkhal Khan the rank of *Ferik* (Lieutenant-General), Cemed (?) Khan, Hasay (?) Khan, Danyal Sultan and İsmail Pasha would also become *Mirlivas*. These appointments were to be kept secret for the time being. The grand vizier then submitted the decision to the Sultan on 24 May 1854 and the appointments were approved on the next day.²⁶⁸

Nevertheless, apart from distributing ranks and titles to Circassian and Dagestani notables, the Porte did very little. Shamil's naib in Circassia, Muhammed Emin, in a letter written in Arabic, dated 21 May 1854, complained that six months had passed since receiving some gunpowder but that nothing had come from the sea (that is, from the Porte).²⁶⁹ He had received orders from "Shamuil"²⁷⁰ to march towards Georgia with the forces of the Abzeh tribe. Shamil had informed him that he would also march in that direction and they would meet if possible. Muhammed Emin also complained of not receiving instructions from the Porte:

²⁶⁷ See Budak, op. cit. (1988), pp. 56–57, transcription of the document is at p. 134. However, the transcription contains several errors, for example, reading "*taraf-ı mugayir*" instead of "*turuk ve meabir*". The date of the document is also mistransliterated as 22 Cemaziyelevvel 1270, whereas it should be 22 Receb 1270, therefore it corresponds to 20 April 1854, and not to 20 February 1854.

²⁶⁸ BOA. İ. DH. 19040. Budak, op. cit., 1988, pp. 134–135.

²⁶⁹ BOA. İ. DH. 19234, 21 May 1854. For the text of the translation of this letter, see Budak, op. cit. (1988), pp. 135–137. The date of the letter, however, is mistransliterated as 23 Ramazan 1270 (19 June 1854).

²⁷⁰ In the original Arabic letter, the name is Shamuil, but the translator has turned it into Shamil.

We need to know the aim of the Sublime State and also what to do and how to be here and what news to send to Sheikh Shamuil. However no orders have appeared from your grand vizirial Excellency except for only conferment of rewards and favours and expressions of affection. When I contemplate the situation I wish the Sublime State had at least sent some troops here. Then I thought in my inadequate mind that a great victory would have been gained. Because, although there is a distance of one month between Anapa and Temürkapu from the mountains, it is less by way of the plains. Since the population of the mountains is from old times brave and warlike, if they had seen some regular imperial troops with us, then the population of the places under Russian rule would hasten to submit to our rule. Thanks to the majority of the Circassian population, the affairs of the mountains would have been completed and the Russians' road to Tiflis would be cut in the vicinity of the Abzeh tribe. Then the Russians would leave Tiflis by their own will, or it would be attacked from all sides by the mountain population down to children. They would not know what to do since they would have to deal with both the Danube and the mountains and then they could not have found enough troops to cope with all.²⁷¹ [My slightly simplified translation]

The allied fleets sent a steam squadron to the Circassian coasts in May 1854. The Ottoman fleet (including the Egyptian squadron) with Sefer and Behcet Pashas and many Circassian notables with their families as well as gifts from the Sultan for Circassian chiefs also wanted to join the allies off Sevastopol and go to Circassia. The fleet would make Sohum a base for its operations and embark 4,000 troops at Batum to transfer to the Circassian coast. The Kapudan Pasha had already informed the allied admirals verbally and by letter of the departure of the Ottoman squadron to the same destination. The appearance of the Ottoman fleet and troops was intended to encourage the Circassians to rise against the Russians. The fleet was commanded by Ferik Kayserili Ahmed Pasha, and included 12 European officers to instruct the Circassian militia, artillery officers, ammunition and small arms. Thus it was composed of 8 line-of-battle ships, 3 frigates, 4 corvettes and brigs, 5 steam frigates and 3 steam corvettes mounting 1,100 guns. It sailed from the Bosphorus on 6 May 1854.

The Ottoman fleet went to Varna, where it found a rather offensive letter from Vice-Admiral Dundas to Ahmed Pasha, in which Admiral Dundas informed Ahmed Pasha that he had received Kapudan Pasha's letter, but his and Admiral Hamelin's opinion was that the Ottoman

²⁷¹ BOA. İ. DH. 19234 enc. 2. Cf. Budak, *op. cit.*, 1988, pp. 135–137.

fleet should “cruise along the coasts of Bulgaria and Roumelia, between the Danube and the Bosphorus, until the return of Rear-Admiral Lyons from the coast of Circassia and the arrival of the combined squadrons at Varna”.²⁷² Thus the British admiral slighted Kapudan Pasha and gave directions to the Ottoman fleet without even consulting him! Mushaver Pasha bitterly observed that, if Ahmed Pasha had any sense of dignity, he would have given an appropriate answer and steered for Batum without the company of the allied fleet. But Ahmed Pasha did not want to offend the allied admirals. He feared that the Porte would not support him in case of complaints about his conduct. We must note that he was right in his prediction. Thus he acted like a typical career-building Ottoman pasha. The Ottoman system promoted people like him, who thought of their selfish interests and career more than any concerns of dignity.

As a way out, Ahmed Pasha requested that Mushaver Pasha go to Sevastopol to negotiate with the allied admirals. Mushaver Pasha found the allied fleet off Sevastopol on 11 May. He had noted down a memorandum for the admirals, explaining the importance of the mission. His memorandum read in part as follows:

With orders to proceed to the coast of Circassia, after consultation with the allied admirals, the Turkish fleet has left the Bosphorus. Sefer Pasha and Behchet Pasha with 300 of their countrymen, and several European officers to act as *talimgis* (instructors), are embarked in it. Those pashas bear the Sultan’s firman, empowering them to act in his name, and are carrying *nishans* of merit and *berats* of rank to influential chieftains. In their opinion, unless the Caucasians operate timely in concert and with strategy, the Russian advance in Asia will be certain. There are embarked in the fleet a battery complete with artillery officers and 300 rounds for each gun, 500 barrels of gunpowder, 500 cases of musket cartridges, 400 cases of muskets, 2,000 pistols, 20 cases of cutlasses, 10,000 moulds of lead... It is anticipated that with the aid of 4,000 regular troops, the marines of the fleet, European military instructors, field-pieces, and other named munitions of war, the Circassians will be able to act offensively on the enemy’s territory.²⁷³

Mushaver Pasha added that the Circassians were already expecting the Ottoman fleet as the signal for their gathering and if it did not soon appear off their coast, then doubts would arise in their minds

²⁷² Slade, op. cit., pp. 224–225.

²⁷³ Slade, op. cit., pp. 228–229.

of the Porte's sincerity. However, Admiral Dundas met this proposal very coldly. He was astonished that his directions to the Ottoman fleet had been disregarded because he said that fleet had been placed under his orders. Mushaver Pasha then visited Admiral Hamelin. Hamelin admitted the importance of the Circassian mission but he was worried that the Russian fleet might pursue the Ottoman fleet and that another disaster might happen. Mushaver Pasha said that if the Russian fleet dared to move from Sevastopol then it would be all the worse for it and a good opportunity for the allied fleets. The Ottoman fleet was also in a much better position now. Yet Admiral Hamelin was of the opinion that if the Ottoman fleet went to Circassia then the allies should remain off Sevastopol, which was out of the question. He also said that he had already been blamed for the Sinop disaster and now did not want to risk a repetition. Two days later, Admiral Dundas gave his and Admiral Hamelin's joint answer in an insulting message to Ahmed Pasha. The admirals simply repeated their opinion briefly and added that future communications should be made in writing, "as verbal messages may lead to serious inconveniences and mistakes".²⁷⁴ The allied admirals had treated the Commander of the Ottoman fleet with contempt and described a mission entrusted by him to a flag officer as a verbal message. Furthermore, they themselves had given a verbal message indicating that the Ottoman fleet should leave Balçık exclusively for the anchorage of the allied fleets.

When Mushaver Pasha brought the news to Varna the Circassian pashas were desperate. Ahmed Pasha, however, did not take much offence. After several days of counselling, he finally signed a letter to the allied admirals, in which he tried to reemphasise the importance of the mission and the reasons for sending Mushaver Pasha to them.²⁷⁵ He also wrote that, in compliance with their wish, he had anchored at Kavarna, leaving Balçık for the allies. The allied fleets came to Balçık after a week. As they passed Kavarna, the Ottoman fleet saluted them and showed all signs of respect. The admirals informed Ahmed Pasha that next time he should come to visit them without Mushaver Pasha, thus showing their anger with him. They even conspicuously failed to

²⁷⁴ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

²⁷⁵ The letter is given by Slade in its original French together with an English translation. Ahmed Pasha in his letter also mentions the *envoyé* of Shamil among the passengers. However, as we have seen from the above letter of Muhammed Emin, dated 21 May 1854, this cannot be Muhammed Emin. See Slade, *op. cit.*, pp. 446-448.

invite Mushaver Pasha to an official dinner on 24 May in honour of the Queen's birthday, while inviting all the pashas and one *bey* from the Ottoman fleet. Ironically, it was a British officer who defended Ottoman interests to the extent of bringing upon himself the scorn of the allied admirals, while the Ottoman commander complied obediently with all the wishes of the allies.

Meanwhile the French steamer *Mogador* brought the first news from the Circassian expedition of the Anglo-French squadron. The Russians had evacuated the coast from Anapa to Redutkale. Sohumkale was in the hands of Circassians. The allied squadron had embarked an Ottoman battalion from Batum to occupy Redutkale, which was then being evacuated by the Russians. The allied admirals then ordered the Ottoman pashas, whom they had invited to dinner, to hastily transfer their passengers and ammunition intended for Circassia to an English screw line-of-battle ship (the *Sans Pareil*) and two Ottoman steam frigates to depart that very evening for Sohumkale and Redutkale. The Ottoman sail ships were to remain in Kavarna. The Ottomans proposed to take four steam frigates to tow four line-of-battle ships, but the admirals would not hear of it. Thus they wanted to turn the Ottoman expedition to Circassia into a consignment. Instead of an Ottoman squadron appearing at the Circassian coast with all due pomp and ceremony, disembarking its envoys with dignity, the Ottoman Circassian pashas with their retinue, families and goods would be cast into the coast of Circassia like ordinary passengers or adventurers from crowded transports. As Slade observes, this could not fail to diminish the importance of the Porte in the eyes of the Circassians. The allied admirals did not even accept a delay until the next forenoon. Thus the Ottoman pashas returned to their ships without dinner. They had again obeyed an insulting order. Pashas, military instructors, traders, women, children, field-pieces, small arms, gunpowder, provisions etc were transferred in five hours from a dozen vessels into three steamers with much natural confusion and damage. The European instructors swore loudly at the admirals.²⁷⁶

Four days after the *Mogador*, the British Rear-Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons also arrived from the coast of Circassia. Sir Edmund reported that the Circassians were divided among themselves and requesting

²⁷⁶ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

troops for action against the Russians.²⁷⁷ But he was opposed to the expedition of the Ottoman fleet to Circassian coasts. Thus the allied admirals now totally disapproved of an Ottoman expedition. Then they asked Ahmed Pasha to write to the Serasker to request troops to be sent to Circassia. The Serasker Hasan Rıza Pasha replied that they sent the fleet with orders to take 4,000 troops from Batum and the Allies' admirals had detained it at Kavarna. The reason for the allied admirals' desire to keep the Ottoman fleet idle nearby was, as Slade remarks, to prevent its activity on the Circassian coast, as compared to their own inactivity at Balçık, being subject to criticism by the public.

Then these "gallant admirals" spent all the summer lying at Balçık until September, from time to time sending a few steamers to inspect Sevastopol. While this was of course not an effective blockade, the formidable reputation of the British fleet was enough to keep the Russian fleet bottled up in the harbour of Sevastopol. If the Russians had become aware of this allied inactivity, they could have done much harm. But in this war such blunders and such lost opportunities were numerous on all sides. The allied fleets did not do much and in any case did not allow the Ottomans do anything with regard to Circassia. They apparently did not want the Ottomans to be strong in Circassia.

About the middle of June, the Ottoman fleet was allowed to come to Balçık. When the Ottomans proposed to cruise the Anatolian coasts, the allies were again opposed to this idea, being fearful of letting the Ottoman fleet out of their reach, for it might go to Circassia. When they ordered it to go and lie up at Varna, the Ottoman admirals finally lost patience and gathered enough courage to ask kindly why they were being held idle at Varna. The allies replied that they were waiting for an answer from their embassies. Finally the Porte decided to recall its fleet (except for two line-of-battle ships) to Istanbul, because there was no sense in keeping it at Varna if it was not to do anything. The Ottoman fleet anchored in the Bosphorus on 3 July 1854.²⁷⁸

Marshal St. Arnaud was of the opinion that the efforts of the Porte to bring Circassia under Ottoman suzerainty fostered the fragmentation of the Circassians and impeded military planning. In a letter dated 27 July 1854 from Varna to the French chargé d'affaires in Istanbul Vincent Benedetti, he wrote that while Shamil sent his naib to unite the

²⁷⁷ Op. cit., p. 244. Besbelli, op. cit., p. 63.

²⁷⁸ Besbelli, op. cit., p. 65.

Circassians, the Porte “sends emissaries who act in the opposite direction by engaging the tribes to place themselves under the suzerainty of the Ottoman government that will protect them in need”.²⁷⁹

Thus the allies had prevented the Ottoman expedition to Circassia. But why did the Ottoman admirals not simply go to Circassia on their own? Was it not obvious that the Russian fleet would not dare to move from Sevastopol, when the allied fleets were concentrated in force nearby? The only reasonable explanation seems to lie in the lack of leadership combined with the atmosphere of distrust in the Porte. Nobody wanted to take responsibility for anything, always trying to defer to the authority of some other body.

Sefer Pasha, Behcet Pasha and other Circassians of rank, landing in this way on the shore, without honours from an Ottoman fleet, did not (of course) produce any great impression on the Circassians; they had returned like refugees. Furthermore the presents remained in the hands of those who brought them. Behcet Pasha was involved in his personal affairs and Sefer Pasha could not regain his old influence. The military instructors were left unguided and unattended to. The Circassians felt betrayed by the Porte, because they had expected the Ottoman fleet to come with Ottoman troops.²⁸⁰

In mid-July 1854, Shamil made his second attack on the Russian positions in Georgia, his last attempt during the war, in an effort to reach the Ottoman army. With a force of about 15,000 cavalry and infantry, he advanced towards Tiflis, coming as near as Shildi 60 kilometres north-east of Tiflis. While Shamil camped on Mount Pakhalis-Tavi, he sent a force of 10,000 infantry and cavalry into the Alazan valley under the command of his son Gazi Muhammed and Danyal Sultan (or Daniel Bek?). They came quite close to breaking the Russian line but the native Georgian population, the Kakhétians, resisted his forces with determination. After three days of fighting in the Alazan valley, Russian reinforcements under the command of Prince David Chavchavadze arrived and dispersed the *murid* force. Shamil retreated to Dagestan on 22 July.²⁸¹ Meanwhile, a detachment commanded by

²⁷⁹ AGKK, IV/2, p. 356.

²⁸⁰ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 243. Besbelli, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²⁸¹ Major Prince Baratov, “Opisanie nashestviya skopisch’ Shamilya na Kakhétiyu v 1854 godu”, *Kavkavskiy Sbornik*, tom I, Tiflis, 1876, pp. 237–267. Budak (*op. cit.*, 1993, pp. 88–90) also gives Shamil’s force as 15,000 men, referring to the newspaper CH and Gammer’s unpublished dissertation of 1989. Gammer (*op. cit.*, 1994, p. 270), however,

his son Gazi Muhammed raided Prince Chavchavadze's summer house in Tsinondali and brought back many prisoners and much booty. Among the prisoners were Princess Anna, the wife of Prince David Chavchavadze and Princess Varvara, the widow of Prince Iliko Orbeliani (granddaughters of the last Georgian king) with their children and their French governess Madame Anne Drancy. Shamil hoped to exchange them for his son Jema'eddin who was a captive in the court of St. Petersburg.²⁸²

However, the news of the capture of these women caused quite a sensation.²⁸³ The French embassy demanded that an order to be given to Mustafa Pasha, the commander of the Batum army, to search in cooperation with M. Steyert (the French consul in Batum) for Madame Drancy, a daughter of the French postal employee M. Lemaire.²⁸⁴ Accordingly an order was sent to Mustafa Pasha.²⁸⁵ For Lord Stratford it was also an outrage, because the information he received was that two young ladies and their French governess were murdered. Therefore he urged the Porte to apply to the Sultan to write to Shamil or cause a letter to be written to him to release the surviving women and children, while strongly condemning the murder and kidnap of women and children. On 23 September 1854 Stratford gave instructions to his head dragoman to be conveyed to Reşid Pasha:

I brought verbally under Reshid Pasha's notice some days ago an occurrence which has been stated in the public prints. It appears from the published statement, to which I allude, that an act of barbarous atrocity has been committed in Georgia by a party of soldiers, – it may be presumed, irregulars, detached from Sheik Shamy'l's army. These practical marauders are described as having attacked the country house of some person of wealth and official distinction in Georgia. The owner was absent. No resistance was made. Two young ladies and their French governess were, nevertheless, murdered by them in the house.

gives Shamil's force as consisting of 7,000 cavalry and 5,000 infantry. Cf. Baumgart, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–179.

²⁸² For a romanticized story of their captivity, see Lesley Blanch. *The Sabres of Paradise*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1995.

²⁸³ See *Journal de Constantinople*, nr. 536, 29 Aout 1854, nr. 537, 4 Septembre 1854, *Ceride-i Havadis*, nr. 704, 9 Zilhicce 1270 (2 September 1854). Budak argues that one of the results of this event was that it caused Britain and France to seek connections with Shamil for the independence of Circassia, without mentioning any negative effects for Shamil (*op. cit.*, 1993, p. 90).

²⁸⁴ BOA. HR. SYS. 907/16, dated 20 August 1854, but this date is not included in the text of the note, so it is probably a later date than the actual submission of the note.

²⁸⁵ BOA. HR. MKT. 91/14.

The proprietor's wife, a lady of rank and education, was carried off to the mountains with several female friends, her guests at the time. I need not remark to you that these are circumstances which shock every feeling of humanity. They are not the acts of soldiers, but of assassins. Honorable war rejects them, and honorable men can have no sympathy with the perpetrators.²⁸⁶

Stratford stated that an officer from the Kars army together with a British officer should be detached to present the letter to Shamil and bring the ladies back. "No expense need be incurred by the Porte for the object of benevolence", wrote Stratford, adding insult to injury. It is interesting that the wording of Stratford's note is much more severe than the French note.

Sadrazam Kibrıslı Mehmed Emin Pasha applied to the Sultan on 12 October 1854, stating that some *başıbozüks* from the army of Shamil had perpetrated atrocities, killing two young ladies and their governess and kidnapping women of from a notable family.²⁸⁷ Thus the grand vizier repeated the incorrect information concerning the murder of women. He asked for a letter of advice and warning to be sent to Shamil, advising him to punish the culprits and prevent such events in the future. The letter was to be sent with Dagestani Enis Efendi from the Bureau of Translation. He would be given verbal instructions as well. His travel allowance would also be given. The draft of the letter was attached. The Sultan approved it.

The letter to Shamil first began with praising him for his brave war for the cause of Islam. Then followed the news of the murder and kidnapping of women. It was stated that a groups of *başıbozüks* had attacked innocent children and women. Although it was certain that Shamil as a pious man would punish such an act contrary to the shariat, it was necessary to carry out the punishment of those responsible for this deplorable act because Shamil's name could otherwise be defamed. Therefore Shamil was required to punish the culprits and to return the women to their families. Furthermore, Russian prisoners of war should be kept well according to international rules. In general the

²⁸⁶ Stratford de Redcliffe's instructions to head dragoman Stephen Pisani, Therapia, 23 September 1854. BOA. HR. TO. 220/48. Translation into Ottoman Turkish is in BOA. İ. HR. 114/5577.

²⁸⁷ BOA. İ. HR. 114/5577 enc. 5.

tone of the letter was not offensive, but certainly it would not please Shamil.²⁸⁸

Stratford had also written to the British military commissioner in the Anatolian army Colonel William Fenwick Williams (1800–1883) in Kars, requesting him to exercise his influence with Sheikh Shamil to get the women released. Williams wrote a letter to Shamil, but the letter seems to have reached Shamil rather late, after Shamil exchanged the ladies for his son Jemaleddin and 40,000 silver roubles on 22 March 1855.²⁸⁹ Shamil's reply to Williams, dated 12 Receb 1271 (31 March 1855), written in Arabic and translated by Williams' secretary for Ottoman, Henry Churchill, reads in part as follows:

We thank you for the notice you take of our dignity and honour, and for giving us a place amongst worthy men; and though we may not be that in truth and reality, God forbid that we should do anything which might be considered disgraceful by the Mohammedan laws or by the exalted government [the Sublime Porte?]. We had liberated the women before the arrival of your letter, and had you been acquainted with the true circumstances you would not have found fault with us; for everybody knows that we are always humane; that we expend our breath in reciting the holy words of the Lord of the Creation, and scorn the enmity of the infidels our foes.²⁹⁰

A Russian account from 1860, when Shamil was already in captivity in Kaluga, gives his narrative of this event:

At the very beginning of the war he [Shamil] received an offer to prepare to meet the allied forces at Imereti. Expressing his agreement Shamil immediately took steps to carry out his plan...In the spring of 1854 he marched towards the district of Chartalah...He intended to march on Tiflis, but in order to act more freely, he sent to inform the Ottoman commanders in Kars and in Abkhazeti of his intentions. Awaiting an answer, he sent his son with all the cavalry and some infantry into Kakheti, while he himself with the rest of his force camped near one of our forts...Soon he received an answer, the contents of which were extremely insulting. Instead of being grateful for his expressed readiness to cooperate with the plans of the allies and for the speed with which he

²⁸⁸ Letter to Shamil. BOA. İ. HR. 114/5577 enc. 2 and HR. SYS. 1354/60 enc. 1.

²⁸⁹ Gammer, op. cit., 1994, p. 272.

²⁹⁰ See Colonel Atwell Lake, *Kars and Our Captivity in Russia*, London: Richard Bentley, 1856, pp. 340–341. The letter was addressed as “From the slave of God, Shemouil, to the illustrious and honourable Colonel Williams” and sealed “Shemouil” according to Mr Churchill.

had carried out his promise, he was reproached and told off as a common subject.²⁹¹

After this event, Shamil remained on the defence. In any case he and his followers must have felt great disappointment from the Ottoman defeats by the Russians. Nevertheless he continued to seek the favour of the caliph and use this favour to enhance his political standing.

Shamil's naib in Circassia Muhammed Emin was made a pasha with the rank of *mirmiran* in May 1854.²⁹² He came to Istanbul with seventy notables of Circassia in July 1854 for negotiations. In August Ferik Alyanak Mustafa Pasha (?–1884) from the Rumelian army, although unsuccessful against the Russians in the Babadağ region, was promoted to the rank of *müşir* and sent to Batum to replace Mehmed Selim Pasha as the commander of the Batum army. Alyanak Mustafa Pasha was apparently chosen because of his Circassian origins. Ömer Pasha had also recommended him.²⁹³ On the request of Mustafa Pasha, Muhammed Emin and his notables received monetary rewards before leaving Istanbul.²⁹⁴ We do not know, however, what instructions he received.

Müşir Alyanak Mustafa Pasha in Batum tried to gain the sympathy of the Circassian, Abkhazian and Georgian notables. He sent them gifts and letters inviting them to join the Ottoman side. Especially he tried to win the Abkhazian Prince Hamid (or Abdülhamid) Bey, whose Russian or Christian name was Mikhail Shervashidze. Mikhail Georgievich Shervashidze (r. 1822–1864) was the last Prince (*Vladetel*) of Abkhazia. His title in Abkhazian was *Chachba*. He was given the rank of lieutenant-general by Nikolai I in 1848. In a letter to Hamid Bey, dated 4 October 1854, Mustafa Pasha promised him on behalf of the Sultan all the titles, ranks and rewards that Russia had given him. He argued that all states had now joined the Ottoman Empire and that Russia was soon going to collapse. The Porte would no longer leave those territories and its population to Russia. Therefore Mustafa Pasha had now been appointed as the commander of the Batum army and *muhafız* of all Abkhazia and Circassia with plentiful troops and provisions. He continued his message as follows:

²⁹¹ Gammer, op. cit., p. 393.

²⁹² Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 77.

²⁹³ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/40, 12 June 1854.

²⁹⁴ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/70, 14 September 1853. Muhammed Emin Pasha received 10,000 piastres, others from 2,500 to 1,500 according to their ranks.

Long ago, you passed over to the Russian side and remained there, leaving your country, land and state. However, since you belong to a great dynasty here and since you are an outstanding, intelligent *bey*, I do not believe that you would leave this place and prefer our enemies the Muscovites. I have even heard when I came to Sohum that you intended to join the Sublime State and serve it. Therefore I presume that the reason for your remaining there is that perhaps you are with us in spirit and Russian only in appearance and that your real intention is to understand the conditions and weakness of the Russians? For nothing is impossible in the world...Did some improper people come to you and stir your mind with some lies? Or did they do something to offend you, hitherto being unable to tell you properly how kind and affectionate the Sublime State will be to such worthy *beys* as you? Your stay there is no doubt for one of these reasons. In any case, such things are possible.²⁹⁵ [My translation]

Mustafa Pasha then invited him to the Ottoman side with all honours, addressing him as “fellow countryman” since Mustafa Pasha was from Anapa.

