

JOSEPH II AND THE CAMPAIGN OF 1788 AGAINST THE OTTOMAN TURKS

Matthew Z. Mayer
Department of History
McGill University
July 1997

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in
partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts
(c).



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-37222-7

A B S T R A C T

Although many historians consider Joseph II's campaign of 1788 against the Ottoman Turks a failure, no one has yet provided a thorough account of it. This study attempts to put something into the void.

Based mostly on original sources found in the *Kriegsarchiv* (War Archives) in Vienna, it examines the campaign from the perspective of Joseph II. The first chapter tries to explain how Joseph became involved in a conflict with the Porte. The second chapter covers the period of February-July 1788, when Joseph postponed his offensive on Belgrade until the fall and waited in Zemun on the defensive. The third chapter begins with the Ottoman advance into the Banat of Timișoara in early August 1788 and ends with the Habsburg army's retreat to winter quarters in November.

Despite failing to take Belgrade, the Habsburg army captured strategically important positions for the campaign of 1789. The difficulties encountered cannot be blamed solely on Joseph's poor generalship. Other factors, such as insufficient Russian assistance, a difficult climate and terrain and a surprisingly strong Ottoman effort, must also be considered.

R É S U M É

Plusieurs historiens soutiennent que la campagne militaire de l'armée dirigée par Joseph II contre les Ottomans en 1788 fut un désastre. Et, cela, sans bien nous définir les preuves sur lesquelles ils se basent. Ce mémoire vise à résoudre cette question.

Pour ce faire, nous nous appuyerons principalement sur des documents originaux du *Kriegsarchiv* (Archives de guerre) à Vienne. Nous étudierons la campagne de 1788 selon la perspective de l'empereur autrichien Joseph II. Le premier chapitre tentera d'élucider les mobiles qui l'ont incité à s'impliquer dans un conflit russo-ottoman. Le deuxième chapitre couvre la période de février à juillet 1788. Enfin, au troisième chapitre, nous aborderons les événements qui sont survenus d'août à décembre 1788, soit jusqu'à la fin de la campagne.

En dépit de l'objectif visé par Joseph II - la prise de Belgrade - qui ne fut pas atteint, l'armée réussit à occuper des positions d'une grande importance stratégique pour la campagne de 1789. En ce qui concerne les causes possibles d'une campagne laborieuse, il faut tenir rigueur de la conduite de Joseph II, de l'assistance inadéquate de son allié russe, des difficultés amenées par le terrain et le climat et des brillantes tactiques du commandeur ottoman.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|--------|
| Note on Terminology | ii |
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| List of maps | iv |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER I THE ROAD TO WAR | 8 |
| CHAPTER II THE AUSTRIANS ENTER THE FRAY | 19 |
| CHAPTER III THE OTTOMANS ATTACK | 40 |
| CONCLUSION | 69 |
| APPENDIX I | 81 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 107 |

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The term 'Habsburg Monarchy' has been used to denote lands which formed Joseph II's empire.¹ When mentioning the protagonist, I have used 'Joseph II', 'Joseph' and 'the Emperor' interchangeably. Consistency has been the guiding principle behind the choice of place names. Where possible, I have replaced the German names of original sources by the current spelling found in Paul Magocsi's *Historical Atlas of East-Central Europe* (Toronto, 1993). Thus the town of 'Weisskirchen' in the Banat of Timișoara is 'Bela Crkva', 'Temeswar' becomes 'Timișoara', 'Schupaneck' is 'Szupany', and so on. Where the translation of an important passage has been particularly difficult, I have included the original text in a footnote.

¹ See page 1, footnote 1.

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

A bursary from the *Fonds pour chercheurs et l'aide à la recherche* (FCAR) allowed me to pursue this study. The assistance of the McGill Humanities Research Council helped fund a five-week research trip to Vienna in the spring of 1996. I am grateful to Dr. Richard Virr, Curator of the Rare Books Department at McLennan Library, McGill University, for permission to reproduce here, for the first time, the collection of Joseph II's holograph letters which is housed there and for his assistance with German paleography. Ms. Silke Falkner assisted with the translation of these German letters into English. I am also indebted to Professor P.C. Hoffmann, from the Faculty of History, Professor A.U. Turgay, from the Department of Islamic Studies and to Dr. Karl Rossa and Ms. Renate Domnanich of the *Kriegsarchiv* in Vienna. Thanks to family and friends who have supported me throughout the years. My father, Frederick Mayer, kindly read a draft of the thesis and offered valuable comments. But my deepest debt of gratitude belongs to Professor Philip Longworth for his patience, incisive questions and numerous suggestions.

M A P S

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| The Theatre of War - 1 June 1788 | 9 |
| The Banat and Transylvania | 43 |

Both maps are by the author.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Historians who have written on Joseph II's reign as sole ruler of the lands which formed the Habsburg Monarchy (1780-1790) have focused primarily on his enlightened reforms.¹ But his foreign policy and particularly the war which he fought as an ally of Russia against the Ottoman Empire in the years 1787-1790, has either been ignored or inadequately covered.

Derek Beales has written on his time as co-ruler (1765-1780) with his mother, Empress Maria Theresa,² in volume one of his biography of Joseph II.³ The work is

¹ The Habsburg Monarchy comprised most of what is today Belgium, Luxemburg, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Slovenia and Hungary in addition to possessions in present-day Romania, Poland, Croatia and Italy. Although he may have had some influence on the formulation of domestic and foreign policy during these years, his main responsibility was the administration of the military. Derek Beales has provided us with a thorough account of Joseph's activities in this period in *Joseph II. In the Shadow of Maria Theresa, 1740-1780*. vol. I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

² Maria Theresa lived from 1717-1780, reigned 1740-1780.