Hamid Bey was now in a difficult situation. He had to choose between Russia and the Ottoman Empire with its allies. Yet the Porte did not inspire much confidence and the allies were not clear in their intentions for Abkhazia and Circassia. Did they plan an independent Abkhazia and Circassia? Did they want to annex these countries to the Ottoman Empire? What protection did they offer against Russia after the war? Naturally, he was afraid of being left in Russian hands if he sided with the allies and if the allies were not permanent in Circassia. So he chose a way between, trying to appease both sides, although by July 1855 Mustafa Pasha seems to have reported Hamid’s acceptance of Ottoman suzerainty.²⁹⁶ Meanwhile Mustafa Pasha had been authorized by the sultan to distribute salaries and ranks from lieutenant to *ferik* to influential and willing notables.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Müşir Mustafa Pasha to Hamid Bey (Mikhail Shervashidze), 4 October 1854. BOA. A. MKT. UM. 1970/19 enc. 14. This letter is written in astonishingly simple, clear, plain Turkish expressions, a rare sight in Ottoman official parlance.

²⁹⁶ BOA. A. AMD. 54/91, 13 July 1855.

²⁹⁷ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/97 enc. 3, 12–13 November 1854, cited by Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 88. Budak states that “Abdülhamid Bey” was given a salary of 2,000 piastres and the rank of *mirmiran*. However, the document mentions not him but a certain “Mağan Kasi” to be rewarded with this rank and salary. This person was the Abkhazian notable Katsi Marganiya from Samurzakan, who held the rank of lieutenant-general in the Russian army. See K. Borozdin, *Omer Pasha v Mingrelii*, St Petersburg, 1873, p. 29.



Illus. 8 Mushir Selim Pasha, Commander of the Ottoman Army of Batum. *ILN*, 19 Aug. 1854.

In 1855, the allies, instead of depending on the expertise of the Porte in relations with the Circassians, quite independently sent their agents to Circassia to organize the Circassian tribes.²⁹⁸ The British sent John Longworth as “civil commissioner” and the French sent Charles Champoiseau as consul to Redutkale.²⁹⁹ Lord Stratford asked the Porte to

²⁹⁸ Lord Redcliffe’s instructions to head dragoman Pisani, 27 May 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/166, cited by Budak, *op. cit.* (1993), p. 148. Budak gives the name of the French official as “Champassaur”.

²⁹⁹ John Augustus Longworth (?–1875) was one of David Urquhart’s agents to Circassia in the 1840s and British consul in Monastir in 1851–60. From April 1855 he was sent with special mission to Circassia. Charles François Noël Champoiseau (1830–1909) was French vice consul in Redutkale in 1855–1857. Müşir Mustafa Pasha wrote to the Porte on 20 May 1855 on Champoiseau’s mission to Redutkale. See BOA. HR. SYS. 1352/54. It seems that both of them were in Sohum at the time of Ömer Pasha’s campaign. Laurence Oliphant writes that “during my stay at Souchoum I was hospitably entertained by Mons. Champoiseau, the French consul”. This was in the first week of October 1855. Oliphant notes that Mr Longworth was also there. See Oliphant, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–59.



Illus. 9 Prince Mikhail Shervashidze of Abkhazia (Hamid Bey). Drawn by Herr Zuther, in Laurence Oliphant's book *The Trans-Caucasian Campaign of the Turkish Army under Omer Pasha*, 1856.

issue orders to Mustafa Pasha at Batum to assist these agents in every way.³⁰⁰ There is no doubt that the orders were issued. These agents, however, achieved very little. Furthermore the allies tried to check and

³⁰⁰ Stratford's instructions to Pisani, to be read to Fuad Pasha, 27 May 1855. BOA. HR. SYS. 1352/64.

supervise all operations of the Porte by attaching military commissioners to its armies.

The British former Secretary of State for War, the Duke of Newcastle made a six-week tour of Circassia and the northern part of Georgia in the autumn of 1855. There he saw Sefer Pasha and Muhammed Emin as well. His impressions and his opinions in his letter to the British foreign minister reflect the opinion of at least part of the British government:

I had most unusually good opportunities of seeing the two principal Mahometan Magnates of Circassia – Sefer Pacha and the Naib – indeed as regards the latter very remarkable man I doubt if anybody has seen so much. Sefer is an effete old rogue and robber – just the man whom you might expect to find as deriving his authority from the Sultan and of course thwarting every English view of policy. He must be recalled by the Porte but nobody ought to be sent in his stead – anybody she so sent will be just as bad and the Porte has no right to send anybody. Turkey never had any real possession of the Country – her rights in Anapa were just like ours in Gibraltar and whatever rights she had she resigned by the treaty of Adrianople. She has not recovered them by conquest. English & French Arms have set free the littoral of Circassia, and it is monstrous to see the Turkish flag flying in every deserted Russian fort & to witness attempts to establish Turkish government in the Country. Omer Pacha quite concurs in this view and he has removed some of the scoundrels whom he found feathering their nests at Soukoum Kaleh, Bathum, and other places, – but even he can hardly make head against this system of complicated iniquity.³⁰¹

Newcastle added that Ömer Pasha was now aware of the dangers of sending a Muslim army into a Christian country. Newcastle also wrote that Ömer Pasha told him that an English or French army ought to be where he is and he ought to be on the Kuban. Newcastle reminded Clarendon that Britain ought to declare to the Circassians and the Georgians their future plans for their country and give guarantees for their liberty after they make peace with Russia. Finally Newcastle told Clarendon that his agent in Circassia (Mr Longworth) was unfit for the job.

The power struggle between Sefer Pasha and Muhammed Emin in Circassia finally resulted in an armed conflict between them. A letter from Muhammed Emin, dated 30 December 1855, informs the grand vizier that Sefer Pasha had attacked Muhammed Emin's men and him-

³⁰¹ Newcastle to Clarendon, Sinop, 3 November 1855. AGKK, III/4, (1988), p. 284.

self while he was residing at the courthouse built with the approval of Serdar-ı Ekrem Ömer Pasha and Sefer Pasha in Şapsuğ region.³⁰² Muhammed Emin writes that Sefer Pasha's attack was repulsed but that he gathered some regular troops with three guns and some bandits and attacked from Anapa into Abkhazia, plundering Muslim property. They again fought and Sefer Pasha retreated. The naib pasha adds that cavalry Brigadier-General (Mirliva) Ali Pasha has also organized conspiracies among the Circassians against him. Finally he expressed his concerns on the fate of Islam in the region.

There are basically two approaches in Ottoman and Turkish historiography to Shamil's role in the Crimean War. The first one is represented by Cevdet Pasha, who accused Shamil of remaining silent as if he had made an agreement with the Russians. His evaluation of the attitudes of Shamil and the Circassians to the war is interesting and worth quoting at some length here:

Unfortunately, Sheikh Shamil of Dagestan, having grappled with the Russians in Dagestan for so many years, did not show the action expected of him during the Crimean War. He retreated to an onlooker's position as if he had concluded an armistice with Russia and while the coasts from Batum to Anapa were captured by the allied states, the Abkhazian and Circassian tribes also remained as though neutral. Actually the cold attitude of the Circassians was also caused by the errors of this [our] side because those sent by the Sublime State to summon these tribes were of slave origins. But the Circassians did not trust the slaves whom they had sold. They did not esteem at all the titles and addresses of pasha and *bey* which we had given. The British for their part, as soon as they approached those coasts, advised first the prohibition of the sale of male and female slaves. But if the Circassians were to abandon their old customs and habits, then for them there was no difference between the Russians and the English. In short, the reasons and means used by both the Sublime Porte and the Europeans to gain the tribes of the Caucasus caused their hate and therefore the desired aims were not attained.³⁰³ [My translation]

The second approach is to accuse the Ottoman Empire for not having rendered enough assistance to the Caucasian peoples. The propo-

³⁰² Translation of an Arabic letter from Muhammed Emin to the grand vizier, dated 30 December 1855. BOA. HR. TO. 424/37 enc. 2.

³⁰³ Cevdet Pasha, op. cit., p. 90. Cf. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1909*, London: Macmillan Press, 1996, p. 106. Lütfi Efendi (op. cit., p. 91) also wrote that the Circassians did not esteem people who are not noble and free by birth.

nents of this approach are usually the Caucasian Ottomans or Turkish citizens of Caucasian origins.³⁰⁴ However, we have seen that the allies intentionally prevented any meaningful assistance being rendered by the Ottomans to the Circassians. By his presence alone and by his two raids towards Tiflis, Shamil had already rendered invaluable service to the Porte, because he had kept a significant number of Russian troops away from the Russo-Ottoman front. The Porte, however, weak and dependent upon the allies with different aims, could not give a strong assurance to the Circassians and the Dagestanis, because rumours of peace were always present during the war, and the Circassians were rightly afraid of Russia's vengeance in case of their commitment and the abandonment of the Porte and its allies.³⁰⁵

The Campaign of Summer 1854 and the Battle of Kürekdere

In the Caucasus, the campaign season of 1854 opened somewhat late in June. The Russian army was now on the offensive. General Prince Andronikov's forces in Guria, around Kutaisi consisted of two infantry regiments, one Cossack regiment, two battalions and the Gurian and Imeretian *militia*, making up approximately 9,000 men and 10 guns. On 8 June, a Russian force under the command of Colonel Prince Eristov was attacked by the Laz *başibozuks* under the command of Hasan Bey. The Laz were repulsed and lost 200 men. On 15 June, General Andronikov attacked Selim Pasha's forces along the river Çolok between Ozurgeti and Çürüksu (Kobuleti or Kapulet). Selim Pasha lost 4,000 men and all his guns, and retired to Batum. The Russians lost 1,500 men.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ See, for example, İsmail Berkok, *Tarihte Kafkasya*, İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1958 and Aytek Kundukh, *Kafkasya Müridizmi: Gazavat Tarihi*, Haz. Tarık Cemal Kutlu, İstanbul: Gözde Kitaplar Yayınevi, 1987.

³⁰⁵ Budak argues that both positions are wrong. See Mustafa Budak, "1853–1856 Kırım Savaşında Osmanlı Devleti ile Şeyh Şamil Arasındaki İlişkiler", *Tarih Boyunca Balkanlardan Kafkaslara Türk Dünyası Semineri*, 29–31 Mayıs 1995. *Bildiriler*, İstanbul: İ. Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1996, pp. 79–92. He finds the policy of the Porte simply cautious.

³⁰⁶ Tarle, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 516. Cf. Budak, op. cit. (1993), pp. 81–82. Budak, referring to CH, gives quite different numbers in favour of the Ottoman army, but adds that "although the Ottoman side claimed victory in this battle, General Andronikov brought his main forces to Ozurgeti on 15 June 1854".

At the end of June 1854, Lieutenant-General Baron K. K. Vrangél's forces, consisting of 5,000 men with 12 guns, advanced towards the Çengel pass near Karabulak village between İğdır and Bayezid. The pass was occupied by Ferik Selim Pasha's forces consisting of approximately 8,000 regular infantry with 8 guns and 7,000 to 10,000 *başibozuks*, half of whom were Kurdish.³⁰⁷ In mid-July, Vrangél, reinforced with 5,000 more troops, attacked this force and dispersed it. The Ottomans lost about 2,000 men dead and wounded with 370 taken prisoner and 4 guns captured, while the Russian losses were 400.³⁰⁸ The Kurdish *başibozuks* fled to their villages, while Selim Pasha retreated towards Van.³⁰⁹ On 31 July Vrangél occupied Bayezid without battle, where he captured significant provisions. Bayezid was on the commercial road from Tehran to Trabzon, thus the Russians were now in a position to control the caravan trade from Iran to Trabzon, which was as important for Britain as it was for the Ottoman Empire. According to Colonel Mikhail Likhutin of the Erivan corps, Selim Pasha had blamed his chief of staff, a Polish émigré and a "renegade", for the decision to accept battle with the Russians. Consequently, the chief of staff was recalled to Istanbul. But Ferik Selim Pasha was also recalled to Istanbul at the end of 1854.³¹⁰

While these battles took place on the left and right flanks of the front, the decisive battle of the 1854 campaign would be in the middle of the front, between Kars and Gümrü, near a village called Kürekdere, where the main forces confronted each other in an open field battle. On the Ottoman side, Mustafa Zarif Pasha had reinforced his forces to compensate for winter losses and now commanded an army of 44,046 regular and 17,625 irregular troops, as of 13 July 1854, according

³⁰⁷ General-Mayor Mikhail Likhutin, *Russkie v Aziatskoy Turtsii v 1854 i 1855 godakh*, St. Petersburg: Tipografiya tovarishestva "Obschestvennaya Pol'za", 1863, p. 76. Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 96.

³⁰⁸ Budak, op. cit., p. 96. Cf. İbragimbeyli (op. cit., p. 224) also gives the number of Ottoman forces around Bayezid as 18,000 men. According to İbragimbeyli, Vrangél's forces included about 1,000 Azerbaijani, 150 Armenian and 150 Kurdish irregular cavalry.

³⁰⁹ Budak, quoting from Yüzbaşı Fevzi Kurtoğlu, argues that Selim Pasha of Batum had come to help. However, Müşir Selim Pasha did not and could not come to help from as far as Batum to Bayezid, while even those nearer Ottoman forces at Kars, Erzurum and Van did not come. Kurtoğlu is simply unaware of the second Selim Pasha other than the one at Batum, namely Ferik Selim Pasha at Bayezid. Gürel (op. cit., p. 111) makes the same mistake.

³¹⁰ Likhutin, op. cit., p. 188.

to his own report to the Ottoman minister of war.³¹¹ However, these numbers may have been inflated in order to draw more rations from the treasury. The Ottoman ministers had told the British ambassador and the French chargé d'affaires (Benedetti) on 1 June 1854 that the army at Kars (including the new *redif*) amounted to 35 thousand men and about 10 thousand irregulars.³¹² According to Zarif Pasha's report, the troops were stationed as follows: At the village of Subatan near Kars, there were 10,431 irregulars (*başibozuks* and volunteers) of which 8,830 cavalry men and 1,601 infantry, under the command of *mirmirans* Resul Pasha, Edhem Pasha, *mirülümera* Hacı Halil Pasha, *sergerde* Kane (?) and others. Although it is not stated in the report, these irregular troops were all under the command of General Kmety (İsmail Pasha).

The main bulk of the Anatolian regular army (including *redif* troops) was stationed in two divisions at the village of Hacı Veli near Kars. The first division consisted of 18,533 men: 14,672 infantry, 2,871 cavalry and 990 artillery men with 36 cannons. The division was commanded by Ferik Kerim Pasha (called Baba Kerim, that is, "Father Kerim" by soldiers), while Ferik Hacı Rıza Pasha and the *mirliva* pashas Mustafa, Ahmed, Mehmed, (another) Ahmed and Hüseyin were serving under his command.

The second division consisted of 17,010 men: 13,162 infantry, 2,157 cavalry, 220 sappers and 1,471 artillery men with 48 cannons. The division was commanded by Ferik Veli Pasha, while Ferik Raşid Pasha and artillery commander Mirliva Tahir Pasha were serving under his command. 3,104 *redif* infantry men with 41 cannons were stationed in the city of Kars and in the redoubts around it under the command of the *mirliva* pashas Şükrü, Hafız and Salih. It must be noted that Mirliva Abdurrahman Pasha is somehow not listed in this report, whereas he was to play a notorious role in the battle of Kürekdere.

At Bayezid, there were 3,878 regular troops (3,587 infantry, 119 cavalry, 172 artillery men) and 7,194 irregular troops (nearly half of which cavalry) under the command of Ferik Selim Pasha. Finally there were 1,521 men and 18 cannons in Erzurum.

The best regiments in the Kars army were from the Arabistan army, but this had nothing to do with their being from Arabia; it was simply

³¹¹ BOA. İ. DH. 305/19393 enc. 3.

³¹² Strtattford to Clarendon, Constantinople, June 2, 1854. AGKK III/2, p. 436.

the result of good command, namely able colonels like Çerkes Hüseyin Bey, in whom the soldiers had confidence. Thus the soldiers fully displayed their military capacity.³¹³ There were more than twenty Ottoman pashas and also more than twenty European staff officers, with Hurşid Pasha (General Guyon) as their chief, some of them being generals of repute from the Hungarian revolution of 1848, as we have seen above. Colonel Count Charles de Meffray, an envoy of the French emperor, joined them in June 1854 as first aide-de-camp to the *mushir*.³¹⁴

Relations between Hurşid Pasha and the *mushir* and among these staff officers were restrained and full of intricacies. Mustafa Zarif Pasha did not like Hurşid Pasha and favoured instead Miralay Feyzi Bey (Colonel Kollman), who had converted to Islam and spoke Turkish well. Zarif Pasha considered him the best in terms of military and engineering talents. He also praised the Polish generals Mirliva Arslan Pasha (Bystrzonowski) and Şahin Pasha (Breanski) and the Hungarian İsmail Pasha (General Kmety). At the beginning of June 1854, Zarif Pasha wrote to the *serasker* that Hurşid Pasha was a short-tempered person, who did not respect other people's opinions and who did not possess enough knowledge of the area and of military science.³¹⁵ In another letter of the same date, he recommended Feyzi Bey be promoted to the rank of *mirliva* and appointed chief of staff. He also added that when Feyzi Bey was a colonel in the Hungarian army, Hurşid Pasha was at that time a major under him.³¹⁶ Zarif Pasha's preference for Feyzi Bey was shared by Ferhad Pasha (General Stein), who in his report to the *serasker* dated 26 June 1854 also praised Feyzi Bey and recommended that he be appointed as chief of staff.³¹⁷ Ferhad Pasha also noted that though every day new staff officers came to the army headquarters at Kars, very few of them were competent and knew Turkish. Many of them were bad examples for the troops and with their high ranks they were only a burden on the state budget. Therefore they should be sent

³¹³ Duncan, op. cit., p. 188. Russian sources confirm the distinguished character of these Arabistan regiments and the *hassa* or *Dersaadet* regiments. See for example *Blokada Karsa. Pis'ma ochevidtsev o pokhode 1855 goda v Aziatskuyu Turtsiyu*. Tiflis: Tipografiya kantselyarii namestnika Kavkazskago, 1856, p. 113.

³¹⁴ Karal, op. cit. (1940), p. 486 and p. 491. Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit., p. 460. AGKK, IV/2, p. 440.

³¹⁵ Zarif Pasha to Serasker Hasan Rıza Pasha, 2 June 1854. BOA. İ. MMS. 2/52 enc. 7.

³¹⁶ Zarif Pasha to Serasker Hasan Rıza Pasha, 2 June 1854. BOA. İ. MMS. 2/52 enc. 8.

³¹⁷ Sezer, op. cit., p. 82. Ferhad Pasha's report in French and its translation into Ottoman Turkish are at BOA. HR. MKT. 80/51.

back. Two Polish officers were examples. Arslan Pasha, who was there to form a company from Polish deserters from the Russian army, was useless. Şahin Pasha had resigned as second chief of staff. He wore a Sardinian colonel's uniform although he received his salary from the Porte. While these two Polish officers claimed that they were on a special mission from Emperor Napoleon III, Ferhad Pasha argued that they only wanted to avoid being under the command of the chief of staff Hurşid Pasha.

Infantry Brigadier-General (Mirliva) Mustafa Raşid Pasha from his station at the village of Hacı Veli near Kars had also reported to Zarif Pasha that Hurşid Pasha had said that Silistria had been captured by the Russians, despite official news to the contrary.³¹⁸ It seems very unlikely that Hurşid Pasha would spread such rumours when there was no need or basis for it. Why should he do so? Although Hurşid Pasha was of British origin, the support of the British government and the British ambassador was not clear. In July, Lord Clarendon wrote that Britain did not have special sympathies for Hurşid Pasha, but objected to leaving the command of the Kars army in incompetent hands.³¹⁹ Hurşid Pasha himself, in a letter to an unidentified Ottoman grandee who seems to be out of Istanbul at that time, complained of Zarif Pasha, saying that although he was gentle and elegant as his name suggested, he did not know how to command and did not listen to advice either. Thus Hurşid Pasha was afraid of his honour being harmed in the end. He wrote that in his situation he should quit the army, but he wanted first to seek advice from his addressee. He did not know to whom write. The *serasker* was a friend of the *müşir* and the *sadrizam* was unpredictable. Should he write to the British ambassador? He added that if his advice had been heeded, no Russians would have remained there until that time.³²⁰ One year later, when Hurşid Pasha was unemployed in Istanbul, Lord Clarendon and Lord Palmerston requested an active command for Hurşid Pasha in the Ottoman army in Europe or in Asia.³²¹

³¹⁸ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/52 enc. 11, 16 June 1854. Raşid Pasha was probably promoted to *ferik* in July 1854.

³¹⁹ Translation of an extract from Lord Clarendon's letter, dated 11 July 1854. BOA. HR. SYS. 1349/47.

³²⁰ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/65 enc. 6, 23 July 1854.

³²¹ Musurus to Fuad Pasha the foreign minister, London, 13 October 1855. BOA. HR. SYS. 1354/11.

Polish officers in general did not like Hurşid Pasha. In fact, Bystrzonowski and Breanski soon resigned from their posts. On 7 August 1854 they wrote to the serasker that they had learned from a letter from Count Zamoyski that Lord Stratford was accusing them of plotting against Hurşid Pasha. They were rather indignant of “*cette accusation calomnieuse*” and did not want to serve under him.³²² While British sources in general praise Hurşid Pasha as a good officer, Sadık Pasha is highly critical of him, calling him an “emptier of bottles”. Since Sadık Pasha was in Rumelia, he must have gained his opinion of Hurşid Pasha from those Polish staff officers who served under Hurşid Pasha. Sadık Pasha describes Zarif Pasha as a “talented administrator and officer, although better as administrator, than commander”. This characterization also seems to come from the Polish officers whom Zarif Pasha favoured, as we have seen. Sadık Pasha was also very critical of Stratford de Redcliffe, whom he called “Little Sultan” and argued that Stratford wanted Hurşid Pasha to have practical and Zarif Pasha only nominal command.

Sadık Pasha writes that Hurşid Pasha gave “Lew” Pasha the task of reading newspapers and taking notes, appointed “Potop” Bey master of bakery and “Piorun” Bey master of trumpets as examples of his contempt for the Polish officers.³²³ Sadık Pasha argues that although “among Polish officers there was disorder, disagreement, jealousy, intrigues and gossip”, there were also talented and brave officers among them such as Breanski, Bystrzonowski, Zarzycki, Grotowski, Jagmin and Wieruski, who were “a hundred times better than the English and Italian officers”.³²⁴ This is in sharp contrast to the characterizations of the Polish officers in the memoirs of the British officers, doctors and journalists who have been with the Anatolian army, such as Atwell Lake, Humphrey Sandwith and Charles Duncan. After the battle of Kürekdere, Colonel de Meffray reported to St. Arnaud that Bystrzonowski must be dismissed.³²⁵

³²² BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 12–13, 7 August 1854.

³²³ Michal Czajkowski (Mehmed Sadyk Pasza), *op. cit.*, 1962, p. 75. Interestingly, Czajkowski calls the Polish officers by the Polish equivalents of their Ottoman-Turkish names. Thus he writes Lew Pasha instead of Arslan Pasha, Potop Bey instead of Tufan Bey, Piorun Bey instead of Yıldırım Bey and Sokol Pasha instead of Şahin Pasha.

³²⁴ Czajkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

³²⁵ Zayonchkovskiy, *ibid.*

On the Russian side, Prince Bebutov had about 13,000 infantry, 3,000 regular cavalry and 4,000 irregular cavalry with 68 to 76 guns.³²⁶ According to Zarif Pasha, the Russians had 76 guns while the Ottomans had 84 guns. The Ottoman army was stronger numerically as well.³²⁷ The Russians, being numerically inferior, however, had a weighty counterbalance: the 8 grenadier battalions and 16 squadrons of the dragoon brigade were superior in quality to any of the Ottoman troops, perhaps even the best regiments from the Arabistan army or the rifle (*şeşhaneci*) battalions. This army included formations of irregular cavalry from Azerbaijan, Kabardia, Georgia, and Karabakh. It was under the command of Colonel Mikhail Tarielovich Loris-Melikov, Colonel Andronikashvili and Lieutenant-Colonel Kundukhov. Both Ottoman and Russian commanders were wary however, and limited themselves to observation until August. At the beginning of August, Bebutov took a position between the Kürekdere and Paldırvan villages. After receiving the news of the Russian victory in Bayezid, Bebutov planned an attack on 5 August.³²⁸

The Anatolian army had taken a position near Hacı Veli Köy. By his own account, Zarif Pasha was not enthusiastic about an attack, referring to orders from the *serasker* to be defensive. However, he maintained that Hurşid Pasha and the European staff officers all wanted to engage the enemy. The *başıbozüks* and the *ulema* among them had also started grumbling: why did we gather here if we are not going to fight? The regular soldiers and officers also wanted to engage. In these conditions, Zarif Pasha writes that, in order to both deceive and appease them, he suggested plans for all kinds of operations while continuing to temporize with them.³²⁹ When he received the news of the defeat at Bayezid on 3 August, Zarif Pasha wanted to send some troops there. But Hurşid Pasha opposed this plan and instead proposed first to attack Bebutov immediately at dawn on 4 August, while he was relatively weak, and then to attack Vrangel's forces that were advancing towards Erzurum. Most of the officers supported this plan. As for the orders to be on the defensive, the war council decided that since they were operating on Ottoman territory and trying to drive the enemy away from Ottoman

³²⁶ Zayonchkovskiy, op. cit., p. 465, Ibragimbeyli, op. cit., p. 252.

³²⁷ Zarif Pasha's evidence, BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 9, answer 5.

³²⁸ Ibragimbeyli, op. cit., p. 253.

³²⁹ See Karal, op. cit. (1940), p. 492. Cf. Zarif Pasha's evidence, BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 9.

territory, they should be considered as acting defensively.³³⁰ Hurşid Pasha's plan was accepted, but according to the *Times* correspondent, who was present at the battle, Zarif Pasha said that the fourth and fifth days were unlucky days so the attack was delayed until 6 August.³³¹ Meanwhile Bebutov learned of the attack from spies and accordingly he also gathered all his forces together in preparation.

According to Ferik Raşid Pasha, although Hurşid Pasha's plan was accepted, Zarif Pasha did not execute it properly. When the army was to march early in the morning, Hurşid Pasha urged Zarif Pasha to go but Zarif Pasha replied him: "I am the *müşir*. I know when to set out",³³² Thus they quarrelled and the march began only after evening in the dark. Then the second division set out late and came to the battle field very late. Raşid Pasha added that due to lack of water on the battlefield, the Ottoman troops suffered from thirst.

According to Staff Lieutenant-Colonel İskender Bey's report written after the battle, there were two opposing views among officers in the Kars army. Zarif Pasha the *müşir*, Ferik Veli Pasha, Şahin Pasha as well as İskender Bey argued for defensive tactics, while Hurşid Pasha and Colonel Meffray wanted to attack the Russians. In the end, Hurşid Pasha's plan was accepted. Hurşid Pasha divided the Ottoman army into three parts, namely two wings and the reserve. Only five battalions under the command of Hafız Pasha were left in Kars. Ferik Kerim Pasha with Feyzi Bey commanded the right wing or the first division that consisted of 24 battalions of infantry, 2 regiments of cavalry and 30 cannons. Ferik Veli Pasha with Ferik Raşid Pasha and General Kmety³³³ (İsmail Pasha) commanded the left wing, while Zarif Pasha with Hurşid Pasha was in the centre or in the left wing which was larger than the right one. The reserve troops were in the middle and consisted of 8 battalions of infantry and one regiment of *redif* cavalry with 6 cannons under the command of Mirliva Hasan Pasha. The *başbozüks* were on both wings and their duty was to encircle the enemy. On the right side Mirliva Abdurrahman Pasha commanded the *başbozüks* of Hacı

³³⁰ Interrogation of Zarif Pasha. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 9, paragraph (answer) 5.

³³¹ Quoted by Sandwith, op. cit., p. 101 or p. 53 in the abridged edition.

³³² *Mazbata* of the MVL on the trial of Zarif and Hurşid pashas, 11 April 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 2.

³³³ Allen and Muratoff (op. cit., p. 76) call him Colonel Kmety, on account of his former rank in the Hungarian army. Kmety now had he rank of *mirliva*, that is, brigadier-general. Budak (op. cit., 1993, p. 99) repeats this mistake by quoting from them. Furthermore, Allen and Muratoff do not mention Veli Pasha in this battle.

Timur Ağa and Reşid Ağa, reinforced with one battalion of infantry and 4 field cannons. Their duty was to capture the Karadağ hill. On the left side Ferik Mustafa Pasha commanded the *başıbozüks* reinforced with 4 cavalry regiments.³³⁴

Hurşid Pasha's plan, though well-prepared, required a well-trained army capable of skilful manoeuvring and coordination in order to execute it. The Ottoman army lacked such qualities. It was divided into three widely-separated groups, therefore, before one group came into action the other faced the whole Russian force. İskender Bey argued that the left wing came to the battlefield two hours after the right wing began to fight with the Russian army, because there was some confusion when Hurşid Pasha joined the left wing and it began marching late. İskender Bey also argued that Hurşid Pasha sent Colonel Schwarzenberg to post the reserve troops at the rear of the left wing, therefore they were too far from the right wing to come to its aid.³³⁵ However, since İskender Bey had not supported Hurşid Pasha's plan, he might have a certain bias against Hurşid Pasha. In any case, there was the problem of jealousy among the officers. Hurşid had his enemies as well, both European and Ottoman, whereas he was only the chief of staff and did not command any units; thus at critical moments, commanders of divisions or regiments were at liberty not to obey his orders without confirmation from the *müşir*, who was not to be found during the battle.³³⁶

On Saturday, 5 August 1854, the two armies met at Kürekdere. The battle lasted from four to seven hours. The Ottoman regular cavalry proved utterly useless. Artillery and part of the infantry fought well. The *başıbozüks* were also useless. However, thanks to its size the Ottoman army could still have won the battle had it not been for the lack of proper (or any) leadership and the inefficiency of some of the officers. Thus the Ottoman army was defeated by an army half or a third of its size. According to Ottoman reports, Ottoman losses included 2,448 dead, 1,009 wounded and 25 guns. The number of regular troops

³³⁴ Report of Staff Lieutenant-Colonel İskender Bey, BOA. İ. MMS. 2/65 enc. 7. Cf. Interrogation of Zarif Pasha. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 9, answer 7.

³³⁵ İskender Bey's report, BOA. İ. MMS. 2/65 enc. 7. Allen and Muratoff, op. cit., p. 77.

³³⁶ "The War in Asia. (From Our Own Correspondent). Kars, Aug. 7", *The Times*, Issue 21844, London, 12 September 1854, p. 9. Cf. Sandwith, op. cit., p. 105. Sandwith writes that the *Times* correspondent was an eye-witness of the battle.

that gathered in Kars after the battle was reported to be 28,782.³³⁷ The *başbozüks* dispersed to villages. Mirliva Hasan Pasha was among the dead. Salih Hayri maintains that there were more than 50,000 Ottoman troops and the Russians were half that number. He also argues that the Ottoman army was defeated due to lack of command.³³⁸ According to Ibragimbeyli, Ottomans lost 2,820 dead, about 2,000 wounded and 86 officers and 1,932 soldiers taken prisoner.³³⁹ The Russian loss included 21 officers and 568 soldiers dead, more than 2,000 wounded.³⁴⁰ While the Ottoman army retreated in disorder towards Kars, the Russian army did not chase it.³⁴¹ Bebutov's caution played a significant role here. If he had followed the Ottoman army, the Ottoman losses would have been much higher and Kars might have been captured.

The *Times* correspondent was a witness of the battle and wrote a lengthy article about it, blaming the Ottoman officers:

With a vivid impression of the whole engagement, from the first cannon-shot to the last straggling discharges of musketry, I can use no language too strong to express my reprobation of the conduct of nearly four-fifths of the Turkish officers present. In accounting for the defeat of an army numbering nearly 40,000 men of all arms by a hostile force of less than one-half that number, it is not sufficient to say that the management of the whole battle on the side of the Turks was a series of blunders from first to last; strategical errors might have protracted the engagement, and have added to the cost of a victory, but downright cowardice alone – which no generalship could have redeemed – gave the day to the Russians. One arm, and one only, behaved well – the artillery – which with its commander, Tahir Pasha, acted worthily of any army in Europe. Of the whole 40 battalions of infantry two regiments – the 5th Anatolian and 4th Desardet [Dersaadet] – alone stood their ground and resisted cavalry. Three successive times did three squadrons of Russian dragoons bear down upon these exceptionally brave regiments with a force before which many better disciplined troops would have yielded... Than the conduct of the rest of the infantry, nothing could well be worse, except that of the entire cavalry, which would have disgraced the rawest Bashi-

³³⁷ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/65 enc. 5.

³³⁸ Salih Hayri, op. cit., p. 153.

³³⁹ Ibragimbeyli, op. cit., p. 259.

³⁴⁰ Tarle writes that according to Bebutov's report, Russian dead and wounded numbered 3,054, which more or less coincides with the above account. See Tarle, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 517.

³⁴¹ Consul Brant to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, Erzeroom, August 10, 1854. PRMA, p. 7. Tarle (op. cit., vol. 2, p. 517) writes that the Russian cavalry under the command of General Baggovut chased the Ottoman army almost to the walls of Kars, which is not confirmed by other sources.

Bazouks. If such, however, was the conduct of the men, that, as I have said, of the great majority of the superior officers was still more infamous. An hour after the action began, there was hardly a Bunbashi [binbaşı] (major) or Murallai [miralay] (colonel) to be seen; almost to a man they had deserted their regiments, and fled back to the camp to secure their baggage and send it off to Kars.³⁴² [Corrections in brackets are mine]

The *Times* correspondent further wrote that after the battle, Zarif Pasha collected his pashas and secured their seals to a petition to the *serasker* that it was Hurşid Pasha's fault alone to have hazarded an engagement. He added that the returns represented the losses as 1,200 killed, 1,800 wounded and 8,000 missing (of which last 2,000 were prisoners and the rest deserters, chiefly *redif*).

Indeed, the day after the battle, Zarif Pasha wrote two letters to the *serasker* about the battles at Bayezid and Kürekdere. He claimed that on Hurşid Pasha's insistence he had accepted battle with the Russian army and because of him they could not win the battle although all troops fought well. Zarif Pasha claimed that although they had sustained some losses, the Russian loss was three or four times greater.³⁴³ He also gathered his pashas in Kars and obtained a statement of accusation against Hurşid Pasha sealed by the *ferik* pashas Mehmed Rıza, Veli, Mehmed Raşid and Abdülkerim, as well as by the governor of Kars Mehmed Sırrı Pasha. The pashas wrote that when they received the news of the defeat at Bayezid, they all agreed with the mushir to send reinforcements to Bayezid and to be on the defensive. However, they argued, Hurşid Pasha strongly objected to this and instead proposed to attack the Russian army. Colonel Meffray also supported him. Thus, although they were reluctant, in order not to seem to be avoiding battle out of cowardice, they also agreed with him. Although all the Ottoman officers and soldiers fought very well, they could not win the battle because of Hurşid Pasha's wrong plans and because he did not listen to anyone's opinion, they claimed. They also accused Hurşid Pasha of mistreating them and of being unaware of military art.³⁴⁴

There is however a witness against Zarif Pasha as well. This is (Mir-liva?) Şükrü Pasha, whose letter from 8 August 1854 is in the same folder with the reports of Zarif Pasha, İskender Bey and other pashas who supported Zarif Pasha. Şükrü Pasha wrote that it is well known

³⁴² *The Times*, *ibid.* Cf. Sandwith, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–108.

³⁴³ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/65 enc. 2 and 3, 6 August 1854.

³⁴⁴ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/65 enc. 4, 6 August 1854.

by everyone that the Ottoman army numbered 70 thousand men in total, while the Russians counted overall 30 thousand men. At Bayezid, there were 1,500 regular troops with 4 cannons and 2,400 *başibozuks*. The Russians reinforced their forces in front of Bayezid with 8 thousand more troops from Erivan and conquered Bayezid. When it was learnt the Russians were about to march upon Erzurum, it was decided to destroy first the Russian forces in front of Kars and then the force marching from Bayezid towards Erzurum. Şükrü Pasha then wrote that the *müşir* let the 70-thousand-strong Ottoman army be defeated by a 30-thousand-strong Russian army. Şükrü Pasha then used even very strong and abusive expressions against Zarif Pasha, calling him a “Yezid” and a “donkey”, and arguing that because he had been busy “with women and boys and with theft”, any soldier was better informed than him.³⁴⁵

The Sublime Porte decided to recall both Zarif Pasha and Hurşid Pasha to stand trial in Istanbul.³⁴⁶ When Zarif Pasha was later arrested and tried at the MVL, he blamed Mirliya Abdurrahman Pasha, who did not come to the help of his comrades, keeping five battalions and one battery (six guns) out of battle. Ferik Raşid Pasha confirmed Zarif Pasha in this matter, stating that the said pasha with his five battalions, six guns and 3,000 *başibozuks* did not come to help although Kerim Pasha, commander of the first division twice sent orders to him.³⁴⁷ Raşid Pasha, however, also maintained that the retreat was not in an orderly manner as claimed by Zarif Pasha, since there was confusion and Zarif Pasha could not have counted enemy losses. Of the battle’s result in general, Zarif Pasha gave quite a different account, as if he had not been defeated. He even argued that the result of the battle was useful for the Ottoman Empire and discouraging for the Russian army.³⁴⁸ This had, of course, nothing to do with the truth.

Hurşid Pasha, for his part, told the MVL that originally he was not a supporter of an offensive action. Instead he had proposed to strengthen the fortifications in Kars and the village of Hacı Veli. He had even experienced some tension resulting from this with Zarif Pasha before

³⁴⁵ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/65 enc. 8, 8 August 1854.

³⁴⁶ BOA. İ. MMS. 2/65 enc. 11, 21 August 1854.

³⁴⁷ *Mazbata* of the MVL on the trial of Zarif and Hurşid pashas, 11 April 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 2.

³⁴⁸ See Karal, *op. cit.* (1940), p. 494. The archival version has a slightly different wording with the same meaning. Cf. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 10.

departing for reconnaissance. When he returned the army was moving towards the village of Vezin. When he asked Zarif Pasha the reasons for this move, Zarif Pasha gave him a peremptory answer: "I am the mushir". However, at Subatan, Zarif Pasha asked his opinion on going to battle with the Russians. Although his original opinion was against such a move, taking into consideration the present deployment of troops and the intelligence on the numerical inferiority of the Russian army, he said if the intention was to do battle, then it was just the right time, therefore, immediate action was necessary before the Russians could receive reinforcement. However, Zarif Pasha did not think it was a lucky time because the moon was in the sign of Scorpio.³⁴⁹ Thus Hurşid Pasha argued that many days passed there uselessly.

The British and French consuls in Erzurum and Trabzon sent reports to Istanbul about the battle of Kürekdere. Extracts from the British reports were given by the British embassy to the Porte as well. These reports contained some details of the battle and even a "list of the well and ill-behaved officers at the battle of Kuruckdereh" and a list of "Ottoman officers accused of being addicted to drinking". Another list included the above Abdurrahman Pasha of the Arabistan army, together with Vanlı Mehmed Pasha, as the officers "whose conduct is most reprehensible in refusing to charge when ordered". It was also noted that Vanlı Mehmed Pasha "purchased his rank for 60,000 piastres from the Mushir".³⁵⁰

Although Zarif Pasha did not blame Colonel Meffray in any way, Marshal St. Arnaud complained about him to the French minister of war Marshal Vaillant after the battle of Kürekdere. St. Arnaud wrote that he had not recommended Meffray to the *serasker*. According to St Arnaud, Meffray had prepared some offensive plans for the Anatolian army and although St Arnaud had not approved these plans, but responded politely and vaguely, Meffray had presented St Arnaud's letter to the *serasker* as if it were an approval. Thus Meffray had succeeded in getting appointed as aide de camp to the commander of the Anatolian army. On 24 July 1854, St. Arnaud had written to Serasker

³⁴⁹ Hurşid Pasha's evidence is in harmony with the account of the *Times* correspondent. The only difference is that the *Times* correspondent gives the unlucky sign as the Ram (Aries) or the Crab (Cancer). See Sandwith, op. cit., p. 101.

³⁵⁰ BOA. HR. SYS. 1191/1 enc. 73-76. These lists are anonymous and undated. Most probably they were written either by Colonel Williams or another British officer at Kars.

Rıza Pasha that they had sent a “non-military Frenchman” to the army of Kars. After the battle of Kürekdere, St. Arnaud even seems to place the blame for the defeat on Meffray’s offensive plans.³⁵¹

The battle of Kürekdere had clearly demonstrated the ability of the Russian army to hold the Caucasus. Shamil and the Circassians were further disappointed by the Porte’s military inability. Thus the Caucasus front remained quiet until the next campaign season. Meanwhile, in the words of Clarendon, “a foreign general of distinction and said to possess great military talent” was on the spot and willing to take the command of Kars. By the “foreign general of distinction”, Clarendon meant General Klapka. His appointment was recommended by the allied commanders-in-chief, by the British ambassador and by all the Ottoman ministers except Reşid Pasha the Grand Vizier. The British foreign minister protested this “disregard of the Sultan’s interests”, and the fact that “against all this weight of authority his [the Grand Vizier’s] decision is allowed to prevail”. Clarendon further directed Lord Stratford to request that Reşid Pasha instruct the newly appointed İsmail Pasha “to defer to the advice of Colonel Williams, who is thoroughly acquainted with the people and the country, and who ought to have a high Turkish rank given to him in order to insure respect for his authority”.³⁵² On 27 September, Clarendon wrote to Lord Stratford:

I have to state to your Excellency that Her Majesty’s Government have little doubt that a deep rooted jealousy of foreigners is, as you suppose, the main cause of the neglect of the army in Asia; but the suicidal indulgence of that feeling ill becomes a Government whose very existence depends upon the support of foreigners.³⁵³

Clarendon also required Stratford to give a copy of his despatch to Reşid Pasha.

The allies recommended that all foreign officers at Kars be recalled and the command of the army be entrusted to General Klapka. However, the Porte did not accept the appointment of General Klapka. Zayonchkovskiy claims that Serasker Rıza Pasha did not like Lord Stratford and therefore declined his nomination of General Klapka, while Klapka

³⁵¹ St. Arnaud to Vaillant, Varna, 29 August 1854. AGKK, IV/2, pp. 440–441.

³⁵² The Earl of Clarendon to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe. Foreign Office, Sept. 22, 1854. PRMA, p. 10.

³⁵³ Clarendon to Stratford, 27 September 1854. BOA. HR. SYS. 1191/1 enc. 54, Turkish translation at enc. 55. The PRMA (No. 13, p. 10) gives a smaller extract from this despatch.

himself wrote that the Porte thought it wiser to decline the services of a foreign general from a fear of giving offence to Austria.³⁵⁴ Klapka also claimed that Ömer Pasha advised the Porte to employ that foreign general (implying himself). Instead the Porte suggested that the Anatolian army be divided into two divisions separately commanded by a French and a British general.³⁵⁵ However, such a divided command was not acceptable to the allies. Eventually İsmail Pasha, the chief of staff of the Rumelian army was appointed to take the command of the Anatolian army at Kars in September 1854, but he did not go to Kars for alleged reasons of health.

While Klapka himself does not explicitly mention any visit of him to Kars, a letter from Rıza Pasha to Zarif Mustafa Pasha, dated 12 July 1854, informs the latter that the British general Klapka, together with Major Proti (?), Captains Kozlowski and Bertolati (?), two interpreters and four servants, as well as General Staff Major Hamdi Bey were sent to them to see the state of things there and to contact Sheikh Shamuil (Shamil). Rıza Pasha added that although Klapka's mission was not official, he should be treated politely and given all the information and assistance he needed.³⁵⁶

The British consul in Erzurum (James Brant) sent reports on the disorganized state of the Anatolian army. The British cabinet decided to send a military commissioner there to get information on the real state of affairs in the army. Three days before the battle of Kürekdere, Lieutenant-Colonel William Fenwick Williams of the Royal Artillery was informed by Lord Clarendon that he had been selected as the officer to attend, as Her Majesty's Commissioner, the head-quarters of the "Turkish" army in Asia, under the orders of Lord Raglan.³⁵⁷ Williams was chosen for his knowledge of Eastern Anatolia, where he had served as the British representative in the international border commission on

³⁵⁴ Klapka, *op. cit.*, p. 45. Zayonchkovskiy, *op. cit.* (2002), vol. II, part 2, p. 472. Zayonchkovskiy refers to correspondence in the military archive at Paris, conducted among the French minister of war Marshal Vaillant, Marshal St. Arnaud, chargé d'affaires Vincent Benedetti and Serasker Rıza Pasha.

³⁵⁵ Grand vizier to the *serasker*, 3 August 1854. BOA. HR. MKT. 82/38.

³⁵⁶ BOA. HR. MKT. 81/42 enc. 3. An anonymous note in French from the British embassy is also in this file (enc. 4). The note says that General Klapka should be sent immediately via Trabzon to Kars and that all foreign officers at Kars, except General Guyon, should be recalled.

³⁵⁷ The Earl of Clarendon to Lieutenant-Colonel Williams. Foreign Office, August 2, 1854. PRMA, p. 1.

the Ottoman-Iranian border from 1842 to 1852.³⁵⁸ Williams arrived at Istanbul in August 1854 and after visiting Lord Stratford there and the Commander-in-Chief Lord Raglan in Varna, he departed for Trabzon on 31 August 1854, from there reaching Bayburt on 10 September and Erzurum on 14 September. He was received with high honours by the governor-general of the province, İsmail Pasha. After two days in Erzurum, Williams headed for Kars.³⁵⁹

Williams was promoted to the rank of *ferik* (lieutenant-general, his British rank was brigadier-general) by the Porte at the request of the British ambassador in December 1854 within three months of his arrival in Erzurum and Kars. From Governor of Erzurum İsmail Pasha's letter to the grand vizier we learn that the British consul in Erzurum James Brant had already informed İsmail Pasha that Williams held the rank of *ferik* even at the time of his arrival at Erzurum. Governor İsmail Pasha also states that he honoured Williams and allowed him to visit the army barracks and hospitals in accordance with the advice of the British consul although Williams did not produce an order from the grand vizier or the *serasker*.³⁶⁰

Eventually General Williams played a role greater than any other officer in the Anatolian army, Ottoman or foreigner. This role however was not altogether positive or helpful for the Ottoman war effort. Because of his temperament, Williams mixed into his behaviour and reports the most justified complaints on frauds and on corruption together with the most fanciful and vainglorious claims of alleged disrespect towards himself. Therefore one needs to distinguish in his reports between the real and the imagined items. As noted by James Reid, "Victorian British commentators might have made harsh judgments about Ottoman corruption, but they addressed certain realities that impartial observers cannot deny".³⁶¹ The fact that a certain European observer shows some prejudices against the Ottomans does not necessarily mean that all his claims are based on fiction. This is especially true in the case of

³⁵⁸ See Robert Curzon, *Armenia: A Year at Erzerum, and on the Frontiers of Russia, Turkey, and Persia*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1854, pp. VII–VIII. The author was at that time private secretary to the British ambassador Sir Stratford Canning and also served in this commission until 1847.

³⁵⁹ Colonel Williams to İsmail Pasha the Governor of Erzurum, 16 September 1854. BOA. HR. MKT. 94/56 enc. 6. Cf. PRMA, p. 21.

³⁶⁰ Governor İsmail Pasha to the grand vizier, 26 September 1854. BOA. HR. MKT. 94/56 enc. 3.

³⁶¹ Reid, *op. cit.* (2000), p. 89.

General Williams, who made very detailed and concrete accusations and revelations of corruption and schemes of embezzlement, based upon his rigorous investigations. We will see some of these.

In his first reports from Erzurum, Colonel Williams found the winter-quarters of the army satisfactory but needing repair, the military hospitals clean but the apothecary's department in need of surgical instruments and medicine. As we have already mentioned, he wrote that during the previous winter 18,000 soldiers had died due to insufficient housing and care.³⁶² A week later, Williams reported from Kars that during the last winter, owing to the want of medicines, food, fuel, bedding and light, nearly 12,000 men perished in the hospitals of Kars.³⁶³ The troops in Erzurum were 15 to 19 months in arrears of pay. They had received only one month's pay before the last "*bairam*" (Ramadan). Although 10,000 purses (*kese*) had been sent lately, nearly two-thirds of it was in paper. More money in specie was needed. Winter clothing had not been sent yet.³⁶⁴

In his reply to the representations of Lord Stratford, Reşid Pasha reported that supplies were being sent to Erzurum. As regards the payment of the arrears, he said that this point could not be settled until the "financial" (loan) commission sits, and "the sooner they meet the better". Meanwhile 5,000 purses (2,500,000 piastres, about 20,000 pounds) in specie were being prepared for transmission to Erzurum for the pay of the soldiers. Reşid Pasha also asked Lord Stratford to give the name of the British commissioner in the financial commission for the purpose of setting the commission to work at once.³⁶⁵ However, even in the case of money in specie (gold and silver) being sent from Istanbul to the army, it is unlikely that it reached the soldiers because the *müşir*, pashas, the *müsteşar* (paymaster-general) and the *defterdar* (accountant-general) kept the specie to themselves and distributed paper money to the colonels, other officers and soldiers. The colonels in turn, receiving paper money that circulated only with a 20 per cent discount, were reduced to inflating the returns of their regiments to get

³⁶² Colonel Williams to İsmail Pasha Governor of Erzurum, 16 September 1854. BOA. HR. MKT. 94/56 enc. 6. The same letter is available at PRMA, p. 21.

³⁶³ Colonel Williams to the Earl of Clarendon, Camp near Kars, September 24, 1854. PRMA, No. 28, p. 26.

³⁶⁴ Stratford's instructions to Pisani to be read to Reshid Pasha. Therapia, October 1, 1854. PRMA, p. 13.

³⁶⁵ Pisani to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe. Pera, October 3, 1854. PRMA, Inclosure 2 in No. 17, p. 14.

some extra rations. They would then resell these rations (food items, etc) to the army.³⁶⁶ The soldiers, if they got paid at all, could change their money notes to buy tobacco and coffee, for example, only at the discount of 20 per cent.³⁶⁷

Meanwhile, as we have seen, the Russians had occupied the town of Bayezid which stood on the great commercial road between Persia and the Black Sea port of Trabzon. This was alarming news from a military and commercial point of view because this occupation also threatened the trade of the British manufacturers with Persia. Ferik Selim Pasha had fled at the approach of the Russian army. Some *başıbozuk* and *redif* troops from the Kars army fought the Russians but could not stop them. The Russians, however, in order to strengthen the Erivan army, withdrew from Bayezid towards Erivan in November 1854, taking the Armenians with them. 600 Karapapaks of Şuregel and 300 Kurds under Kasım Ağa had also joined the Russians.³⁶⁸

In Kars, Colonel Williams was received with military honours and attention by Zarif Mustafa Pasha. Together with his aide-de-camp Lieutenant Teesdale and Doctor Sandwith, Williams inspected the troops. The soldiers were in need of many things, such as clothing and provisions, yet their healthy and soldier-like mien impressed Williams. The great portion of the infantry was armed with flint firelocks, but three battalions of chasseurs (*şешaneci*) were armed with the Minié rifle (which the Russian army did not have) and seven battalions of infantry had muskets.³⁶⁹ However, the sabres of the cavalry were too

³⁶⁶ Sandwith, op. cit., p. 125.

³⁶⁷ PRMA, Inclosure in No. 48, September-October 1854, p. 46. Duncan, op. cit., vol. II, p. 11. Edouard Engelhardt, *Türkiye ve Tanzimat Hareketleri*, Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1976, p. 83.

³⁶⁸ Lieutenant Teesdale to Colonel Williams. Kars, November 26, 1854. PRMA, p. 73.

³⁶⁹ Colonel Williams to the Earl of Clarendon. Camp near Kars, September 26, 1854. PRMA, p. 29. The dictionary of Ferit Devellioglu, under the second meaning of *meniyye* (first meaning "death" in Arabic) gives the information that the *meniyye* rifles were introduced into the Ottoman army under Sultan Abdülaziz. (*Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lugat*, Ankara, 2002, p. 615). However, Minié has nothing to do with *meniyye*, it is the surname of the French officer who invented these rifles and bullets before 1850. Secondly, as seen above, Minié rifles were already being used in the Ottoman armies during the Crimean War. See PRMA, pp. 102, 333, 335. Laurence Oliphant (op. cit., pp. 100, 205) records their use by Ömer Pasha's army during his Caucasian campaign as well in the autumn of 1855, which is confirmed by Borozdin (op. cit., p. 29). Adolphus Slade also confirms the exclusive possession of Minié rifles by the allies. See Slade, op. cit., p. 99.

short. (After Williams's report, new sabres were imported from Britain). Cavalry was indeed the worst part of the Ottoman army, while the artillery was the best.

In general, the Ottoman army was not armed worse than the Russian army, which did not have Minié rifles at all. But the management of the Ottoman army was very corrupt and subjected the soldiers to terrible abuse. Williams soon discovered huge discrepancies between the actual counted number of troops and the muster-rolls, thus revealing embezzlement by the mushir and his subordinates, who pocketed the pay and rations of the missing soldiers. The army at Kars, that was supposed to be 40,000-strong, actually consisted altogether of 18,340 men including infantry, cavalry, artillery and some irregulars. The *başıbozüks* were also stated as amounting to 10,000 in the muster-rolls, when in reality there were not more than 6,000 of them.³⁷⁰ Even after Williams' count of the troops, Zarif Mustafa Pasha reported the muster-roll tally to Istanbul as totalling 27,538 effective of all arms, whereas in Williams' opinion only 14,000 effective men were present.³⁷¹ Williams also learnt from the "Vakeel" (deputy) of the *defterdar* that rations for 33,000 men were being issued daily.³⁷²

It is certain that this practise of muster-roll fraud was known and tolerated by the Porte, because it was the widespread and usual practise. An irrefutable proof for this is found in the words of the grand vizier himself. In November 1854 the army of Batum was weakened due to deaths from diseases and desertions and it needed reinforcements. It was decided to send the Tunis army and to levy 1,000 *asakir-i muvazzafa* from the *sancak* of Lazistan. The grand vizier Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Pasha wrote that the Porte allowed the levy of 1,000 men, however, he warned that this levy should not be conducted as it usually was in most places by officers, that is, by registering for example 100 men but employing only 60 or 70 of them, and then taking the pay and

³⁷⁰ Report of the Military Board to the *serasker* on the Corps d'Armée of Kars in September and October, 1854. (Translation). PRMA, p. 116. Budak (op. cit. (1993), p. 105) gives these last numbers about the *başıbozüks*, and other similar cases, referring to another British archival document.

³⁷¹ Colonel Williams to the Earl of Clarendon. Camp near Kars, October 11, 1854. PRMA, p. 39.

³⁷² Colonel Williams to the Earl of Clarendon. Camp near Kars, October 25, 1854. PRMA, p. 47.

rations of the remaining men.³⁷³ The grand vizier also warned the local authorities that measures must be taken to prevent these recruits from oppressing anyone. From these words and from the whole of the *tez-kire*, it is certain that the grand vizier was trying to prevent the customary practise of fraud because of the demands of the war.

Another proof of the fact that the Porte knew of and tolerated the muster-roll fraud is the complete absence of any direct questions on this matter addressed to the three successive commanders of the Anatolian army (Abdi, Ahmed and Zarif Pashas) during their trial in Istanbul from November 1854 to June 1855. Despite the many reports by Williams on concrete cases of fraud that were forwarded to the Porte by the British embassy, none of these pashas was asked directly about the muster-roll fraud or invited to prove that the numbers of troops conformed with reality. The questions about corruption in the administration of the army were too general, as if corruption were only a rumour. It is also remarkable that while Abdi Pasha and Ahmed Pasha argue against each other and accuse each other regarding many military issues, they never accuse each other of corruption. On the contrary, they firmly confirm each other on that matter.³⁷⁴

According to the reports of Colonel Williams and the narratives of Doctor Sandwith, Colonel Lake and the *Morning Chronicle* correspondent Charles Duncan, apart from the muster-roll fraud, the governors, pashas and colonels used every opportunity for speculation and did many other disreputable things. They bought wheat and barley from producers and then sold it to the army at inflated prices, instead of allowing the producers to bring their produce to the army quartermasters for payment. Pashas took bribes for all kinds of purchases for the army, or simply embezzled the money without making any purchases at all. For example, they did not give the soldiers their ration of rice twice a week. This theft alone brought them £30,000. The pashas and colonels also dealt in *kaimes* (paper money). They collaborated with greedy contractors who sold low quality goods and provisions to the army at enormous profits. For example, a Greek baker named Kozma mixed the flour with hay, barley and other things and gave very coarse, hardly edible crumbs at the price of best quality loaves of wheat-flour.

³⁷³ Grand Vizier Kibrılı Mehmed Emin Pasha to the Sultan, 12 November 1854. BOA. İ. MMS. 3/97 enc. 3.

³⁷⁴ For the interrogation and statements of these pashas, see BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 and 5/170.

Kozma was protected by Ahmed Pasha.³⁷⁵ In another instance, pashas and colonels bought old horses worth 3 to 6 pounds each for the cavalry and charged the government 10 to 12 pounds for each horse, thus pocketing the difference. They made the soldiers work for commercial purposes. In general, the pashas lived in luxury together with their large *harems* and did not care for the well-being of the soldiers at all. For example, some of the pashas appropriated houses with accommodation sufficient for 250 men, while the soldiers were packed tightly into overcrowded rooms. When soldiers were quartered in any place, the pashas took bribes from the rich not to use their houses while the poor were forced to evacuate their homes. Thus it was the poorest villages of Erzurum and Kars that were forced to billet soldiers in their houses. Many pashas added drunkenness to their vices.

Another problem was the hostility of the uneducated old officers towards young officers brought up in the military schools of the Sultan or in Europe. Williams reported:

Several months ago fourteen of these young men, after completing their studies at the Galata Serai, were sent to this army; they found themselves exposed to every description of insult and degradation; not one of them received a paid appointment in the Etat-Major, and several have, in consequence, disappeared altogether from this army; I believe only four remain, and those subsist on the bounty of such superior officers as may find it to their own interest to employ them: in short, the officers at present in command, as well as those in subordinate posts, will always endeavour to keep the young cadets out of employ in order that their own promotion may secure for them those illicit sources of peculation on which they at present fatten, at the expense of the unfed and badly-clothed soldier.³⁷⁶

Sandwith is also of the opinion that especially against these young, educated “Turkish” officers, “a system of persecution” was pursued:

³⁷⁵ Duncan writes that the inspector Hayreddin Pasha had made “Kosmo” eat the “bread” of his bakery as a punishment at the beginning of 1854. However, it seems that Kozma continued with his practise with the consent of Müşir Ahmed Pasha, because Duncan also writes that the *müşir* [Zarif Mustafa Pasha] himself bastinadoed Kozma for the same crime in May 1854. See Duncan, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 115 and vol. 2, p. 12. During his trial in Istanbul, Zarif Pasha was asked about Kozma as well and he admitted that he had beaten him or had him beaten and that afterwards he began to perform his duties better. However, Zarif Pasha also argued that other bakers could not provide bread at the same price as Kozma, who had great capital and long experience in this business. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 9, question 15.

³⁷⁶ Colonel Williams to the Earl of Clarendon. Camp near Kars, October 23, 1854. PRMA, No. 46, p. 41.

This mean and spiteful conduct towards these unfortunate young Turks was observable in all their superior officers, from the mushir downwards, and was shown in a variety of ways. No tents, pay or rations were given them, and they prowled about the camp in rags, fed by the charity of those who pitied their sad condition.³⁷⁷

The new mushir of the Anatolian army İsmail Pasha was in no hurry to proceed from Istanbul to Erzurum, because of an eye infection which threatened his sight. Whether this was a real problem or an excuse not to spend the winter in Erzurum is open to question. Meanwhile Kerim Pasha acted as his deputy for a short time but then Şükrü Pasha from the Rumeli army was appointed as the acting Commander-in-Chief. His chief of staff was Hüseyin Pasha. Şükrü Pasha arrived at Erzurum toward the end of October. Before Şükrü Pasha arrived at Kars on 12 November, General Williams had already received from the British consul Brant in Erzurum the information that at an evening meeting Zarif Pasha had excited Şükrü Pasha against Williams and Şükrü Pasha had said that Williams should not be allowed to interfere in the affairs of the army.³⁷⁸ Williams quickly reported the situation to Stratford de Redcliffe and to Lord Clarendon. Williams also reported happily that the new chief of staff Hüseyin Pasha had “taken the young staff-students under his special protection, provided them quarters, claimed their long arrears of pay”.³⁷⁹

Meanwhile Zarif Pasha came to Istanbul in November 1854 and he was soon arrested³⁸⁰ in December 1854 after strong demands from Lord Stratford, who gave an official note to the Ottoman foreign minister Âli Pasha on 28 November 1854, demanding the punishment of Zarif Pasha together with his two predecessors Müşir Ahmed Pasha and Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha.³⁸¹ In fact even Abdi Pasha, the predecessor

³⁷⁷ Sandwith, op. cit., p. 122, or p. 69 in the abridged edition of the book in the same year.

³⁷⁸ Consul Brant to Colonel Williams, Erzerum, November 2, 1854. PRMA, p. 53. Cf. Budak, op. cit. (1993), p. 106. Budak writes that the Porte dismissed Zarif Pasha and appointed instead Şükrü Pasha, omitting the appointment of İsmail Pasha.

³⁷⁹ Colonel Williams to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, Camp near Kars, November 4, 1854. PRMA, p. 52.

³⁸⁰ BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 7, 17 December 1854. The *irade* called for an acceleration of the trial of Abdi, Ahmed and Ferik Ali (Rıza) pashas as well as Zarif Pasha.

³⁸¹ Lord Stratford de Redcliffe to Aali Pasha, November 28, 1854. PRMA, p. 56. For the official Ottoman translation of this official note, see BOA. İ. MMS. 3/107 enc. 1. Budak (ibid.), refers to the same original document in English, however, he writes that Stratford wanted Kerim and Veli Pashas together with Zarif Pasha to be punished.

of Ahmed Pasha had not yet been tried. The trial of the three successive commanders of the Anatolian army, Abdi, Ahmed and Zarif Pashas, together with Ferik Ali Rıza Pasha, is, however, very important as an indicator of the attitude of the Ottoman elite toward charges of corruption against high officials, as in the case of Kapudan Mahmud Pasha. The difference is that in this case the allies, especially the British, pressed for the punishment of Zarif Pasha and others.

There were two basic charges against Zarif Pasha. The first was strictly military in character: He was accused of taking offensive action in the battle of Kürekdere (and thereby playing into the hand of the Russians) when his orders were to be on the defensive. The second charge concerned corruption in the administration of the Anatolian army. On the first charge the DŞA decided that since the battle took place on Ottoman territory it should be seen as a defensive operation.³⁸² This decision was approved by the MVL and the Council of Ministers (*Meclis-i Vükela*) as well. On the second charge, Zarif Pasha said that he had no knowledge of this and it must be directed to the *müsteşar*, the *defterdar* and other officials. On the question of the exchange of coins for paper money, he first pretended not to know. When he was asked again, he said that it was perpetrated by the *veznedar* (teller) sent by the treasury and he had sent the *veznedar* to the former *müsteşar* Rıza Efendi. However, Rıza Efendi had only imprisoned the culprit for a short time. Raşid Pasha and Hurşid Pasha said that they had heard of some acts like stealing from the cavalry fodder and buying grain at increased prices but they were not able to prove them.³⁸³ Then the MVL reached the conclusion that there had not been as much corruption in purchases and expenditures under Zarif Pasha as under his predecessors, and that rations to the army had been allocated properly. While it was not denied that some local officials had committed embezzlement, it was not possible to investigate these cases from Istanbul, therefore, Vasıf Pasha and his *defterdar* Vehab Efendi should be questioned.

Consequently, Zarif Pasha's arrest and unemployment did not last long, as was the rule among the Ottoman elite at that time. His trial lasted until June 1855, when he was finally acquitted and released in

³⁸² *Mazbata* of the DŞA, 7 May 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 1.

³⁸³ *Mazbata* of the MVL on the trial of Zarif and Hurşid pashas. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 2, 11 April 1855.

July.³⁸⁴ Within two years, at the end of 1856, Hasan Rıza Pasha was again appointed *serasker* and he again managed to take Zarif Pasha into state service, this time as president of the DŞA.³⁸⁵ As we have seen, only Ahmed Pasha from the Anatolian army was found guilty and exiled to Cyprus for five years.

On 8 December 1854, Colonel Williams complained to Lord Stratford that he had not received any correspondence from him since 23 September. He was disappointed that his demands were not being complied with. Williams observed, among other things, that in such a case, he would fail to preserve the power which he had “seized unaided”.³⁸⁶ Meanwhile, at the request of the British cabinet, the Porte agreed to confer upon Colonel Williams the rank of *ferik* (division general or lieutenant-general) towards the end of December 1854. This was his “local” rank, while in the British army, the new rank of Colonel Williams was Brigadier-General.

Lord Stratford in his despatch to Clarendon regarding the complaints of Colonel Williams remarked that Williams had decided in a hasty manner that he was neglected by the British ambassador. “Winter, distance, roads scarcely passable, want of funds, the extent of evil to be cured, the scarcity of trustworthy officers, the greater interest of operations elsewhere, the illness of Ismail Pasha” were to blame. He also blamed the “corruption, ignorance, prejudice, want of public spirit and the instincts of selfishness” of the “Turkish” ministers. But then he added remarkably:

Has England itself been always without a taint? Have we never heard of Bacon, or of Marlborough? Have we forgotten the Memoirs of Pepys, the profligacies of his day and the one claim of an exiled Sovereign to the gratitude of his country? Are not the denunciations of Burke still ringing in our ears? Place, time, and circumstances vary altogether; but the disease differs only in degree. In Turkey it has reached the stage of extreme virulence; in Christendom, generally, it is in abeyance, or shows itself only under mild forms; in Russia it mingles with the system of administration, and would no doubt fulfil its mission there as elsewhere,

³⁸⁴ Grand vizier's petition and the Sultan's *irade*, 1–2 July 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 14.

³⁸⁵ Cevdet Pasha, *Tezâkir* 13–20, Ankara: TTK, 1991, p. 37. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/170 enc. 1.

³⁸⁶ Colonel Williams to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, Erzeroom, December 8, 1854. PRMA, p. 65.

if the power and energy of Government did not maintain a counteracting vitality.³⁸⁷

Lord Stratford also wrote that he had learnt from a “Turkish” minister, on whom he could rely in this instance, that the real cause of the poverty of the Asian army last year was the jealousy of Mehmed Ali Pasha, grand vizier and then *serasker*, towards Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha, then the mushir of the *hassa* army, who seemed to be his rival. Furthermore, the present *serasker* (Hasan Rıza Pasha) and Ömer Pasha had long been at variance with each other. While the *serasker* asserted that he had sent ample supplies to the army in Rumeli, the Generalissimo complained of being neglected.

To those historical allusions concerning England, forwarded by Stratford to Williams as well, the response of Williams is also worth mentioning here:

although the crimes of Bacon, Pepys, and Marlborough were parallel and identical with those which now brand the characters of the greatest and least of the public men in Turkey, the circumstances which relate to the repression and punishment of them are by no means so; for, if we take the last and greatest of these guilty Englishmen above-mentioned, we find his glory and his avarice associated with the history and fortunes of the greatest nation upon earth. England was not then supported in the arms, as it were, of France and Turkey, and could not have been pre-emptorily called by great patrons and allies to put her house in order and repress corruption, as Turkey now is by France and England; and had this warning voice been heard, and responded to, we should have been spared this desperate struggle.³⁸⁸

Williams added that those “base” (implying Şükrü Pasha), “despicable” (referring to many of the commanding officers), and “drunken” (openly accusing Liva Ahmed Pasha) Ottoman officers were still at the head of various departments and corps of the Anatolian army.

On the other hand, Stratford was pressing the Porte for the trial and punishment of Abdi, Ahmed and Ali Rıza Pashas from the Anatolian army for the corruption and other charges. In December 1854, an important change in office made things easier for Stratford: Reşid Pasha once again became grand vizier. Nevertheless, Reşid Pasha was

³⁸⁷ Lord Stratford to the Earl of Clarendon. Constantinople, December 28, 1854. PRMA, p. 78.

³⁸⁸ Brigadier-General Williams to the Earl of Clarendon. Erzeroom, January 25, 1855. PRMA, p. 133.

no longer the champion of reform, and even if he were so, his office did not mean everything, the whims of the Sultan and the intrigues of rivals had also to be taken into account. Lord Stratford was growing weary of the complaints of Williams and the constant pressure of Clarendon. Williams had sent the cover of a letter addressed to him by Şükrü (Shukri) Pasha as an instance of the disrespect shown him by the Ottoman authorities. Yet upon an exact translation of the superscription in question, Lord Stratford found that its terms, “far from being disrespectful, rather err on the side of compliment”. Lord Stratford observed that the “Queen’s Ambassador and personal representative” had no higher titles.³⁸⁹

Indeed this despatch of Lord Stratford to Lord Clarendon, dated 21 January 1855, revealed a very curious and important fact: Stratford admitted that there existed no record of his having applied in writing for a formal recognition of Colonel Williams as Her Majesty’s Commissioner to the army of Kars. Stratford was “really at a loss to discover how it happened” that he omitted “so obvious a formality”. As he noted, “the very facilities” of his “position with respect to the Turkish ministers” had betrayed him into an inadvertency, but this was of so little practical importance since Williams’s own correspondence had shown the honours and attentions with which he was received in Erzurum and Kars. Therefore, Stratford very rightly observed that, “surely there are no symptoms here of any disrespect to Her Majesty’s Commissioner, who at that time in military rank was a simple Lieutenant-Colonel”. Ottoman authorities had in fact shown undue respect to a British lieutenant-colonel without proper documents testifying his appointment and they had even allowed him to search into almost all the details of the Kars army.

³⁸⁹ Lord Stratford de Redcliffe to the Earl of Clarendon. Constantinople, January 21, 1855. PRMA, p. 91. The translation of this address read as follows: “To the most noble presence of the possessor of rank and nobility, his Excellency Williams Bey, a Military Chief Commander of the exalted Government of England, residing at Erzurum”. Ibid., p. 93. Later, *The Times* of 7 April 1856, (issue 22335, p. 11) also published a news article on this question, giving a more elaborate translation and comments from Mr. R. W. Redhouse. Redhouse was also of the opinion that the terms of address were polite.

*The Siege and Fall of Kars and Ömer Pasha's Caucasian Campaign
in 1855*

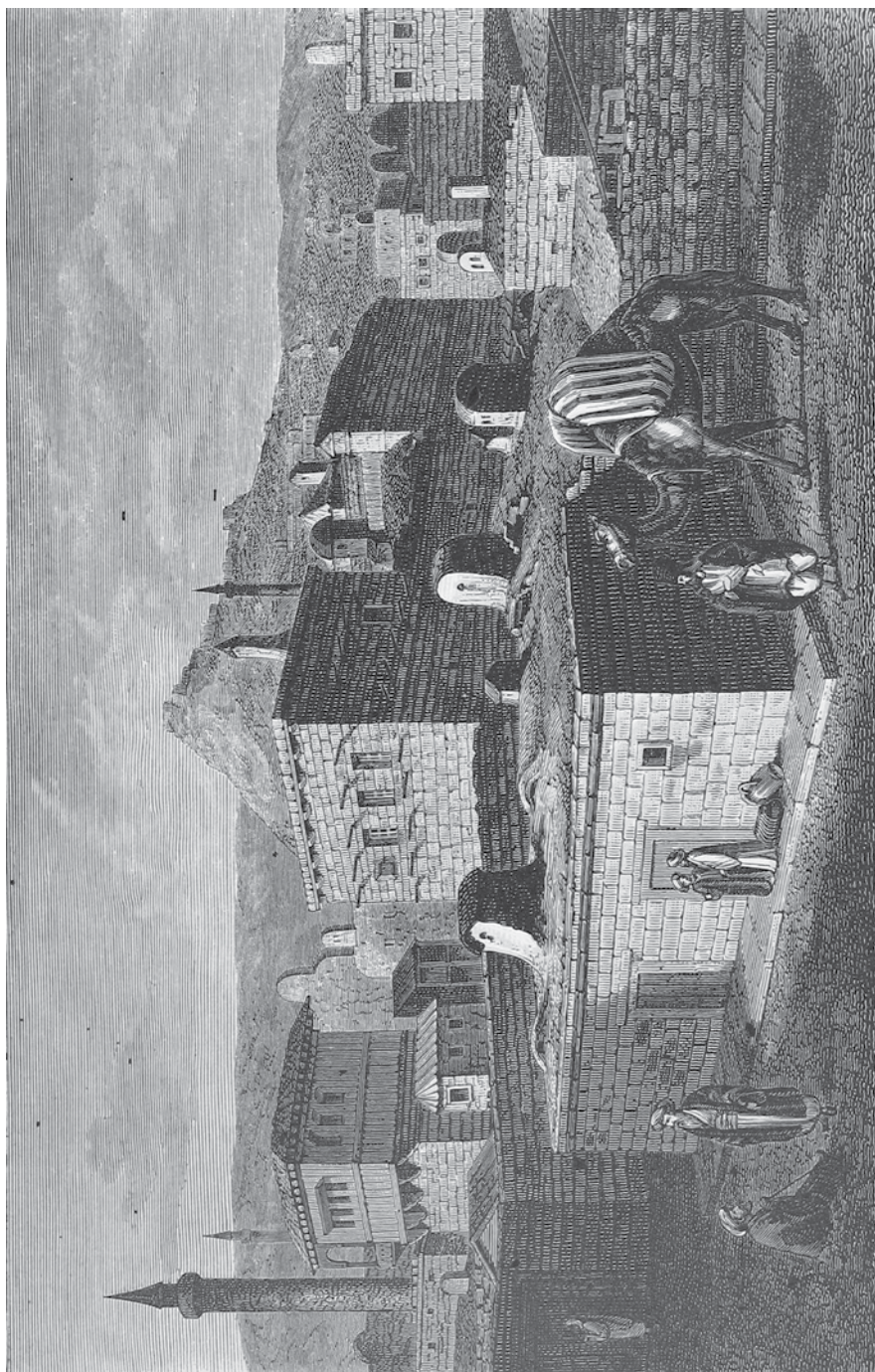
In January 1855, Mehmed Vasif Pasha (?–1865), the former commander of the Arabistan army, was appointed as the provisional commander-in-chief of the Anatolian army until İsmail Pasha could take over his responsibilities. İsmail Pasha himself was sent to the Danube to replace Ömer Pasha, who was now sent to the Crimea. Vasif Pasha was known to be an honest commander; since he had independent means, he was not engaged in speculation.³⁹⁰ Therefore he was chosen to command the Anatolian army. Vasif Pasha was given instructions from the *serasker* Rıza Pasha and the grand vizier Reşid Pasha. The *serasker* instructed Vasif Pasha to be on the defensive against the Russians, and in the case of a Russian attack he should consult with Ferik Williams Pasha and other commanders to repel the enemy. Reşid Pasha's instructions placed more emphasis on the need to fight corruption and to follow the advice of Ferik Williams Pasha.³⁹¹ According to Sadık Pasha, Redcliffe told Vasif Pasha that he demanded "absolute obedience" to Colonel Williams, in which case Vasif could count on Redcliffe's support. Sadık Pasha even claims that Vasif Pasha kissed the coat of Redcliffe, which no "Turk" had done before. He adds that Vasif Pasha was no "Turk", but a Georgian of slave origin.³⁹²

Meanwhile the *firman* conferring on Williams the rank of *ferik* was read in Erzurum on 25 January 1855 in the presence of military and civil authorities. This ceremony was a novelty in that it was probably the first time such a high rank was bestowed upon a Christian, without changing his name to a Muslim one. As Williams noted, this innovation was calculated to do much good, "for, hitherto, the Turks have forced Europeans to take an Osmanli designation and the soldier was made to believe that the officer in question had embraced his religion

³⁹⁰ General Nikolay Nikolayevich Muravyov in his memoirs wrote that Vasif was a Georgian from the Guria region, village Chokhlati, surname Gudjabidze, and that he was sold as a slave at the age of 12 to the well-known Reşid Pasha in Istanbul. See Muravyov, *Voina za Kavkazom v 1855 godu*, vol. 1, St. Petersburg: Tipografiya tovarischestva "Obschestvennaya pol'za", 1877, p. 41. Mehmed Süreyya also records his Georgian origin. He had become a *ferik* in 1830–31. He had also been governor of Niş, Salonica, Vidin and Trabzon.

³⁹¹ Instructions to be delivered to Vassif Pasha, dated January 28, 1855 (translation). The Grand Vizier's addition to the Instructions to Vassif Pasha (translation). PRMA, pp. 107–110.

³⁹² Czajkowski, op. cit., p. 77.



Illus. 10 Williams Pasha's house, Kars, 1855. From General Nikolay Muravyov's book *Voyna za Kavkazom v 1855 godu*, 1877.

also; and this inferred that no Christian was worthy of holding high rank in the armies of the Sultan".³⁹³

By February 1855, Lord Stratford came into conflict with the demands of Brigadier-General Williams, and this time he complained to the Earl of Clarendon. Even Stratford did not approve of Williams's tone towards the Ottoman command. Finally Lord Stratford asked the question which the Ottoman pashas in Erzurum and Kars should have asked from the beginning: What exactly are the position and powers of Williams? That he was assuming the powers of a Commander-in-Chief was clear from his demands and even Stratford was not prepared to press upon the Porte for all Williams' demands. Therefore Stratford wrote that "he should be made acquainted with the extent of his powers on the spot, with the degree to which he is independent of the Commander-in-chief". He further remarked:

It appears that the Commissioner asserts in practise a right of being obeyed without hesitation, whether the object of his suggestion be the punishment or removal of an officer accused by him, the correction of an abuse, the introduction of an improvement, or the direction of a military operation. If such are his powers I know not in what he differs from a Commander-in-chief, except that he is not charged with taking the field in person, and directing the whole of the operations on his single responsibility. The Porte most certainly does not put this construction on the authority with which he is invested, nor have I so read my instructions as to ask for more on his behalf than a fair reliance on his judgement in matters affecting the administration of an army, a respectful attention to his advice and suggestions for the promotion of its efficiency, and that amount of confidence as to military movements and plans which ought to be inspired by the intimate relations subsisting between the respective Governments.

Observing in your Lordship's instruction to General Williams that he is directed to maintain the most friendly relations with the Turkish officers, I venture to ask whether the tone which he has assumed towards them, the abruptness of his charges, the violence of his threats, the dictatorial spirit which, according to his own account, has generally characterized his proceedings, can be said to correspond with that intention, or to favour those dispositions to reform which it is our object to produce no less at Kars than throughout the Turkish Empire.

³⁹³ Brigadier-General Williams to Lord Stratford. Erzeroom, January 26, 1855. PRMA, pp. 133–134.



Illus. 11 Sadyk Pasha receiving Cossacks from the Dobrudja at Shumla. *ILN*, 6 May 1854.

We should be inconsistent with ourselves if we sought to trample down what remains of Turkish independence...³⁹⁴

Stratford then pointed out the inconsistency of Williams' pretensions to such a high position due to his "ignorance of the native languages, and of practical experience in the field".

Adolphus Slade is also critical of the conduct of General Williams, arguing that his unfavourable estimate of the Turks, formed while employed in delimiting the Ottoman-Iranian border, was

the inevitable consequence of his dependence on interpreters, drawn from classes prone from infancy to exaggerate in disfavour of the ruling class, and who when conflicting opinions respecting them are deducible, invariably deduce the least flattering. He had seen the Turks with their rayas' eyes, he had heard about them from their rayas' lips, and had passed judgement accordingly. As well might an Algerine's sketch of the French, or a Hindoo's colouring of the English, be accepted as genuine representation.

Thus impressed, the commissioner, face to face with proud susceptible men, unconsciously passed the faint line of demarcation between counsel and dictation...he fancied, in the professional jealousy excited by his visitorial character, disrespect for his position: – singular hallucination, in days when the humblest individual in French or English uniform was caressed!³⁹⁵

An author by the pen name of S. de Zaklitschine, who seems to have been a well-informed French staff officer (in the Kars army?) published a book in 1856 in response to the British "blue book" (the PRMA). There he wrote that

the reports of Lieutenant-Colonel Williams on the battle of İncedere testify, if not to his credulity, at least to his premeditated tendency to denigrate everything that had been done in Anatolia prior to his arrival. They do not speak in favour of his calm and cold judgement, neither of his view as a man of war nor of his impartiality as a critic.³⁹⁶ [My translation]

³⁹⁴ Lord Stratford to the Earl of Clarendon. Constantinople, February 19, 1855. PRMA, pp. 129–130.

³⁹⁵ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

³⁹⁶ S. de Zaklitschine, *Kars et le Général Williams. Réponse au Livre Bleu*, Malta, 1856, p. 19.

Sadık Pasha in his turn, wrote that Colonel Williams, “like most of the English officers who bought their ranks and did not earn them by service and merit, treated his officers like Negroes”.³⁹⁷

In February 1855, Vasıf Pasha became the mushir of the Anatolian army. He was given clear instructions to follow the advice of General Williams. Ferik Halim Pasha was also appointed to his staff. The chronicler Lütfi went to his house before his departure from Istanbul. Vasıf Pasha was sitting with Ferik Halim Pasha, who was complaining that having changed the old muskets with capsule (cartridge) rifles, what would they do if the French do not give them the cartridges and if they did not have money for the cartridges. Vasıf Pasha kept silent, smoking his *nargile* and pretending not to hear.³⁹⁸

Meanwhile General Nikolai Nikolayevich Muravyov (1794–1866), appointed at the end of 1854, came to Tiflis at the beginning of March as the new viceroy of the Caucasus. He was not known and he did not belong to the tsar’s circle of favourites, but he was an energetic and able officer. His appointment must have appeared as a surprise to generals like Bebutov, Baryatinskiy and Baklanov, who may have felt some jealousy towards him. Muravyov had been to Istanbul and Egypt in 1833 during the Russian assistance to the Porte against Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt. He spoke Russian, French, English, German and Turkish fluently.³⁹⁹

At the beginning of June 1855, Muravyov advanced towards the front with 21,200 infantry, 6,000 Cossack and Dragoon cavalry, 88 guns and some militia.⁴⁰⁰ His plan was to besiege Kars from all sides, cutting all communication with Erzurum and other centres and thus forcing the fortress to surrender. Vasıf and Williams Pashas on the other hand, knowing very well the hazards of an open field battle with the Russian army, committed all their energy to fortifying the city. Fortunately, Colonel Lake of Williams’s staff was an expert on fortification.

Cossack cavalry General Yakov Petrovich Baklanov (1808–1873) crossed the border at the end of May for reconnaissance. Towards the end of June he recommended to Muravyov that Kars be stormed, but Muravyov was hesitant. General Muravyov wrote to the Russian war minister that if he had an additional 15,000 troops, he could storm

³⁹⁷ Czajkowski, op. cit., p. 78.

³⁹⁸ Lütfi, op. cit., p. 108.

³⁹⁹ Sandwith, op. cit., p. 303. Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 212.

⁴⁰⁰ Tarle, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 520.

the city.⁴⁰¹ Instead he strengthened the blockade of Kars, seizing or destroying all sources of provision for the army at Kars. Soon Kars was suffering from hunger. An Ottoman force under Ali Pasha, sent from Erzurum, was defeated by General Pyotr Petrovich Kovalevskiy (1808–1855) at Penek on 31 August. Ali Pasha himself was taken prisoner.

The peasants around Kars were now forced to submit their grain tithe to the Russian army. Nevertheless, Muravyov in his memoirs writes that for livestock bought from the population, he ordered that they be paid in gold, not with dubious promissory notes, as was the practice of the Ottoman army.⁴⁰² Muravyov issued an appeal to the population of Kars on 28 June. The leaflet was also translated into Ottoman Turkish and distributed. The appeal proclaimed that the Russian army was now encamped near their villages but that “not one ear of their harvest” had been trodden upon by Russian horses, while Istanbul had showered them with taxes, violence and unpaid transport services. It is worth quoting more from this proclamation which illustrates the arguments of Russian propaganda (using the word “propaganda” in a neutral sense):

When 22 years ago Mehmed Ali Pasha betrayed the Sultan and your present friends England and France sacrificed Istanbul to Mehmed Ali, while Turkey was being ruined and everybody watched cold heartedly, who gave you the hand of help? The late Emperor Nikolai, enemy of rebellion and malice. He ordered his army to cross the sea and shield Istanbul by breast. At that time our troops were in the Bosphorus and Nikolai could have demanded any reward from Turkey. But the Great Sovereign did not make trade on his friendship. He saved his ally and withdrew his army after the danger was past. Did Turkey have a right not to trust Nikolai's word? But Sultan Mahmud died and around Sultan Abdülmecid there appeared men who valued their personal interests more than the peace of the nation. Now the English and the French give orders... while the executors of these orders are Muslims... When a French captain appears beside a pasha at the head of his army, who gives the orders? The French captain! Foreigners have occupied your country, there are foreign troops even in the palace. Open your eyes and know well who is your real friend and who is your enemy!⁴⁰³ [My translation]

⁴⁰¹ Tarle, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 523.

⁴⁰² Muravyov, op. cit., vol. I, p. 210.

⁴⁰³ *Vozzvanie Gen. Muravyova k poddannym Turtsii, ot 16-go iyunya 1855 goda* [General Muravyov's appeal to the subjects of Turkey, 28 June 1855]. AKAK, vol. XI, no. 65, p. 79. For the Ottoman Turkish version, see BOA. İ. DH. 331/21600 enc. 1.

Meanwhile, the situation in Kars had become unbearable for the soldiers and for the civilians. Müşir Vasıf Pasha was sending letter after letter to the Porte reporting that the Russians were about to attack the city and asking for reinforcements. In his letter on 20 June 1855, he wrote that a Russian army of 40,000 to 50,000 men had come to the south of Kars preparing for an attack. Vasıf Pasha added that it would be difficult to oppose this Russian force because most of the troops in Kars were *redif* troops and they had been demoralized by earlier defeats.⁴⁰⁴ Every day many soldiers were dying and many of them deserting. Some civilians helped these deserters and some civilians, both Muslim and Christian (mainly Armenian), spied for the Russians. Vasıf and Williams had to resort to executions to stop the desertions and spying but even that was insufficient to put an end to them.⁴⁰⁵

While Kars was thus under siege, the Porte and its allies were discussing various plans for relief for the Kars army. While the allies' top priority was the conquest of Sevastopol, the Porte was naturally more interested in Kars. Brigadier-General Mansfield had come from Britain as Stratford's military advisor. There were in general two plans: either landing an army at Trabzon and advancing towards Erzurum and Kars or landing the army at Redutkale and advancing towards Kutaisi and Tiflis.⁴⁰⁶ Both plans had their advantages and disadvantages but the Porte favoured the latter. Towards the end of June 1855, a meeting was held in Sadrazam Âli Pasha's *konak* on the Bosphorus with the participation of Foreign Minister Fuad Pasha, Serasker Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha (1811–1882), Lord Stratford, General W. R. Mansfield and Dragoman Stephen Pisani. We do not know why the French did not participate in this meeting. Were they uninvited or uninterested? The second alternative seems more likely.

After conferring with the *serasker*, General Mansfield prepared a memorandum for a landing at Redutkale. It was proposed that command of the campaign be given to Lieutenant-General R. J. H. Vivian, the commander of the "Turkish Contingent". Vivian's contingent (20,000 men, half of which was in Istanbul) was to be reinforced with

⁴⁰⁴ Müşir Mehmed Vasıf Pasha to the Grand Vizier, 20 June 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 5/171 enc. 3.

⁴⁰⁵ Budak, *op. cit.* (1993), p. 138. Budak, however, mentions only Armenian spies. Cf. Tobias Heinzelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁴⁰⁶ Lord Stratford to the Earl of Clarendon, 30 June 1855. See PRMA, p. 221. Stratford mentions "three possible modes of acting", but the third one is not clear. Probably it is a variant of the second plan.

forces from Batum and Rumelia, Egypt and Tunis, reaching a total of about 43,400 troops.⁴⁰⁷ Nevertheless, Vivian was not enthusiastic about the plan, stating that the “Turkish Contingent” was not fit for this service, that he must have exact details, and then demanding a long list of facilities of transport and supplies. The list included, among other items, 170 transport ships and 15,000 horses for a proposed corps of 25,000 men.⁴⁰⁸

The decisions, of course, had to be taken by the British government and the Porte. Stratford immediately despatched the plan to Clarendon asking whether a diversion operation from Redutkale was approved by the government. On 14 July, Clarendon replied by telegraph that the plan had not been approved, adding that “Trebizond ought to be the base of operations”.⁴⁰⁹ The British Secretary of State for War, Fox Maule-Ramsay, Lord Panmure (1801–1874), agreed with Lord Clarendon and warned General Vivian about undertaking “any expedition of a nature so wild and ill-digested as that contemplated by the Porte” and “risking the honour of the British name and your own reputation”.⁴¹⁰ Thus began a long series of discussions which delayed the proposed campaign and did much harm to its results. With the French generals and admirals hostile to the plan and the British hesitant, it was left to Ömer Pasha.

Starting from 23 June, Ömer Pasha warned the allied commanders about the situation of the army in Kars and of the necessity of a diversionary operation from Redutkale. On 7 July he sent a memorandum to the British and French generals and admirals in chief, wherein he stated that the Kars army “to the number of 10,000 men, blockaded in the entrenched camp of Kars by a superior Russian force”, might capitulate because of hunger if not from some other cause. The commander of the Kars army, finding that his communications with Erzurum were cut off, had requested, on 23 June, reinforcements and a powerful diversion on the side of Redutkale. Then Ömer Pasha added:

⁴⁰⁷ PRMA, pp. 221–225. Cf. Budak, *op. cit.*, pp. 150–153. Budak has translated the “Turkish Contingent” as “*Türk alayı*”, that is, “Turkish regiment”. However, General Mansfield’s report (which Budak translates) tells that the “Turkish Contingent” would form “a division” of the force that would be sent to save Kars.

⁴⁰⁸ Vivian to Redcliffe, 2 July 1855. PRMA, pp. 227–228.

⁴⁰⁹ The Earl of Clarendon to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, July 14, 1855. PRMA, p. 226. Clarendon’s detailed dispatch was sent on 13 July. See PRMA, p. 225.

⁴¹⁰ Lord Panmure to Lieutenant-General Vivian. War Department, July 14, 1855. PRMA, pp. 234–235.

The proposal which I wish to make is, that I should throw myself, with the part of my army which is here and at Kertch, 25,000 Infantry, 3,000 Cavalry from Eupatoria, and a proportion of Artillery, upon some point of the coast of Circassia, and by menacing from thence the communication of the Russians, oblige them to abandon the siege of Kars.⁴¹¹

Ömer Pasha added that this force and that under Mustafa Pasha at Batum was enough for the operation and he only required assistance in the transport of his troops. He wished a war council to convene to decide upon the operation.

The conference of the generals and admirals took place on 14 July with the participation of the French Commander-in-Chief General Aimable Jean Jacques Pélissier (1794–1864), the British Commander-in-Chief General James Simpson (1792–1868), the Sardinian Commander-in-Chief General Alfonso Ferrero La Marmora (1804–1878), the Commander of the French Fleet in the Black Sea Vice-Admiral Armand Joseph Bruat (1796–19 November 1855), the Commander of the British Fleet in the Black Sea Vice-Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons and Rear-Admiral Houston Stewart (1791–1875). Ömer Pasha told the assembled officers that a superior Russian force of 48,000 men, of whom 10,000 were cavalry, had advanced upon Kars, with other Russian forces taking Bayezid and Toprak Kale on the way to Erzurum. The generals said they could offer no opinion without information from their embassies. Thereupon, Ömer Pasha informed the conference that he would go to Istanbul for a few days to confer with his government and the next day he left for Istanbul on board the British steamer *Valorous*. Regarding General Vivian's contingent, Ömer Pasha had informed the General Simpson that sending General Vivian's contingent would be risky, as the men were not yet acquainted with their officers, the officers did not speak their language, and the contingent was too small for this operation. He argued that he was well-known in Asia (where he had conducted several campaigns) and possessed the confidence of the "Turks" and therefore was "more likely to gain the sympathies and assistance of the inhabitants in provisioning, in gaining information, etc."⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ PRMA, translation of the Inclosure 3 in no. 270, p. 251.

⁴¹² Lieutenant-Colonel Simmons to Lieutenant-General Simpson, camp near Kamara, July 12, 1855. PRMA, p. 247. Simmons was attached to the headquarters of Ömer Pasha.

Ömer Pasha arrived at Istanbul on 17 July 1855 and visited the Serasker and then Sultan Abdülmecid. He complained of neglect by the allies, saying that they were keeping the best Ottoman troops in the Crimea uselessly and did not care for Kars at all. This made him for a while the hero of Istanbul. All resources were placed at his disposal. He chose his officers. The Sultan gave him an estate from the inheritance of Hüsrev Pasha, who had died in the previous year at the age of 97. He was also invested with the Order of the Bath by the British ambassador.⁴¹³

Ömer Pasha was definitely in favour of a landing at Redutkale instead of Trabzon. According to Slade, he argued that

From Trebizond to Erzeroom the movement would be of long duration, and difficult, from the distance and the mountainous nature of the country; which is only traversed by mule roads, rendering the passage of artillery a work of great labour and of slow process.⁴¹⁴

Probably what gave more weight to Ömer Pasha's plan was a metaphor most likely originating with Serasker Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha, as the Ottomans liked to use figurative language. Thus he said that the operation was like striking the snake at its tail in order to turn its head to the rear. When Ömer Pasha's campaign finally ended in failure, Rifat Pasha the former president of the MVL remarked "we have given Kars for the sake of a metaphor"⁴¹⁵

Colonel Simmons and Colonel Vico had come to Istanbul with Ömer Pasha. The latter had brought General Simpson's letter to Lord Stratford. Simpson informed the ambassador that Ömer Pasha's arguments had failed to convince the members of the conference, "who all, without exception, entertain the strongest objection to the withdrawal of any troops from the Crimea".⁴¹⁶ Therefore, Simpson begged Lord Stratford to use his "powerful influence" with the Porte to prevent the acceptance of Ömer Pasha's proposal. On 19 July, Stratford wrote to Clarendon on the sudden arrival of Ömer Pasha and his proposal, having learnt everything from General Simpson and Colonel Simmons.

⁴¹³ Slade argues that Ömer Pasha went from his ship immediately to the palace and accused the Porte to the Sultan of negligence and incapacity in regard of military matters. See Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 426.

⁴¹⁴ Slade, *ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ Cevdet Pasha, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁴¹⁶ General Simpson to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, before Sevastopol, July 16, 1855. PRMA, p. 249. As Simpson wrote, this letter was brought by Colonel Vico, who was on the same ship with Ömer Pasha, ostensibly for the purpose of restoring his health.

Stratford wrote that, through Pisani, he had learnt that the arrival of the Generalissimo without orders from the government had created “some feelings of dissatisfaction” and that he had explained his conduct by referring to “the perilous nature of the emergency, and the inutility, as he thought, of his presence near Sebastopol under present circumstances”.⁴¹⁷

Stratford and Clarendon were not categorically against the plan. Their objection was rather to the use of the “Turkish Contingent”. Meanwhile Ömer Pasha was received well by the Sultan. He was also on very good terms with the new Serasker Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha, unlike the former Hasan Rıza Pasha, with whom he had been at odds. On 2 August 1855, the Porte delivered an official note to the British embassy, asserting that the best way to save Kars was to march with a 45,000-strong army from Redutkale toward Tiflis via Kutais. Since the British had objected to the use of the “Turkish Contingent” in this operation, the Porte instead proposed, as Ömer Pasha had said, to send the Contingent to the Crimea and to take 20,000 Ottoman troops from there. The remaining troops for the operation would be taken from Rumeli and Batum. The note also argued that a march from Trabzon to Erzurum with cannons and ammunition could take three to four months, by which time Kars would be gone; whereas the road from Redutkale to Tiflis via Kutais was easier and convenient for the transport of cannons.⁴¹⁸ By this time, the French government had also accepted the plan provided that the numbers of Ottoman troops before Sevastopol were not diminished. The shortfall could be filled by the “Turkish Contingent”. On 9 August, Clarendon informed Stratford by telegraph that General Vivian’s contingent was to go immediately to Gözleve and the Ottoman troops there, 10,000 or 12,000, were to go with Ömer Pasha to Redutkale. The Ottoman troops at Balaklava and Kerch were also not to be diminished in number.⁴¹⁹

Ömer Pasha spent too much time in Istanbul apparently for preparations but certainly having some leisure time and as in the words of Slade, “enjoying a long ovation”.⁴²⁰ He departed for Sevastopol only on

⁴¹⁷ Lord Stratford de Redcliffe to the Earl of Clarendon, Therapia, 19 July 1855. PRMA, pp. 248–249.

⁴¹⁸ OBKS, No. 49, pp. 161–165.

⁴¹⁹ The Earl of Clarendon to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, 9 August 1855. PRMA, p. 255.

⁴²⁰ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 426.

1 September 1855, calling briefly on Süzebolu on the Bulgarian coast.⁴²¹ In Süzebolu he met Abdi Pasha the former commander of the Anatolian army and talked with him about the campaign.

Ömer Pasha and Ferik Ahmed Pasha arrived on 4 September at the bay of Kamiesh, south of Sevastopol, where the French fleet was anchored. Ömer Pasha now had to struggle with the allied commanders to get his troops. The admirals said they had sent all the transport ships to France to bring troops and that they could only be provided if approved by the Commander-in-Chief when they returned. However, Ömer Pasha noticed signs of desperation in the admirals. Next he visited General Pelissier and General Simpson and felt the same mood in them as well. On 6 September 1855 a meeting of the generals and admirals was held. The meeting rejected the idea of any troops leaving Sevastopol. General Pelissier was especially opposed to Ömer Pasha's plan, saying that Kars was not important at all and that the campaign season had already passed.⁴²² Meanwhile they were executing the sixth bombardment of the city that started on 5 September and they were planning an assault on the Malakoff bastion, which was the main bastion defending the city. They asked Ömer Pasha to participate in the assault. However, Ömer Pasha did not believe in the success of the assault and declined the honour by saying that he had urgent duties to perform. He left Sevastopol on board the steamer *Şehper* for Trabzon on 6 September, two days before the fall of the Malakoff.⁴²³ Ferik Ahmed Pasha and Osman Pasha remained in Sevastopol to organise the transfer of 10 Ottoman infantry battalions under the orders of the allies. According to Slade, Ömer Pasha forbade the Ottoman troops investing Sevastopol to take part in the assault.⁴²⁴

In the end, after so many efforts, Ömer Pasha neither joined in the conquest of Sevastopol nor did he succeed in his diversionary operation against the Russian army at Kars. But at that moment he still had some time left to come to the relief of the Kars army. He arrived at

⁴²¹ Ahmed Pasha to Serasker Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha, Gözleve, 10 September 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 6/196 enc. 4. Slade, op. cit., p. 428. Budak assigns the Bulgarian port of Süzebolu (Sizepolis) to the Crimea (op. cit., 1993, p. 167).

⁴²² Ömer Pasha to Serasker Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha, Trabzon, 11 September 1855. BOA. İ. MMS. 6/196 enc. 3, quoted by Budak, op. cit., p. 169.

⁴²³ "The Turkish Army in the Crimea", Camp of the Allied Armies on the Tchernaya, Sept. 7, *The Times*, London, 21 September 1855, Issue 22165, p. 8. Also see Oliphant, op. cit., p. 32; Budak, op. cit., p. 169.

⁴²⁴ Budak, op. cit., pp. 169–170. Cf. Slade, op. cit., p. 428.

Trabzon on 11 September after being delayed by a gale. From Trabzon he wrote to Serasker Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha and advised him of his arrival and plans. The next day he proceeded to Batum. After the fall of Sevastopol, General Pelissier softened his position and allowed 3 battalions of chasseurs with Minié rifles under the command of Colonel Archibald Ballard to go to Batum.⁴²⁵ But still more troops were needed and these were at last sent by mid-October 1855.

Meanwhile Muravyov was restless before Kars. He had a very effective blockade in place and the city was on the verge of capitulation, but Sevastopol had fallen and Ömer Pasha was about to advance into Georgia. Russia needed an urgent victory to compensate for Sevastopol. Therefore Muravyov wanted to storm and take Kars before Ömer Pasha's forces made any advance. This time General Baklanov was against a frontal assault but Muravyov did not listen to him.⁴²⁶ Thus on the morning of 29 September 1855 the Russian forces made an all-out attack on the bastions of Kars, mainly on the Tahmasb redoubt. The Ottoman army, although much-weakened by hunger and diseases, fought very well behind their fortifications. General Kmety had sensed the Russian assault beforehand and therefore it was not a surprise attack. The Ottoman artillery was very effective. The Russian army lost about 7,500 to 8,000 men dead and wounded on this day, including General Pyotr Kovalevskiy among the dead.⁴²⁷ Ottoman losses were insignificant, less than 1,000, including about 100 to 150 civilians from Kars.⁴²⁸ However, the Ottoman army had no cavalry available to harass the retreating Russians.⁴²⁹

The news of the victory at Kars created great pleasure in Istanbul. Ferik Williams Pasha and Ferik Kerim Pasha were promoted to the

⁴²⁵ Budak, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁴²⁶ Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 525, 528.

⁴²⁷ According to the official report of General Muravyov after the battle, Russian losses (dead and wounded) totaled 252 officers and 7,274 men. See Bogdanovich, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 345–346. Tarle (*op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 528) also quoting from Muravyov, gives the same figure for officers but a slightly different figure for men: 7,226. The Ottoman semi-official newspaper CH had increased the Russian loss up to 15,000 men and 300 officers. See Budak, *op. cit.* (1993), p. 131. Budak, however, also takes for granted the news from the CH, that Russian generals “Berimerof” (Brimmer) and “Baklonof” (Baklanov) were among the dead (p. 131). In reality, among Russian Generals only Kovalevskiy died of wounds from this battle. See Bogdanovich and Tarle, above.

⁴²⁸ See Budak, *op. cit.* (1993), pp. 130–133. Budak gives various numbers related to losses from various sources.

⁴²⁹ Sandwith, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

rank of *müşir* and decorated with the order of *Mecidiye*. A medal of Kars was struck and distributed. The population of Kars was exempted from taxes for three years.⁴³⁰

Muravyov had now suffered a terrible defeat. But he had still enough forces to continue with the blockade and he made a very correct decision after his ill-considered attack: He simply continued the siege without moving from his position, though many had expected him to withdraw to Tiflis. Hunger reached such a pitch that many Ottoman soldiers deserted daily. These deserters were usually captured by Russian patrols surrounding the city. Vasif Pasha and Williams announced the death penalty for deserters but even this did not stop them. The civilian population of Kars was also suffering from starvation. Women were bringing their children to General Williams's house and leaving them there. Without horses, the army could not make a sortie either. In fact on the orders of Williams, the horses were secretly being slaughtered and their meat given to the hospital kitchen. The Russian troops, on the other hand, were comfortably billeted in huts and well-supplied.⁴³¹

The former commander of the Batum army, Hassa Müşiri Mehmed Selim Pasha had now become the commander of the forces in Erzurum. However, he did not advance beyond Köprüköy in the direction of Kars and soon it became clear that no help or diversion would come from his side. It should be mentioned here that the British consul in Erzurum (James Brant) had a very low opinion of Selim Pasha, accusing him of cowardice in his despatches to Lord Clarendon and Lord Stratford. (Tired of pressure and threats from the British consul and British officers, Selim Pasha finally sent a petition to the Porte in February 1856 to be removed from Erzurum to another place).⁴³² Meanwhile the army in Kars was again under heavy siege and had no hope other than Ömer Pasha's advance. Yet Ömer Pasha was too slow.

Ömer Pasha changed his mind, probably at Batum, and instead of Redutkale, now chose Sohum as the port of landing. However, since Sohum was to the north of Redutkale, this only further delayed the advance towards Kutaisi. It is indeed hard to explain why Ömer Pasha chose Sohum, if he had in mind the urgent liberation of Kars. Perhaps

⁴³⁰ Kırzioğlu, op. cit., pp. 174–196. Budak, op. cit., p. 133.

⁴³¹ Brigadier-General Williams to Consul Brant, Kars, November 19, 1855. PRMA, p. 330.

⁴³² Selim Pasha to the grand vizier, 12 February 1856. BOA. HR. SYS. 1355/28.

he thought that his incursion into Georgia would be enough to force Muravyov to abandon the siege of Kars and rush to the assistance of Tiflis. Another reason is suggested by Allen and Muratoff, who argue that Ömer Pasha had no cavalry except for some (less than 1,000) Polish refugees and Ottoman Cossacks and he hoped to find plenty of irregular cavalry among the Circassians. As Allen and Muratoff pointed out, his hopes proved to be unrealistic.⁴³³

Ömer Pasha also wrote to the Serasker that the Circassians wanted an Ottoman officer in Circassia and therefore he would send them Mustafa Pasha, the commander of the Batum army. Grand vizier Âli Pasha, however, wrote to Serasker Mehmed Pasha that the status of Circassia was under negotiation with the embassies of the allied states and for the time being Mustafa Pasha should not be sent.⁴³⁴

Ömer Pasha started his march from Sohum in the middle of October 1855. His army numbered about 40,000, which included three well-trained rifle (*şeshaneci*) battalions armed with Minié rifles (about 2,000 men) commanded by Colonel Ballard.⁴³⁵ Ömer Pasha's chief of staff was Ferhad Pasha (Stein). Abdi Pasha (the former commander of the Anatolian army?) and a certain Osman Pasha also commanded infantry brigades. But half of the army was stationed at Sohum, Çamçıra and then at Zugdidi, leaving only 20,000 for the advance.⁴³⁶ Some Abkhazian and Circassian irregular cavalry accompanied Ömer Pasha's army. The territory was indeed marshy and densely forested. Laurence Oliphant, the British journalist who accompanied Ömer Pasha's army, noted that "everything was paid for regularly, and the property of the country-people in Abkhasia was scrupulously respected by the Turkish army during its onward progress through the country".⁴³⁷

From Sohum, Ömer Pasha reached the river Ingur at the beginning of November covering approximately 75 kilometres in 16 days.⁴³⁸ On 6 November Ömer Pasha defeated the Russian forces and the local militia commanded by General Prince Ivane Konstantinovich Bagration-

⁴³³ Allen and Muratoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–96.

⁴³⁴ Grand Vizier Âli Pasha to Serasker Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha, 7 October 1855. BOA. İ. DH. 21447, quoted by Budak, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 172.

⁴³⁵ Oliphant, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–84.

⁴³⁶ Bogdanovich, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 346. Cf. Ibragimbeyli, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

⁴³⁷ Oliphant, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁴³⁸ Burchuladze, *op. cit.*, p. 16. Burchuladze gives the distance in versts. Allen and Muratoff (*op. cit.*, p. 97), however, argue that Ömer Pasha covered 50 miles (which is close to 75 km) in 20 days.

Mukhranskiy on the banks of the river Ingur.⁴³⁹ From the Ottoman side, 16 battalions of infantry and 3 battalions of rifles took part in the battle. General Bagration-Mukhranskiy on the other hand had a total of 9,000 regular infantry, 700 Cossacks and about 10,000 irregular infantry and cavalry (*militsiya*).⁴⁴⁰ Russian prisoners of war reported that 8 infantry battalions (about 5,000 men) with 8 guns, 3,000 Georgian militia and 7,000 volunteers had participated in the battle, but that the volunteers had deserted just after the first firing. Oliphant gives the Russian losses as about 1,200 killed and wounded and the Ottoman losses as less than 400. He also writes that “it is impossible to speak too highly of the gallantry which the Turkish soldiers displayed throughout the action”.⁴⁴¹ On losses, Burchuladze claims the opposite, that the Russians lost more than 500 but the Ottoman losses were “several times bigger”.⁴⁴² Tarle gives the Russian losses as 450 men. Ibragimbeyli, on the other hand, describes the battle as if it ended indecisively, claiming that the Russians “firmly resisted the onslaught of the numerically overwhelming enemy”, and not mentioning losses at all.⁴⁴³ After the battle of Ingur, the Russian forces retreated to the left bank of the river Tskhenis-tskhali (or Skeniskal, River “Horse”), leaving Mingrelia and Guria. On 9 November, Ömer Pasha came to Zugdidi (capital of Mingrelia) and spent five days there. He behaved as if he was in no hurry. According to Laurence Oliphant, the local population was in general in terror and was hostile to the Ottoman army. Despite Ömer Pasha’s efforts to prevent pillage and to reassure the local people, the Abkhazian irregular cavalry in particular (about 200 men) started pillaging villages and kidnapping children to sell as slaves.⁴⁴⁴ Ömer Pasha then sent the Abkhazian militia back to their homes. Towards the end of November it started to rain heavily for days. Under such rains it became extremely difficult to advance. On 8 December, after receiving the news of the fall of Kars on 27 November, Ömer Pasha gave the order to retreat. The retreat was however conducted in a disorderly

⁴³⁹ Op. cit., pp. 97–113.

⁴⁴⁰ Burchuladze, op. cit., p. 16. Ibragimbeyli’s numbers are almost identical (op. cit., p. 329). Tarle (op. cit., vol. II, p. 531) writes that the Russian forces numbered 18,500 men with 28 guns.

⁴⁴¹ Oliphant, op. cit., pp. 112–113.

⁴⁴² Burchuladze, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴⁴³ Tarle, op. cit., vol. II, p. 531. Ibragimbeyli, op. cit., pp. 330–331.

⁴⁴⁴ Oliphant, op. cit., pp. 121–122, 125, 146. Cf. Burchuladze, op. cit., p. 19.

fashion. The Ottoman army was demoralized and the Georgian militia emboldened. Oliphant writes that Ömer Pasha said that

he had good reason to know that the country-people were assisting the enemy by every means in their power, and expressed his determination to deal with them accordingly. He seemed, not unnaturally, in low spirits at the unfortunate issue of the campaign, in which his usual luck seemed to have deserted him.⁴⁴⁵

Slade has very aptly expressed Ömer Pasha's failure: "Too often in the East, administration sacrifices a general: this time the general failed the administration."⁴⁴⁶ Tarle has also argued that Ömer Pasha, being an average general, had gained an undeserved reputation on the Danube under favourable conditions and by self-advertisement and now, when he had a superior army, he did not use the results of this victory at the battle of Ingur and did not do anything to save Kars.⁴⁴⁷

On Ömer Pasha's far-fetched campaign, Ahmed Rıza Trabzoni makes an interesting point in his *destan*. Trabzoni writes that he went to Kerch and talked to some Ottoman officers. There Ahmed Rıza asked a major why Kars was left to starvation and why Ömer Pasha landed at Sohum, which is far away and full of marshes difficult to cross. The officer answered him that the intention was to give Kars to the Russians so as to make a peace. The fall of Kars would be an opportunity for peace.⁴⁴⁸ While we cannot of course take this information for granted, it does not seem to be altogether illogical. At least it means that there were such rumours among officers. Indeed, after the fall of Sevastopol, Russia badly needed to gain something, in order to save face and thus be willing to make peace.

While Ömer Pasha lost precious time in Mingrelia and Müşir Mehmed Selim Pasha did not move from Erzurum, Kars was finally forced to capitulate on 27 November 1855. With the approval of Müşir Vasıf Pasha, General Williams sent his aide-de-camp Major Teesdale to General Muravyov on 24 November to negotiate the terms of surrender. Muravyov treated him well. Meanwhile General Kmety and General Kollman, having been formally sentenced to death by the Austrian government, did not expect mercy at the hands of the Russians.

⁴⁴⁵ Oliphant, *op. cit.*, pp. 182–183.

⁴⁴⁶ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

⁴⁴⁷ Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 531.

⁴⁴⁸ Ahmed Rıza Trabzoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 254–255.

Therefore they requested General Williams to accept their resignations. Williams accepted and they escaped the siege by night and reached Erzurum.

According to the terms of surrender, agreed between Williams and Muravyov, the fortress of Kars would be delivered up intact. The Garrison of Kars would march out and become prisoners. Muravyov appreciated the gallantry of the officers and allowed them to retain their swords. The *redif*, *başıbozuk*, Laz soldiers and the non-combatants (doctors, secretaries etc) would be allowed to return to their homes. General Williams would provide a list of certain Hungarian and European officers, who would also be allowed to return to their homes. Private property, public buildings and monuments would be respected. Thus about 5,000 to 8,000 regular (*nizam*) troops became prisoners while about 6,000 irregulars marched towards their homes.⁴⁴⁹

Immediately after the surrender, General Muravyov sent provisions to the city population. He talked with Vasif Pasha and reminded him that they had met in Istanbul in 1833, when Muravyov had come with the Russian military mission. At that time Vasif Pasha was a division general, Kerim Pasha was a lieutenant-colonel in the guards (Hassa?) cavalry regiment of Avni Bey and Ömer Pasha (the Generalissimo) was then appointed by the *serasker* as interpreter to Muravyov.⁴⁵⁰ Kerim Pasha is said to have told the Russian officer Daniil Aryutinov that if Ömer Pasha was defeated, he deserved it because he contemplated manoeuvring instead of urgent help to Kars, and now they had to surrender because of him.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Trabzoni (op. cit., p. 256) gives the number as “five to six thousand”, while Salih Hayri (op. cit., p. 245) gives as small a number as four thousand. On the testimony of Captain Thomson’s Hungarian interpreter, who returned to Erzurum after the surrender, the *Times* correspondent in Erzurum gives the number of *nizam* soldiers at Kars taken prisoner by the Russians as 5,000. See “The Surrender of Kars. Erzeroum Dec. 11”, *The Times*, London, 3 January 1856, Issue 22254, p. 8. This might be true, but if we add up the number of deserters who had fallen into Russian hands, then the number is again about 8,000. *Blokada Karsa* (p. 114) gives the number of deserters as 3,000. At the end of the war there were about 7,800 prisoners of war from Kars in Russian hands. The list of Ottoman prisoners of war in Odessa, as of the end of 1856, numbered 8030, with only about 200 from Sinop and other places and the rest from Kars. See “Kontrol’naya kniga razmena russkikh i turetskikh voenno-plennykh”, RGVIA, fond 481, op. 1, d. 695. This notebook contains the names of all the Ottoman prisoners of war.

⁴⁵⁰ *Blokada Karsa*, pp. 113, 118.

⁴⁵¹ *Blokada Karsa*, p. 109.



Illus. 12 Mushir Kerim Pasha (Baba Kerim), chief of staff of the Anatolian army, 1855. Vasiliy Timm, *RHL*, 1855.

The “Turkish Contingent”, the “Osmanli Irregular Cavalry” and the “Spahis d’Orient”.

The so-called “Turkish Contingent” and the *başıbozuk* formations under the command of the British and the French are among the interesting and little known subjects of the Crimean War, especially in the Turkish historiography.⁴⁵² The fact that they were left to oblivion is understandable because many Ottomans did not like to remember them. The “Turkish Contingent” was an army of 20,000 Ottoman soldiers hired by the British, to be paid, fed, clothed and officered by the British and returned to the Porte at the end of the war. In Turkish it

⁴⁵² To the best of my knowledge, the only article in Turkish on this topic is by Cezmi Karasu, “Kırım Savaşında Kontenjan Askeri”, *Yedinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri I*, Ankara: Genelkurmay ATASE Yayınları, 2000, pp. 15–27. This article is rather superficial and contains some major and many minor errors, beginning with the first sentence, which states that the Crimean War happened in 1854–1855!



Illus. 13 Surrender of Kars, 1855. From General Nikolay Muravyov's book *Voyna za Kavkazom v 1855 godu*, 1877.

was called *kontenjan askeri* or simply designated as Ottoman troops under the order of the British army. Although the Turkish general staff's *History of the Turkish Armed Forces* calls it *Türk-İngiliz Mukavemet Ordusu*, that is, "Turkish-English Resistance Army",⁴⁵³ I have not come across this expression or anything remotely like it anywhere in the BOA. Whatever name we give it, it truly represents a turning point in the entire history of the Ottoman Empire, for it consisted of Muslim soldiers fighting under Christian officers in the pay of a Christian state, albeit an ally. One is hard-pressed to find a similar example in military history. For that reason it is discussed here in some detail, although, from a military point of view, it did not play any significant role in the outcome of the war (or rather had no opportunity to do so).

As usual in such cases, the demand for the "Turkish Contingent" arose from dire necessity. The number of British soldiers in the Crimea was small in comparison with those of the French army. At the beginning of 1855, the number of British troops in the Crimea was around 13,000, while the French had almost 70,000 troops. Because of this disparity between the two armies, British commanders could not take the initiative in matters of strategy and tactics in the Crimea. This could not help but be reflected in their influence over the Porte as well.

Lord Stratford was also anxious because his own influence with the Porte had deteriorated. Something had to be done by the British to redress the balance. According to Stratford's biographer,

It galled his national pride to see the French outnumbering the British troops in the proportion of at least four to one. Not only was the disparity injurious to the success of the siege, inasmuch as our men were numerically incapable of working and holding the wide extent of front which was allotted to them, without undue and consequently injurious physical strain; but the comparative insignificance of the British army brought the credit and prestige of England so low that her commanders found themselves compelled to give way to the superior influence of the French, even when there was no doubt that the latter were in the wrong.⁴⁵⁴

Thus it was probably first in the mind of Stratford that the idea of forming a separate large regular army from hired Ottoman soldiers

⁴⁵³ See TC Genelkurmay Harp Tarihi Başkanlığı, *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, III. Cilt, 5. Kısım*, Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1978, p. 463. The book gives no references to any source on this point.

⁴⁵⁴ Lane-Poole, op. cit., vol. II, p. 408.

occurred. Unable to feed its own armies, the Porte accepted the proposal. Stratford obtained the Sultan's approval in December 1854 and an agreement was signed on 3 February 1855 in Istanbul.⁴⁵⁵

The agreement contained nine articles. The first article stated that Her Britannic Majesty agreed to take into her service a body of "Turkish" regular troops, to consist of twenty thousand men of all arms. Fifteen thousand of these men were to be detached from the regular troops serving in the armies of the Sultan and the remaining five thousand were to be taken from the *redifs*, either serving or in the reserve. All officers above the rank of sergeant were to be British, while the appointment of subaltern officers was left to the Ottoman government, with a few drill sergeants reserved for nomination by the British commanders.⁴⁵⁶ Major-General Robert John Vivian, a British East India Company officer, was selected to command the contingent.⁴⁵⁷

The troops designated for the contingent would be handed over with their arms and ammunition. The men and officers in the contingent would receive the same pay and rations as they did in the Ottoman army. However, this rule seems to have been violated and higher salaries were offered, as will be shown below. The troops were to be free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies.

Adolphus Slade argued that the Porte at first thought that the troops to be furnished were intended for immediate active service and only reluctantly accepted the demand. Then the Porte regretted that it had accepted, but it did not have the firmness to state its reasons. As Slade observed, raising an army after the Indian model was not easy in the Ottoman Empire. Slade argued that the officers chosen for the contingent from India were not fit for the service because "Indian officers, accustomed to rule haughtily a subject race, were not the men (with few exceptions) to act judiciously with a dominant race, imbued with traditions of military renown". Those selected came with exclusive ideas "fostered by brevet rank, high expectations and a double pay".⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ BOA. HR. SYS. 1192/2 enc. 2-8, 3 February 1855. The agreement is in French, with English and Turkish translations. The original text in French uses the term "*un corps de troupes régulières turques*". See enc. 3. The Ottoman Turkish text, however, does not use the word "Turkish".

⁴⁵⁶ Stratford's memorandum to the Porte, 3 February 1855. BOA. HR. SYS. 1192/2 enc. 9.

⁴⁵⁷ The ILN described him as "an able East Indian officer" and "the scion of an old military house". See "The Turkish Contingent", *ILN*, 23 June 1855, p. 630.

⁴⁵⁸ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 380.



Illus. 14 The Turkish contingent for the Crimea. *ILN*, 23 June 1855.

As for the *başıbozuk* formations, they were inspired by the colonial army models of the British in India and of the French in Algeria. Both France and Britain used local irregular cavalry in their colonies. The French Commander-in Chief Marshal St. Arnaud gave the task of forming an Ottoman irregular cavalry corps to General Yusuf, who was renowned for his *spahis* (*sipahi*, the old Persian/Ottoman word for light horseman) in Algeria. While Lord Raglan did not much like such irregular troops, Lord Stratford had introduced Lt Colonel William F. Beatson (1804–1872) to Lord Raglan and Ömer Pasha as early as January 1854. Thus even before the “Turkish Contingent” began to form, the first move of the British was to propose the formation of an irregular (*başıbozuk*) cavalry division under the command of Colonel Beatson.⁴⁵⁹ Like many officers of the “Turkish Contingent”, Colonel Beatson

⁴⁵⁹ Stratford to Clarendon, 3 February 1854, AGKK, III/2, p. 196. Also see BOA. HR. SYS. 1192/2 enc. 1, 7 November 1854. This is a translation of the note of the British embassy.

had made his career in India, where he had formed a similar irregular cavalry unit (the Bundelkund Legion) from Indian natives.⁴⁶⁰ Beatson had offered his services to Lord Clarendon and he was accepted. Promoted to the rank of general and accordingly made a pasha in the Ottoman army, Beatson was to form an irregular cavalry division of about 4,000 men in Bulgaria (called the “Osmanli irregular cavalry” or in short form “Beatson’s Horse”). The formation of this unit was accepted in 1854, but its realization coincided with that of the “Turkish Contingent”. The irregular cavalry was at first under the orders of the Foreign Office and Lord Stratford, that is, it was not attached to Lord Raglan. However, in September 1855, it was attached to the “Turkish Contingent”. According to Captain Edward Money, who served in this irregular cavalry from July 1855 until July 1856, only about 1,500 of the proposed 5,000 men (8 regiments) had been recruited by August 1855.⁴⁶¹ These troops were stationed in Çanakkale (Dardanelles). We will review the problems they created in Chapter 5.

On the date of the signing of the agreement forming the “Turkish Contingent”, Lord Stratford delivered another note demanding that proper steps be taken for raising the separate “Ottoman Irregular Cavalry” (in official translation *başibozuk süvari askeri*) with necessary orders being issued to provincial authorities. Stratford warned that the orders should contain necessary information especially as regards the pay and rations of the soldiers:

The success of this important experiment depends so much upon the manner and spirit in which it is begun that the undersigned in addressing Aali Pasha on the subject cannot too strongly impress His Highness with the necessity of having the Vizirial letters, which he solicits, drawn up in the clearest and most stringent terms. It is, in particular, desirable that the men to be enrolled should know from the outset that in point of military service, pay, and rations they are to stand in direct connection with British officers and the Queen’s Government. It is also essential that strict precautions should be taken to secure the peaceable inhabitants from any acts of plunder or violence in which the volunteers, if left entirely to themselves, might be tempted to indulge, while passing from their respective homes to the place of their destination.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶⁰ See [Calthorpe], op. cit., p. 47 and Reid, op. cit., p. 271.

⁴⁶¹ Edward Money, *Twelve Months with the Bashi-Bazouks*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1857, p. 32.

⁴⁶² Stratford’s memorandum to the Porte, 3 February 1855. BOA. HR. SYS. 1192/2 enc. 10.

Accordingly, orders were sent to all Ottoman provinces from Vidin to Damascus. The commander of the Osmanli irregular cavalry General Beatson sent Colonel Frederick Walpole and Colonel Bruce to Syria to recruit troops in March 1855. Colonel Walpole (major in the British army) arrived at Damascus in March.⁴⁶³ Other officers were also sent to Anatolia and Rumelia. As Captain Money noted, the recruits were offered pay and rations at a “most liberal rate”.⁴⁶⁴ Captain Money gives the rates of pay for officers and troopers and these rates are indeed much higher than in the Ottoman regular and irregular troops. The *nefer* (private or trooper) received 24 piastres per month plus rations and forage in the regular Turkish cavalry, while the irregular cavalrymen were paid 70 piastres per month, including rations and forage. On the other hand, the British now paid the *nefers* 1 pound 13 shillings 4 pence per month (equal to about 200 piastres) as well as rations of bread and forage for horses.⁴⁶⁵ However, in some places these regular and irregular levies perpetrated the same kind of atrocities and disorders as the *başibozuks* of the Ottoman armies. We will see more of this in Chapter 5.

The Porte’s dissatisfaction and unwillingness is confirmed by its slowness in the collection of troops for the Contingent. In the middle of April, General Vivian came to Istanbul and at once made inquiries to the Porte about the forces to be placed under his command. However, very little had been done. Stratford de Redcliffe gave a note dated 19 April 1855 to Saffet Efendi the acting foreign minister. The British ambassador expressed his regret that “so very imperfect a preparation” was observed for that purpose at Constantinople, “notwithstanding the representations addressed repeatedly by him to the proper authorities, and the specific assurances received in reply”. Then he requested that

⁴⁶³ Reid (op. cit., p. 275) argues that these officers began their activities there in August 1855. However, this is refuted by the letters of Mehmed İzzet Pasha and İsmail Rahmi Pasha from Damascus, dated May 1855. See Chief of staff of the Arabistan army Mehmed İzzet Pasha to the Serasker, Damascus, 17 May 1855. BOA. HR. SYS. 1352/51.

⁴⁶⁴ Captain Money, op. cit., p. 31.

⁴⁶⁵ Money, op. cit., pp. 31 and 49. Money claimed that the troops in the regular Ottoman army received 18 piastres or two shillings. However, this is not true, as we have seen, infantry troops received 20 piastres and cavalry 24 piastres. On the other hand, at the rate of pound sterling to piastres which was prevalent at that time, 18 piastres would make slightly less than 3 shillings.

the Troops, which are to compose the Corps in question may be collected, and that such part of them as are at Constantinople, may be at once detached from the remainder of the Garrison, and reviewed in presence of the British General, to the amount of at least six thousand infantry, with two regiments of Cavalry and two or three batteries of Field Artillery. The season for operations in the field is rapidly coming on, and it is most desirable that the Turkish Corps in the Queen of England's pay should be prepared, with all practicable expedition and good effect, for taking part in them.

The Undersigned must remind the Ottoman Secretary of State that he is entitled to expect the number of troops agreed upon from the several places already designated by the Porte, namely, the Danube, Constantinople and Bosnia, or in failure of the required numbers in those quarters from other more convenient sources. He begs to observe at the same time, that according to his advices from the Crimea, there is no probability of any portion of the force in question being sent by Omer Pasha, since it appears beyond a doubt, that His Highness is not in a condition to weaken his army with any degree of prudence, and that he is employing the troops commanded by him, in strict agreement with the Commanders in Chief of the Allied Forces.⁴⁶⁶

The governor of Aleppo, İsmail Rahmi Pasha in his letter dated 20 May 1855 informs the Porte that at present 430 soldiers of cavalry out of the desired 500 have already been recruited and the rest will soon be found.⁴⁶⁷ He adds that although there was great enthusiasm at the beginning, the recruitment had slowed down somewhat. He also anticipates that the "Kolonel Bey", meaning the British colonel (Walpole or Bruce?) charged with the task, being a stranger to local affairs, might express some complaints because of the delays, but the troops must be recruited by encouragement rather than through conscription.

It seems that the province of Baghdad was also charged to recruit 500 or more cavalry. Towards the end of June 1855, Mehmed Reşid Pasha, governor of Baghdad and commander of the Iraq army, sent a complaint to the Porte. He wrote that Hilmi Pasha the *mutasarrif* of Mosul had informed him that the British consul in Mosul was recruiting cavalry troops with a monthly pay of 150 piastres *excluding* rations and forage under the command of Sergerde Laz Osman Ağa and several officers, who had come from the Anatolian army. It was said that the British authorities would recruit troops from Baghdad as well.

⁴⁶⁶ Stratford de Redcliffe to Saffet Efendi, Pera, 19 April 1855. BOA. HR. SYS. 1192/2 enc. 15–16.

⁴⁶⁷ İsmail Rahmi Pasha to the Porte, 20 May 1855. BOA. HR. SYS. 1352/56.

Mehmed Reşid Pasha wrote that while the purpose of this act was fair and beneficent, it was also well-known to the grand vizier that this area was not like Rumelia and Anatolia in that it was not possible to employ local troops there. The troops there had been brought with much difficulty from Anatolia and Rumelia and up to then they were given a monthly salary of 70 piastres *including* rations and forage. Mehmed Reşid Pasha then warned that if now they were offered twice and three times more pay with the prospect of being sent to the side of “*Rum*”, towards their own country, then no Turkish soldiers would remain in Baghdad, leaving the area open to danger from the Russians and Iranians.⁴⁶⁸

It is remarkable that the governor used exactly the words “Turkish soldiers” for soldiers from Anatolia and Rumeli to distinguish them from local (Arabic, Kurdish, etc.) soldiers; because Ottoman documents at that time very rarely used the term “Turkish”. Sending exclusively Anatolian or Rumelian recruits to the Arabic provinces was indeed a time-honoured practice of the Porte. The logic behind this measure was that local troops would be ineffective against their kinsmen, while the Anatolian or Rumelian recruits would not feel sympathy for the local people. Experience had confirmed the prudence of this practice. Even the Russian consul in Beirut had noticed this fact about the Arabistan army in Damascus.⁴⁶⁹

On the other hand, the situation of the Kars army in the summer of 1855 forced the Porte to try recruiting irregular infantry and cavalry from Anatolia at somewhat raised rates of pay. Müşir Vasif Pasha asked for 3,000 cavalry and 2,000 infantry to be sent urgently to Kars. Thus infantry troops were offered 70 piastres per month plus rations and cavalry troops were offered 100 piastres per month plus rations and forage. Nevertheless, it was not possible to obtain so many soldiers.⁴⁷⁰

On 28 August 1855, General Vivian (already promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General) submitted to the Ottoman *serasker* a nominal roll of officers of the Contingent, recommended for “Turkish” rank, which Lord Stratford de Redcliffe had approved in consultation with his military adviser General Mansfield. The “Turkish” rank for British officers usually meant the promotion of one or two or even more steps

⁴⁶⁸ BOA. HR. SYS. 1353/15 enc. 2, 29 June 1855.

⁴⁶⁹ “Doneseniye russkogo voennogo agenta v Konstantinopole generalnogo shtaba grafa Osten-Sakena. 4/16 fevralya 1852”. RGVIA. Fond 450, op. 1, d. 47, list 16.

⁴⁷⁰ Budak, op. cit., 1993, p. 110.

up in rank with regard to the Ottoman officers, thus a British captain would correspond to an Ottoman major or colonel, and so on. The memorandum from Lord Stratford stressed the fact that these officers would continue to be in the pay of the British government and receive no salaries or rations from the Porte. Their pay and rations would be the same as in the Ottoman army.

General Vivian was first made a *ferik*, but Lord Stratford seems to have been dissatisfied with this promotion and demanded the rank of mushir for him. Accordingly General Vivian was made mushir (full general or marshal), 5 officers were given the rank of *ferik* (division general or lieutenant-general), 8 officers received the rank of *mirliva* (brigadier general), 9 officers became *miralay* (colonel) and finally there were 42 *kaimmakams* (lieutenant-colonels).⁴⁷¹ The commander was given the authority to make provisional appointments to fill possible vacancies during the war, subject to later approval from the Porte. If the commander wanted to promote an Ottoman *binbaşı* (major) to the rank of *kaimmakam*, then the Ottoman officer would receive from the British government the pay given to this rank in the Ottoman army.

The “Turkish Contingent” was to be sent to Gözleve to replace the Ottoman troops to be detached for the Caucasian campaign of Ömer Pasha, intended to save Kars from the siege of the Russian army. Indeed, at first, the command of the projected 45,000-strong relief army to be gathered in Redutkale was offered to Lieutenant-General Vivian on 1 July 1855, as described in Chapter 3. In his report to Lord Stratford, Vivian stated that there were a number of material questions that had to be settled before he could give this proposal serious consideration. He had concerns as regarded the sea and land transport of the troops and animals, and the supply of ordinance and commissariat (provisions) on enemy territory. Finally, he required “authority to act independently” together with a guaranteed flow of money for the operations. “Unless all these points can be satisfactorily arranged”, asserted Vivian, “I think it would be useless to discuss the measure.”⁴⁷²

On 11 July, General Mansfield sent a letter to General Vivian, forwarding him the minutes of his conversation with the Ottoman ministers on the matter. Lord Stratford had asked for Vivian’s views. Vivian

⁴⁷¹ BOA. İ. HR. 123/6166, 5 September 1855.

⁴⁷² Vivian to Lord Stratford, Turkish Contingent Head-Quarters, Büyükdere, July 2, 1855. Supplementary PRMA, Inclosure in No. 2, pp. 2–3.

again pointed out a number of deficiencies, being quite unwilling to undertake the campaign. Transport was insufficient and in any case temporary, so the army landed at Redutkale would be left “without shipping to fall back upon in case of a reverse”. Vivian further ventured to give his opinion that “as the interests of France and England are centered in Sebastopol, all our means should be directed to that quarter”. He pointed out that the officers of the Contingent had to employ interpreters to talk to the soldiers and if these interpreters deserted in action great confusion would ensue and this would damage the prestige of the “English” officers. Vivian then expressed his suspicions as follows:

Thirty thousand English troops, with all the appliances of money and shipping, with the whole aid of England, were unsupplied before Sebastopol. What would it be with a Turkish army of 40,000, in an enemy's country, some 50 or 100 miles from the sea, its base of operation being an open roadstead?⁴⁷³

Vivian then suggested that, for the relief of Kars, Batum might be chosen as the base of landing and operations might be directed against Ahıska.

The “Turkish Contingent” went from Büyükdere to Varna and from there to the Crimea in September. General Vivian, *commandant du Contingent Turc* met the Sultan together with his retinue before going to the Crimea.⁴⁷⁴

After so much preparation, the “Turkish Contingent” with its privileged officers and soldiers was wanted neither by Ömer Pasha, nor by Williams in Kars. Finally it was decided to send them to Kerch. After the fall of Sevastopol to the allies and Kars to the Russians, peace talks started again in the winter of 1855. Stratford was not happy with the abrupt end of the war and the “premature” peace negotiations, because, among other reasons, the “Turkish Contingent” had not yet shown its quality in battle. He wrote in his memoirs:

The war came to so early a close that the troops in our pay had no opportunity of shewing their prowess, but neither did they afford any grounds of complaint. Even the irregulars submitted with good will to the command of Christian officers and to a degree of discipline which they had

⁴⁷³ Vivian to Lord Stratford, Büyükdere, July 14, 1855. Supplementary PRMA, No. 3, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁴ BOA. İ. HR. 123/6184, 11 September 1855.

not previously undergone. On returning to their respective provinces they expressed so much satisfaction with the good treatment they had experienced in our service that when the Indian mutiny broke out it would have been easy to raise an auxiliary force from among the population of their creed.⁴⁷⁵

Our trader and *destan* writer Ahmed Rıza had been to Kerch at that time and he gives the number of Ottoman troops under British command in Kertch as 30,000, obviously with some exaggeration.⁴⁷⁶

Battles in the Crimea and the Siege of Sevastopol

The battles in the Crimea and the siege of Sevastopol are exhaustively-discussed components of the Western and Russian historiography of the Crimean War. Here we will deal only briefly with these events, focusing as always on the Ottoman side.

On 4 September 1854, Nikolai wrote to Menshikov that he had at his disposal 52 battalions, 16 squadrons, 8 infantry and 2 cavalry batteries and 3 Cossack regiments, besides the fleet and the local garrison. He added that he considered these forces enough to repulse the enemy.⁴⁷⁷ According to Albert Seaton, Menshikov had 38,000 troops and 18,000 seamen plus 12,000 troops between Kefe (Feodosia) and Kertch, which more or less corresponds with those figures.⁴⁷⁸

The allies landed at Eskihisar (Old Fort), between Alma and Gözleve in the Crimea on 13 September 1854. Prince Menshikov had not taken measures to prevent the allied landing. However, it must be admitted that he could not know where the landing would take place and even if he did know, he could not be certain whether it might be a decoy while the real landing would take place at another location. Then the allies advanced towards Alma on their way to Sevastopol.

The first battle between the allies and the Russian forces took place at the river Alma on 20 September 1854. On that day a Russian army of 33,000 to 40,000 met the allied army of about 60,000 men. Mirliva Süleyman Pasha's forces were incorporated into the division of the French

⁴⁷⁵ Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 410.

⁴⁷⁶ Trabzoni, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁴⁷⁷ Nikolai to Menshikov, 23 August (2 September) 1854. RGVIA. Fond 481, op. 1, d. 8, list 28.

⁴⁷⁸ Albert Seaton. *The Crimean War: A Russian Chronicle*. New York, London: St. Martin's Press, 1977, pp. 50–59.

General Bosquet. The French had the advantage of their Minié rifles. The Russian army was forced to retreat, but the allies did not pursue it. If they had, they could well have taken Sevastopol by the end of the month. The Russians lost about 1,800 killed, 3,900 wounded and missing. The French casualties included 140 to 250 killed and 1,200 to 1,400 wounded. The British loss is put at 362 killed and more than 1,500 wounded.⁴⁷⁹ There is no indication of the Ottoman losses in the existing literature. Most probably they are included among the French casualties. The Ottoman commander Mirliva Süleyman Pasha did not report on his casualties in his letter to the Porte.⁴⁸⁰

The allies restarted marching towards Sevastopol on 23 September. Meanwhile the Russians scuttled seven of their ships to block entrance to the bay of Sevastopol. The allies then made the decision not to attack Sevastopol from the northwest side, but to attack instead from the southeast. However, this was another blunder by the allies, because on the northwest side the city was poorly fortified and defended by only some 5,000 men. Menshikov with his army had gone out of the city to take the road to Bahçesaray and the city was left to the local garrison and the sailors. We must note that both the Russians and the Allies lacked proper reconnaissance services. Meanwhile Marshal St Arnaud died and General François Certain Canrobert (1809–1895) took the French command.

The allied commanders did not want to risk attacking the city before reinforcements from Varna arrived. This was still another blunder. In October the numbers of French forces reached 42,000 and the British 23,000, while the Ottoman forces before Sevastopol remained the same.⁴⁸¹ The Ottoman contingent was kept as reserve. Thus, while the allies lost precious time, the Russians improved their fortifications under the supervision of Colonel Totleben and the admirals Nakhimov, Kornilov and others. Some of Menshikov's army also entered the city, raising the total number of defenders to 25,000.

On 17 October, the allies began the first bombardment of Sevastopol. During the bombardment they caused extensive damage to the

⁴⁷⁹ See Winfried Baumgart, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁴⁸⁰ Serasker Hasan Rıza Pasha to the grand vizier, 6 October 1854. BOA. İ. DH. 19668. The *serasker* wrote that the casualty figures were not reported and therefore would be requested. Alma was mentioned as Almalu or Elmalu.

⁴⁸¹ Baumgart, *op. cit.*, p. 126. Baumgart gives the number of the Ottoman troops as 5,000. Captain Saim Besbelli gives the same number. See Besbelli, *op. cit.*, p. 76. According to Slade, however, this number must be about 6,000 to 7,000.

defences but they did not proceed to a direct assault. Thus they missed another opportunity. The bombardment was also undertaken from the sea side. The Ottoman fleet with its line-of-battle ships, including the *Mahmudiye* and the *Teşrifiye*, also took part in this action but the wooden ships proved useless against stone fortifications. The allied ships were badly damaged and casualties were high while the effect on the Russian positions was limited. 12 sailors from the *Mahmudiye* were also wounded. The *Mahmudiye* and three ships from the Egyptian squadron had to be sent to Istanbul for repairs. On their way, two Egyptian ships went aground after a gale and about 1,000 sailors were drowned, including the commander of the Egyptian division (squadron) Hasan Pasha.⁴⁸² The failed bombardment of Sevastopol from the sea was a lesson which led to the later construction of ironclad ships. The bombardment continued until 25 October and achieved nothing, although Admiral Kornilov died on the first day of the bombardment. Thus began the 349 days of siege and trench warfare at Sevastopol.

Menshikov, with his army reinforced to 65,000, decided to attack the British supply port at Balaklava on 25 October 1854. Part of the Ottoman contingent, consisting of little-trained *redif* or *esnan* troops (about 1,000 to 1,400 men with 10 guns), was deployed in a line of four lightly constructed artillery earthworks or redoubts to the north of Balaklava. According to Fortescue, Lord Raglan did not wish his soldiers mix up with the “Turkish” soldiers, and his army did not wish it either, because, “in Bulgaria the men had observed how the Bulgarian peasants, who sold them provisions, were insolently waylaid and robbed by the Turks of the money that had been paid to them; and they were very indignant”.⁴⁸³

Lt General Pavel Petrovich Liprandi (1796–1864), with a force of 25,000 men, made a surprise attack on this line early at dawn on 25 October. The Ottoman troops, overwhelmed by the far superior enemy, after a resistance of more than one hour (during which 170 of them were killed), retreated in disorder. John Blunt, civilian interpreter and unofficial aide-de-camp to Lt General Lord Lucan, wrote in his reminiscences that the Ottoman commander Rüstem Pasha told him after the battle that some of the ammunition supplied to those

⁴⁸² Besbelli, op. cit., pp. 74–75.

⁴⁸³ John W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*. Vol. XIII (1852–1870). London: Naval & Military Press, 2004, p. 89. Cf. Austin, op. cit., p. 51.



Illus. 15 Council of war, Lord Raglan, Ömer Pasha and Marshal Péliissier.
Photo by Roger Fenton, 1855.

redoubts did not fit the bores of the guns. Blunt wrote the following about those in Redoubt No. 1:

The Turks, although greatly outnumbered, made a gallant stand, and both Lord Lucan and Sir Colin Campbell manifested their approval! The former called out to me 'Blunt, those Turks are doing well!' but, having lost fully one-third of their number, and, expecting no support, they retired leaving their three guns, their killed and a few prisoners, most of them wounded, in the enemy's hands.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁴ "Blunt Speaking". *The Crimean War Reminiscences of John Elijah Blunt, Civilian Interpreter*, ed. Dr Douglas Austin, UK: Crimean War Research Society Special

Blunt was then sent to the *binbashi* (major) of the retreating troops to order them to form behind the Highlanders (93rd Regiment). One of the men, bleeding from a wound in his breast, asked “why no troops were sent to our support”. Another declared that “the guns in their redoubt were too small and ill-supplied with ammunition, and could not be properly served”. A third complained that during the last two days they had nothing to eat but biscuits and very little water to drink. After the first redoubt was captured by the Russians, those in the other three redoubts, about 800 men, “seeing large bodies of Russian cavalry and infantry rapidly advancing in their direction and expecting no support, made but little resistance and fled towards Balaklava”.

The *Takvim-i Vekayi* wrote that the Ottoman troops in the first *tabya* (redoubt) were attacked by 8 Russian battalions with 12 guns and that their resistance lasted two hours.⁴⁸⁵ Adolphus Slade depicted the situation as follows:

This exposed and dangerous post, above 2,000 yards away from any support, requiring the staunchest troops of the army to hold, if worth holding, was entrusted to men under depressing influences; men not long enrolled, and never in action. Ignorant and suspicious, in a strange army, they may have fancied themselves placed there by the “infidel” to be sacrificed.⁴⁸⁶

According to the *Times* correspondent William Howard Russell,

For some mysterious reason or other the Turkish government sent instead of the veterans who fought under Omar Pasha, a body of soldiers of only two years’ service, the latest levies of the Porte, many belonging to the non-belligerent class of barbers, tailors, and small shopkeepers. Still they were patient, hardy, and strong...⁴⁸⁷

Publication 33, 2007, pp. 23–24. Dr Austin remarks that shortly after the event itself, however, Major General Sir Colin Campbell was “scathing in his adverse comments on the Turks”. Austin further comments that “clearly, Campbell did not then realise how well they had held out”.

⁴⁸⁵ See Yapıcı, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁴⁸⁶ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

⁴⁸⁷ Russell, *The British Expedition to the Crimea*, Rev. Ed., London: G. Routledge & Co., 1858, p. 175. Tarle also gives the number of troops in each redoubt at 250. See Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 169. According to the *Takvim-i Vekayi*, each of these four *tabyas* had half a battalion Ottoman troops. The *esnan* battalions usually numbered about 500. See *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 27 Safer 1261 (19 November 1854). Also see Yapıcı, *op. cit.*, p. 65. Balaklava is here depicted as Balıklı.

It is not surprising that the Ottoman commander did not send his best troops, when Lord Raglan wanted some Ottoman troops to dig and hold earthworks for the defence of British troops. Why should he give his best troops for such a task? Apparently Russell arrived together with Lord Raglan about 8 o'clock. Russell then writes that

It was soon evident that no reliance was to be placed on the Turkish infantry or artillerymen. All the stories we had heard about their bravery behind stone walls and earthworks proved how differently the same or similar people fight under different circumstances. When the Russians advanced, the Turks fired a few rounds at them, got frightened at the distance of their supports in the rear, looked round, received a few shots and shell, then "bolted," and fled with an agility quite at variance with common-place notions of Oriental deportment on the battle-field... Meantime the enemy advanced his cavalry rapidly. To our inexpressible disgust we saw the Turks in redoubt No. 2 fly at their approach...⁴⁸⁸

Lord Raglan's nephew and aide-de-camp Colonel Somerset Calthorpe wrote in the same vein as Russell:

A few moments after our arrival the Russians established a battery of field artillery... and opened fire on No. 1 Redoubt; at the same time a column of infantry (some 1,200) men advanced up to it, the Turkish garrison firing on them in a desultory sort of way with small arms, but without attempting to serve their heavy guns. To our intense disgust, in a few moments we saw a little stream of men issue from the rear of the redoubt and run down the hill side towards our lines...⁴⁸⁹

Yet Russell and Calthorpe do not mention the fact that these few Ottoman troops had been under artillery fire for almost two hours before the arrival of the British command staff at their observation point. The vastly superior Russian forces (three columns, commanded by Major Generals Levutskiy, Semyakin and Gribbe) had stormed Redoubt No. 1 towards 8 o'clock after a strong and concentrated cannonade, although the "Turks" fought "very stubbornly" and left 170 dead.⁴⁹⁰ Lord Raglan came to observe the battlefield very shortly before 8 a.m. General Can-

⁴⁸⁸ Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 184–185. Relying upon the depiction of this battle by Russell and Kinglake and distrusting George Buchanan's observations, Reid (*op. cit.*, p. 268) uses the same argument with the same phrase ("the Ottoman troops bolted and fled"). Reid even argues that the Ottoman "battalions" fled "even before shots were fired by either side".

⁴⁸⁹ [Colonel Somerset Calthorpe], *op. cit.*, pp. 302–303.

⁴⁹⁰ Nikolai F. Dubrovin, *Istoriya Krymskoi voiny i oborony Sevastopolya*, Vol. II, St. Petersburg: Tip. tov. "Obschestvennaya Pol'za", 1900, pp. 127–130.

Robert came thereafter. When he looked from the Chersonese Plateau, Raglan saw only the retreating Ottoman troops. As Michael Hargreave Mawson observed on Calthorpe's narrative:

The evidence in this passage is most unreliable; the author writing not only from a viewpoint nearly three miles from the action, but also with the specific intention of defending the memory of a beloved commander and uncle – Raglan. The fact that Raglan was two hours or more late for the battle has been carefully glossed over with the claim that the Russian Artillery only opened fire once Raglan and the staff were watching, and that the infantry charge was simultaneous. It is contrary to the usages of war to shell a position whilst your own infantry is attempting to capture it. The figure of 1,200 Russian infantry can be taken as deliberately under-estimated.⁴⁹¹

From that day onwards, the French and the British officers and soldiers in the Crimea began to treat the Ottoman soldiers (“the Turks”) as despicable cowards. On the other hand, according to Oleg Shkedy, the evaluations of Russian researchers and participants in the war concerning the Ottoman troops in this battle were more balanced. The “Turks” had defended the first redoubt as long as possible, and although it was taken by the Russians they were not to be blamed. Shkedy also wrote that Russian sources in general were of the opinion that the allies commanded everything and that the Ottoman generals were in an unenviable position.⁴⁹²

James Reid's interpretation of the conduct of the Ottoman troops in this battle is one-sided and biased, due to his reliance on Russell and Kinglake only. He wrote that

All optimism about the Ottoman reformed army evaporated with the disgraceful performance of the Ottoman battalions at the battle of Balaklava. Here, Ottoman infantry battalions stationed on hill redoubts in the advance of the entire allied army broke and ran, even before shots were fired by either side. The sight of massive Russian cavalry formations bearing down upon them in their isolated forward positions provoked such fear and panic, that to a man, the Ottoman troops bolted and fled.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ Michael Hargreave Mawson, *The True Heroes of Balaclava*, Kent, Bedford, London: Crimean War Research Society Publications, spiral-bound printout, 1996, p. 13.

⁴⁹² Oleg P. Shkedy, “Turetskaya armiya v Krymskoi kampanii”, *Vostochnaya (Krymskaya) Voina 1853–1856 godov: Novye materialy i novoe osmyslenie*, vol. 1, Simferopol: Krymskiy Arkhiv, 2005, p. 80.

⁴⁹³ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

Had Reid read other sources as well, such as Adolphus Slade, he could have formed a more balanced view. First, he would see that these were *esnân* and *redif* troops. Second, he would understand that these troops did not “bolt” immediately, but resisted a much stronger enemy for almost two hours. Reid’s treatment of this episode gives the impression that he has not tried to understand what really took place. Instead, he only attempted to find support for what he already “knows” about what happened. On the other hand, this is not to say that the Ottoman soldiers would not “bolt” in any situation. They might have fled, as they did in several cases, like soldiers in any other army. However, one need not distort historical facts to prove that the Ottoman army was not reformed. There are other ways of showing the extent (or limits) of the effects of reform in the Ottoman army. The point here is to try to understand first what actually happened and then why it happened that way.

After the capture of the redoubts by the Russians, a cavalry battle ensued, with the famous “charge of the light brigade” by the British upon Russian fortified positions, which is still a major point of discussion in the British historiography. We will not go into the details of this battle. The British lost from the light cavalry brigade from 118 to 134 killed and more than 200 wounded. The Russian loss was 550, of which 238 were killed.⁴⁹⁴ The *Takvim-i Vekayi* described the folly of the British charge of the light brigade as a “demonstration of bravery at the extreme level”.

The battle’s results were insignificant from a military point of view, but the Ottoman troops from then on were subjected to all kinds of misery and humiliation. Blunt witnessed and described in detail their deprivations and ill-treatment by the allied troops, who “unjustly accused the Turks of cowardice and in consequence treated them contemptuously”. Blunt also argues that Russell later withdrew his imputation of cowardice against them on learning from Lord Lucan and others about their “brave stand”.⁴⁹⁵ As Robert Edgerton states, the Ottoman soldiers were “cursed at, spat upon, kicked, and slapped, their only duties to carry

⁴⁹⁴ Baumgart, op. cit., p. 130. These are, I think, the most up-to-date numbers. However, there are various numbers on this account. Dubrovin (op. cit., p. 141) gives the British loss as 400 dead, 60 wounded and 22 prisoners. According to the *Takvim-i Vekayi*, Russian casualties were more than 1,500; Ottomans lost 150 and the British 400 in dead and wounded. See Yapıcı, op. cit., p. 65.

⁴⁹⁵ Blunt, op. cit., pp. 54–57.

supplies, maintain roads, and stay out of sight”.⁴⁹⁶ According to Tarle, the allied officers would not even sit at the table for dinner with the Ottoman officers.⁴⁹⁷ Depending on the allies for their food, the Ottoman troops were also left to starvation. They then started stealing food, for which they were flogged.

Soon the Ottoman soldiers started dying from cold, hunger, filth and disease. According to the Russian military historian Nikolai Dubrovin, old and torn tents did not protect the Ottoman soldiers from the cold and sometimes up to 300 men died in one day.⁴⁹⁸ They were deprived of all necessities: poorly fed, clothed, and sheltered, without bed and linen, morally depressed, disdained and insulted. They had no money either. Furthermore, they had no press, no Ottoman correspondents to write about their plight. Everyday they buried their comrades and the dogs dug up the dead bodies and devoured them. There was a “hospital”, a building or a hovel where Russian prisoners had previously been kept. After they all died of cholera, the building was given over to the Ottomans, but the dirt had never been cleaned away. Up to 400 men were strewn on the damp mud floors of its rooms, the doors and windows closed to keep out the cold air.⁴⁹⁹ The Ottoman surgeon in charge of the “hospital”, who had been trained in London, told the British war correspondent N. A. Woods: “The deadly fetid air which issued from this charnel-house made me involuntarily shrink back from the door with loathing”. He further commented: “None of those poor fellows will come out alive. I have not saved a single man who entered that fatal building”.⁵⁰⁰ When Woods asked whether he had enough medicine, the surgeon said he had plenty, but medicine was useless against hunger.

Mushaver Pasha took a steamer to transport the Ottoman sick to Istanbul and 75 out of the 158 invalids died on the way. He then wrote to the naval council in Istanbul for two hospital ships to be sent to Balaklava and Kaniş. A frigate was then converted into a hospital with all the personnel and equipment and sent to Kaniş in February.

⁴⁹⁶ Robert B. Edgerton, *Death or Glory: The Legacy of the Crimean War*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999, p. 169.

⁴⁹⁷ Tarle, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 169.

⁴⁹⁸ Dubrovin, op. cit., vol. II, p. 381. Blunt (op. cit., p. 55) wrote that an adjutant on Rüstem Pasha’s staff showed him a report in which it was stated that nearly half of the “Turkish” troops in Balaklava had died.

⁴⁹⁹ Slade, op. cit., p. 331. Also see Blunt, op. cit., pp. 56–57; Dubrovin, op. cit., p. 382.

⁵⁰⁰ Quoted by Edgerton, op. cit., p. 170.

But the British fleet could not find a place for it: “the hospital frigate remained ten days in the offing of Kamiesh, waiting the pleasure of the British authorities, and was then sent back to Constantinople by order of the naval commander-in-chief, on the plea of want of room for her either at Kamiesh or Balaclava. Large vessels were then lying in those harbours for the accommodation of a few officers.” Mushaver Pasha was also an eye-witness to the deprivations of the Ottoman army in the Crimea:

One day the pasha in command at Kadykeuy spoke to the author about the slender rations issued to his troops: each man he said, received a daily allowance only of biscuit and rice, without butter to cook the latter into pilaf, and fresh meat about once a week. Had he represented the case in the right quarter, I asked. He had not: he declined doing so; and the tenor of his remarks showed an indisposition, in common with other pashas serving the Allies, to say or do aught likely, in his opinion, to make him seem troublesome. The loss of a thousand men was not to be named in the same breath with the loss of the English general’s smile.⁵⁰¹

Once again, as in the army of Anatolia, we see that the Ottoman officers took little interest in the condition of their troops. The problem was that the Muslim soldiers did not accept pork and rum and for this they were issued only an additional half pound of biscuit. As Slade observes, the Ottoman soldiers in the Crimea were theoretically equal with the British soldiers, but not in practice. Interestingly, as Slade observes, the Muslims were not cunning enough to accept the pork and rum and then sell or give it to their European comrades, who might then have treated them with more respect.

Tea, coffee, sugar, etc. – appropriate articles – always abounding in store, were never regularly issued to the Turks; who were more dependent, with their pay in arrears, than others with silver in their pockets, on the commissariat for comforts. The hucksters in the Crimea, unlike the *bakkals* of Constantinople, gave no credit. Whence arose this indifference about the Turks is difficult to say; unless one might trace it to the habitual bearing of Anglo-Saxons towards an “inferior race”.⁵⁰²

James Henry Skene, the British consul at the Dardanelles also wrote that the Ottoman troops in the Crimea were so badly paid, and so

⁵⁰¹ Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

⁵⁰² Slade, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

irregularly, that they begged the British and French soldiers for scraps of food. Skene further described their misery:

When English sailors went from their ships to the Naval Brigade at the front, they would capture three Turkish soldiers apiece, ride on the shoulders of one, and drive the others before them with a long whip, to relieve the first when he should get tired. The poor Turks would then get a few biscuits as payment of their eight miles' stage, and return to Balaclava perfectly satisfied.⁵⁰³

Meanwhile, Ömer Pasha was planning to occupy Bessarabia in November 1854 but in December he was ordered to go to the Crimea. He was to base himself at Gözleve and not to participate in the siege of Sevastopol. From December 1854 to February 1855, three divisions (one of which was Egyptian) totalling some 35,000 men with horses and artillery were transported from Varna and Süzebolu to Gözleve.

After the indecisive battle of Balaklava, the Russian and allied armies fought again, at Inkerman, on 5 November 1854. Nikolai was getting nervous; he sent his two sons, Grand Dukes Mikhail and Nikolai to the Crimea to urge Menshikov to action. Meanwhile, Menshikov had received further reinforcements and now commanded 107,000 men inside and outside Sevastopol, excluding the sailors, while the allies had about 70,000 men. For action on 5 November, Menshikov had detached 57,000 troops. He gave the overall command of the operation to General Dannenberg, who had come from Bessarabia and had no knowledge of the terrain. On the day of the battle of Inkerman, the morning weather was foggy and the combat occurred in great confusion for both sides. Overall, the battle ended with a great victory for the allies. This was an infantry battle or a "soldiers' battle," as it came to be called later, because the soldiers had fought without much direction from their officers. The Russian massed bayonet attacks proved useless against the longer-range Minié rifles, for which the Russians muskets were no match.⁵⁰⁴ Russian losses were enormous: about 11,000 in dead and wounded, while the Allied losses were around 4,500 dead and wounded.

Shortly after Inkerman, a terrible gale broke out on 14 November. The Allies lost about 30 ships, including two frigates from the Ottoman

⁵⁰³ James Henry Skene, *With Lord Stratford in the Crimean War*, London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1883, pp. 40–41.

⁵⁰⁴ Baumgart, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–138.

fleet. Human losses were around 500 and thus its effect was almost comparable to that of a lost battle. It became clear that during this winter neither could the allies take Sevastopol nor could the Russians drive them away from it. War had begun in earnest. The ensuing bitter winter brought all the deficiencies of the Allied armies to the fore. The *Times* correspondent William Howard Russell delivered detailed reports on the disorganization and misery of the British army. These reports were read by a concerned public. This had a revolutionary effect in Britain, and Lord Raglan, his commissariat officials and government ministers were blamed. Soon Lord Aberdeen's government gave way to Lord Palmerston. Both Marx and Engels wrote in the NYDT on the mismanagement of the British war system.⁵⁰⁵

The Russians too had supply and reinforcement problems because there were no railways south of Moscow. The Russians could not resolve these difficulties before the end of the war. In the end, they played a major role in their defeat, because they ran out of supplies and could not replenish them easily. The French were the best organized army, while nothing equalled the misery of the Ottoman troops.

The concentration of large Ottoman forces at Gözleve menaced the Russian supply lines traversing Or Kapusu (Perekop). Emperor Nikolai I ordered an attack on these forces. Prince Menshikov gave the task to General Stepan Khrulev, who attacked the Ottomans with an army of 29,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry with 80 guns on 17 February 1855.⁵⁰⁶ Assisted by gunfire from Allied warships, the Ottoman forces commanded by Ömer Pasha repulsed the Russians, who lost about 700 men.⁵⁰⁷ Ottoman losses (including some French and civilians) were 103 dead and 296 wounded. Ferik Selim Pasha and Miralay Rüstem Bey from the Egyptian troops were among the dead. Lord Raglan reported the battle to the Duke of Newcastle (copied to Lord Stratford), praising the "gallant and determined conduct" of the Ottoman troops and testi-

⁵⁰⁵ "British Disaster in the Crimea – The British War System", anonymous leading article, NYDT, January 22, 1855. See Marx, op. cit., pp. 506–512.

⁵⁰⁶ See the *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 11 Receb 1271 (30 March 1855). Yapıcı, op. cit., p. 73. Baumgart (op. cit., p. 145) however gives the total number of Khrulev's forces at 19,000.

⁵⁰⁷ Cevdet Pasha argues that the Russians attacked with more than 40,000 men and lost more than 3,000 dead and as many wounded. See *Tezâkir 1–12*, p. 29. This seems an exaggerated account.

fyng to the “serious nature of the attack which was made upon them”.⁵⁰⁸ After this unsuccessful attack Nikolai removed Menshikov from his post and appointed General Gorchakov as Commander-in-Chief in the Crimea. Emperor Nikolai I died soon afterwards on 2 March 1855 and his son Aleksandr II ascended the throne.⁵⁰⁹

The death of Nikolai increased hopes for a diplomatic solution. In mid-March 1855, a new conference for peace among the ambassadors of France (Bourqueney), Britain (Lord Westmoreland), the Porte (Arif Efendi), Russia (Prince Aleksandr Gorchakov) and foreign minister Count Buol of Austria was opened in Vienna. Russia had accepted negotiations on the basis of the “four points”. Since Arif Efendi did not know French, Rıza Bey from the Tercüme Odası was later sent to Vienna.⁵¹⁰ Ali Fuat Türkgeldi is highly critical of the Porte’s conduct in keeping such an ambassador in Vienna and allowing him to be present at the conference but not to speak, “as if the negotiations concerned not us but China”. He also asks why Âli Pasha was not sent immediately. He attributes this to the manipulations of Stratford Canning. However, Türkgeldi is mistaken. Stratford does not seem responsible for this. The problem was that, at the beginning of the Vienna conference, the Porte did not know what to do regarding the four points, especially the fourth point, which dealt with the question of the rights and privileges of non-Muslim subjects of the Porte. This question was discussed among 21 Ottoman statesmen in a *Meclis-i Meşveret* which was held on 24–26 March 1855. Türkgeldi does not mention this important meeting and its resolution (*mazbata*), although it is mentioned as an attachment to Âli Pasha’s instructions, published by Türkgeldi.⁵¹¹ We will take up this issue in Chapter 5.

Towards the end of March 1855, Foreign Minister Âli Pasha was appointed as an extraordinary delegate to the Vienna conference and he first participated in the conference together with the French for-

⁵⁰⁸ Lord Raglan to the Duke of Newcastle. Before Sevastopol, 20 February 1855. BOA. HR. SYS. 1190/32 enc. 35. Copy to Lord Stratford, enc. 34.

⁵⁰⁹ Tarle, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 519–520. Cevdet Pasha (*ibid*) writes that Nikolai was much distressed by the news of the defeat and died thereafter. General Süer (*op. cit.*, p. 151) argues that Nikolai committed suicide upon the news of the defeat of the Russian army by the Ottoman army in Gözleve on 17 February 1855. Nikolai did not commit suicide, but took a near suicidal action: he inspected some troops in cold weather while he was ill.

⁵¹⁰ Türkgeldi, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 45.

⁵¹¹ See Instructions to Ali Pasha, delegate to the Vienna Conference. Türkgeldi, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 347.



Illus. 16 Ottoman soldiers and Tatar children at Gözleve. *ILN*, 3 March 1855.

eign minister Drouyn de Lhuys on 9 April 1855.⁵¹² The British had sent Lord John Russell to the conference. After Reşid Pasha's resignation, Âli Pasha became the new *sadrizam* while he was in Vienna in May 1855. Fuad Pasha became the new foreign minister. The conference negotiations were stopped (or officially speaking, deferred) at the beginning of June. The conference could not reach an agreement mainly because of the third point, which dealt with the Straits regime and the constraints on the Russian navy in the Black Sea. During the conference, Âli Pasha proposed the following important formulation on 19 April 1855:

The Contracting Powers, wishing to demonstrate the importance they attach to assuring that the Ottoman Empire participate in the advantages of the concert established by public law among the different European States, declare that they henceforth consider that empire as an integral part of the concert and engage themselves to respect its territorial integrity and its independence as an essential condition of the general balance of power.⁵¹³

This formulation would later be re-formulated into Article 7 of the Treaty of Paris, without, however, reference to the European balance of power.

The allies continued with the siege and bombardment of Sevastopol and Piedmont-Sardinia joined the allies with 15,000 troops. In April 20,000 Ottoman troops came from Gözleve to take positions outside the siege works. Then began a second duel of artillery. The allied forces had a clear superiority in firepower. During 9 to 19 April, the allies fired 165,000 rounds, while the Russian responded with only 89,000.⁵¹⁴ Meanwhile the allied fleets took an expedition to Kerch and occupied it along with Kefe and Yenikale, later destroying vast Russian supplies round the Sea of Azov. By June the allies totaled 224,000 men. Ottoman forces in the Crimea reached 55,000, stationed at Gözleve, Sevastopol and Yenikale. The French forces amounted to 120,000, the British 32,000. The allies now reached a degree of unprecedented fire concentration in a siege war. They could fire 75,000 rounds per day, whereas the Russians had to economize on ammunition and could reply with

⁵¹² Türkgeldi, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 55.

⁵¹³ Adanır, "Turkey's entry into the Concert of Europe", *European Review* 13(3), London, 2005, p. 408.

⁵¹⁴ Aleksandr Svechin, *Evolyutsiya Voennogo Iskusstva*, vol. II, Moscow-Leningrad: Voengiz, 1928, p. 66.

only a quarter of that number.⁵¹⁵ In the end, the result of the siege was determined by the Allied preponderance in guns and ammunition. Russia simply could not produce and deliver to its troops as much ammunition as did the allies.

On 8 September 1855, after an infernal bombardment of three days in which both British and French troops took part, the French finally took the Malakoff. The fire density of the bombardment was truly unprecedented. Indeed, as early as January 1855, General Canrobert had written to Serasker Rıza Pasha that they would open “a fire perhaps unequalled in the history of siege warfare”.⁵¹⁶ The Russian forces were obliged to evacuate the southern part of the city and passed over the harbour to the north side. The allies occupied the city on 12 September. The casualties on both sides were heavy; the Russian side lost about 13,000 and the allies about 10,000 men. The Ottoman troops were not among the storming troops; they were stationed on the Chernaia (Karasu) river. Ömer Pasha had by then left the Crimea for his Caucasian campaign, without appointing a deputy for himself. He was criticised for having caused the Ottomans’ non-participation in the final victory in Sevastopol. Cevdet Pasha wrote that Ömer Pasha had quarrelled with the French Commander-in-Chief General Pelissier, and when he came to Istanbul in July 1855, he had said that “Malakoff cannot be taken this year... Sevastopol can be taken in two or three years. The allies may even be defeated. But they have their ships to pull out their troops and may abandon us there”.⁵¹⁷ Cevdet Pasha also criticises Ömer Pasha’s behaviour in Istanbul, arguing that he debased himself in the eyes of the elite and the common people by using his influence to bring Damad Mehmed Ali Pasha back to the fore (meaning the latter’s appointment as Kapudan Pasha) and also appearing in public parades and having relations with some women of ill-repute.

In fact Cevdet Pasha finds fault in Ömer Pasha’s command of the Rumelian army as well. He argues that Ömer Pasha could not manage the *başıbozüks* and caused their dispersal, which led to their being forced to pillage. When the Russians crossed the Danube in an extended line, being vulnerable to attack at any point, he did not have courage to mount an attack on them. Cevdet Pasha even argues that Ömer

⁵¹⁵ Baumgart, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁵¹⁶ BOA. HR. SYS. 1336/31, 29 January 1855. “... nous pourrons ouvrir contre Sevastopol un feu peut-être sans exemple dans les annales des guerres de siège”.

⁵¹⁷ Cevdet Pasha, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

Pasha was about to surrender Silistria to the Russians, but the local population led by İbrahim Ağa organized the defence. In the Crimea, he passed his days idly in Gözleve instead of participating in the siege and storm of Sevastopol. Then, according to Cevdet Pasha, Pelissier had told him to wait for one more day and promised to offer the entire fleet for the transport of Ömer Pasha's troops to Anatolia, but Ömer Pasha had not accepted. Instead of marching directly from Batum via Ardahan, he preferred a far away route, leaving Kars to fall into the hands of the Russians.⁵¹⁸

The Crimean War was not confined to the Crimea and the territory of the Ottoman Empire. The allies also sent a fleet to the Baltic Sea and the British to the White Sea and to Petropavlovsk on the Kamchatka peninsula. The battles fought there were not decisive or at least they did not affect Ottoman troops and do not require attention for the present study.⁵¹⁹

After the capture of the southern part of Sevastopol, there arose a conflict in overall aims between France and Britain. Napoleon III was basically content with having won a victory in the Crimea and now did not want to continue the war. The British on the other hand were not equally satisfied. The Russian army had not been beaten yet. Britain also had plans for the independence of Circassia. But there was little to do in the Crimea. The allied armies did not want to go into Russian territory, away from the coast. The French were then persuaded into an expedition against the fortress of Kılburun. The allied fleets bombarded the fortress and it surrendered quickly. As we have noted previously, here for the first time ironclad floating batteries were used.

As we have seen, the number of Ottoman troops fluctuated during the progress of the war. However, what was the highest number of Ottoman regular troops involved in the conflict? What is probably the most accurate figure is recorded in a financial report, prepared in October 1855 to be submitted to the loan control commission (more on this will be said in Chapter 4). According to this report, the total effective number of Ottoman land troops (infantry, guards, cavalry, fortress and field artillery) was 199,152 men, excluding the 10,000 men of the "Turkish Contingent" in the pay of the British government, the 23,931

⁵¹⁸ Cevdet Pasha, *Tezâkir* 13–20, pp. 34–35.

⁵¹⁹ Andrew Lambert and Stephen Badsey (op. cit., p. 275), however, argue that "in so far as allied military pressure had any bearing on the Russian decision to accept peace terms, that pressure came from the Royal Navy in the Baltic".



Illus. 17 Ferik İsmail Pasha, commander of the Egyptian troops in the Crimea.
Photo by Roger Fenton, 1855.

men of the Egyptian army, 2,000 Ottoman Cossacks and 485 Tatar cavalry.⁵²⁰ If we add them up, then the figure reaches 235,568 men, of which approximately half were *redif* soldiers. Furthermore, according to this report, 77 per cent of the Ottoman troops were infantry and the rest were cavalry and artillery. As for the navy, it must have amounted to several thousands.

The End of the War and the Treaty of Paris

While the allied and the Russian armies watched each other from the two sides of Sevastopol, on 28 December 1855 the Austrian ambassador at St Petersburg, Esterhazy, submitted an ultimatum to Russia to accept peace negotiations on the basis of the “four points”. Otherwise,

⁵²⁰ *Le Moniteur Universel*, Paris, 8 January 1856. BOA. HR. SYS. 1355/3 lef3.

Austria would join the allies. Meanwhile Sweden made a defensive agreement with the allies. The King of Prussia too appealed to his nephew to make peace.⁵²¹ After some hesitation, Emperor Aleksandr II accepted the terms in January 1856.

The formal peace negotiations began in February 1856 in Paris. The Ottoman Empire was represented by grand vizier Âli Pasha and Mehmed Cemil Bey, (ambassador in Paris and Sardinia), a son of Reşid Pasha. France was represented by Count Alexandre Colonna-Walewski, the new foreign minister, and Baron François-Adolphe de Bourqueney, ambassador in Vienna. Russia sent Count Aleksey Orlov and Baron Filip de Brunnov, the former ambassador in London. The British representatives were Lord Clarendon the foreign minister and Baron Henry Richard Charles Cowley, the ambassador in Paris. The Austrian representatives were Prime Minister Charles-Ferdinand Buol-Schauenstein and their Paris ambassador Baron Joseph-Alexandre de Hübner. The kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia was represented by the prime minister Count Camille Benso Cavour and de Villamarina. Finally Prussia was represented by Baron Othon de Manteuffel, prime minister and foreign minister and Count de Hatzfeldt, ambassador in Paris.

The war was ended but this was more at the desire of France than of Britain, because for Britain (and for Stratford) it was an unfinished war. Britain had spent much money for the “Turkish Contingent” and the “Osmanli irregular cavalry” yet just when they were ready to do service, the war had ended. The victory in Sevastopol was generally seen as a French victory, so the British needed another campaign to gain victory for itself and to destroy Russian military might. Lord Palmerston had rigorously strengthened Britain’s navy and army since he became prime minister in early 1855, replacing Lord Aberdeen. However, Palmerston could not do much because France and Austria had agreed to put an end to the war.

Napoleon III, on the other hand, had already gained what he hoped for from the war: prestige and glory to his dynasty and to France and the disruption of the Russian-Austrian-Prussian bloc. Why should he fight further? French public opinion also favoured an end to the war because it had now come to be seen as more in the interests of Britain. Therefore, the policy of France was now very mild towards Russia,

⁵²¹ W. E. Mosse, “How Russia Made Peace September 1855 to April 1856”, *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11(3), 1955, pp. 305–307.

considering that France would need Russian support in the future. In fact the Paris Congress marked the beginning of a Franco-Russian rapprochement.⁵²² It also marked the end of the Russian-Austrian-Prussian alliance in European politics. While Austria lost the friendship of both Russia and Britain and even of France, Prussia benefited most from the new balance of power in Europe. Prussia was to defeat France in 1871 and this would eventually encourage Russia to renounce the neutrality of the Black Sea. The other powers finally accepted that new situation.

Before the congress, Abdülmecid issued his Edict of Reforms (*Islahat Fermanı*) on 18 February 1856. The edict promised equality before law for all the subjects of the Porte, reform of the police, taxation, etc. We will deal with it in Chapter 5.

The Treaty of Paris provided for the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and placed it under the guarantee of the great powers. The allies and Russia returned to each other all captured cities and territory, except for some Russian territory in south Bessarabia (Budjak) that went to Moldavia. Thus Russia was removed from a position of control at the mouth of the Danube. The Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were to remain under the suzerainty of the Porte. None of the powers would exercise exclusive protection over these principalities. All prisoners of war were to be returned. The Black Sea was declared neutral and free of any war ships except for a limited number of small ships. No fortifications were to be built or held on its coasts. It would be open to merchants ships of all nations. All commercial navigation on the Danube was also opened to all nations. The Russian protectorate over the Danubian principalities was abolished. The principalities, together with Serbia, would be under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire and the collective guarantee of the great powers. Serbia would continue to be free in its internal affairs but the Porte would have a garrison in Belgrade as before. While Britain wanted to press for the independence or autonomy of the Circassians, even the Porte did not seem enthusiastic about this project. Therefore the congress did not address the situation of Circassia.

For the Sublime Porte, the most important result was the inclusion of the Ottoman Empire into the Concert of Europe. On the ques-

⁵²² L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, London: Hurst & Company, 2000, p. 336.

tion of the rights of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, Âli Pasha and the Porte tried hard to prevent any article that could be used for interference in the internal affairs of the Porte. First they did not want the *Islahat Fermanı* to be mentioned in the treaty. When they could not prevent it, the Porte objected to the expression that the contracting powers “take note” (*prendre acte*) of it, because the ministers looked the phrase up in dictionaries and found out that the word “*acte*” meant “*sened*”! For the Porte, this would mean that the firman was accepted as a binding convention.⁵²³ Finally Âli Pasha was able to reach an agreement on the expression “the contracting Powers note the high value of this communication” (*Les Puissances constatent la haute valeur de cette communication*). The same article (Article 9) also stated that the firman would not be used as an excuse for the Great Powers either collectively or separately to interfere with the relations of the Sultan with his subjects.

During the Paris congress and afterwards, Napoleon III ardently espoused the “nationality principle”. The most immediate and urgent manifestation of this principle was the cause of the unification of the Danubian principalities. Napoleon III had reason to oppose the 1815 settlement which disregarded nationalities. Therefore he urged for a united Rumania under a foreign prince. Piedmont-Sardinia naturally supported the nationality principle. Austria was against it, fearing that a united Rumania would be attractive to her own Rumanian subjects. The Porte was naturally against it because it rightly considered such a unification as a step towards full independence. Britain wavered, while Russia was Napoleon’s chief ally in this question. Russia wanted to gain the goodwill of the Rumanian people and to widen the rift between France and Britain. Eventually, the principalities were united in 1859 under Colonel Alexander Cuza.

⁵²³ Roderic Davison, *op. cit.* (1999), p. 435.