³ *Joseph II. In the Shadow of Maria Theresa, 1740-1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

essential to an understanding of Joseph's education and early military career, but does not reach the years in which he was sole ruler and the promised second volume has not yet appeared.

The standard secondary source on the subject is *Kriege unter Kaiser Josef II* (Vienna, 1904) by Oskar Criste, which has yet to be translated into English. Based almost entirely on original sources from the *Kriegsarchiv*, Criste's work is the fullest yet on the events of 1788. Among other things, it provides useful information on the complement of the Habsburg forces and the strength of the artillery, and reproduces several original documents. The book is a useful starting point, but it pays most attention to the War of Bavarian Succession (1778-1779) and the campaign of 1789. The discussion of the campaign of 1788 is limited to 16 pages and a number of significant turn of events, such as the postponement of the storming of Belgrade in May, the breakthrough of the Turks into the Banat in August and Joseph's attempts to expel them in September, have not been adequately explained.

The same can be said of the accounts by William Coxe and Paul Mitrofanov. Coxe's five pages on the subject in volume three of his *History of the House of Austria* (London, 1847) give a general description of the campaign of 1788, but his exposition of Joseph's grand strategy and strategy is inaccurate, and is deficient as to sources. Mitrofanov's two-volume account of Joseph's life entitled *Joseph II. Seine politische und kulturelle Tätigkeit* (V. von Demelic trans., Vienna and Leipzig, 1910), devotes no more than a paragraph to the course of the campaign of 1788.⁴

⁴ See pp. 192-193.

Recent scholarship has done little to enlarge our understanding of the campaign. Karl A. Roider Jr. has written extensively on Habsburg foreign policy in the eighteenth century. His article 'Kaunitz, Joseph II and the Turkish War',⁵ and his subsequent book, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790* (Baton Rouge, 1982) are useful for the diplomatic background to the war against the Ottomans, but offer little on the military campaigns themselves. Paul Bernard's article 'Austria's Last Turkish War'⁶ takes the perspective of the Serbians, Wallachians and Moldavians, but provides only a sketchy, and inaccurate, treatment of the war itself. The best recent summary of the campaign is by T.C.W. Blanning.⁷ But again, the work deals with Joseph's reign as a whole and the military operations of 1788 are limited to only a few pages.

Thus Joseph's campaign of 1788 against the Ottomans constitutes a gap in modern historical literature. Not only is there a curious lack of printed material on the subject but what does exist is either superficial or inaccurate. As commander-in-chief of the Habsburg forces during the campaign, Joseph has been judged without being given a fair trial.

Apart from T.C.W. Blanning,⁸ most scholars see the campaign of 1788 as a

⁵ In the *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. LIV, No. 4, October 1976, pp. 538-556.

⁶ in the *Austrian History Yearbook*. vols. 19-20, 1983-1984, pp. 15-31.

⁷ T.C.W. Blanning, *Joseph II*. London: Longman, 1994, pp. 176-180.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

complete failure,⁹ caused mostly by the incompetence of Joseph II. Karl Roider has been particularly critical, arguing that,

Despite ill health, lack of enthusiasm and mediocre military ability, Joseph placed himself in command, hoping that the genius of his chief adviser, Field Marshal Lacy, would compensate for his own deficiencies.¹⁰

This view contrasts sharply with the one offered by Joseph's biographer, Derek Beales. Basing himself on Joseph's record as commander-in-chief of the Habsburg troops in the War of Bavarian Succession against Prussia in 1778-1779, Beales argues that, although no genius, he appears to have been an effective commander.¹¹ However, since Roider fails to support his negative assessment of Joseph with specific evidence and since Beales has not yet written on the war against the Ottomans, we must still grapple with a number of unanswered questions: Was the campaign, in fact, as catastrophic as many historians have led us to believe? If one assumes that the campaign was a failure, was it due to misguided strategy on the part of Joseph and his military advisers, which supposedly called for 'offensives of five separate armies from the Adriatic to Galicia'?¹² If so, was Joseph's lack of military ability the principal cause or have previous studies failed to take into account the complexities of the Austro-Russian alliance and the actions of the Ottomans from Joseph's point of view?

⁹ This was Paul Mitrofanov's conclusion: 'Der Feldzug von Jahre 1788 war vollständig verunglückt.' in *Joseph II. Seine politische und kulturelle Tätigkeit*. p. 193.

¹⁰ See Roider, 'Kaunitz, Joseph II and the Turkish War'. p. 547.

¹¹ Beales, *op. cit.*, pp. 415-416.

¹² Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question*. p. 180.

Since war is an interface, a definitive study of the campaign of 1788 is impossible without access to the archives of all three belligerents, namely the Austrians, Russians and Ottomans. But the aim here is more modest: to give a critical account of the military operations of the campaign of 1788 from the perspective of Joseph II, the commander-in-chief of the Habsburg army.

That so little should have been written on the war in general and the campaign of 1788 in particular is surprising when one considers the volume of primary published sources. Selections of Joseph's correspondence have been edited by Alfred Ritter von Arneth, including *Joseph II und Katherina von Russland, Ihr Briefwechsel* (Osnabrück, 1973) and, more importantly, *Joseph II und Leopold von Toscana, Ihr Briefwechsel, vol. II, 1785-1790* (Vienna, 1872).¹³ The latter work contains a description of the campaign of 1788 by Joseph himself.¹⁴ Although it was written near the end of the campaign - and thus may have allowed Joseph to embellish the story somewhat - and though it contains some minor inaccuracies, it corresponds very closely with original sources found in the *Kriegsarchiv* (War Archives) in Vienna. Yet few historians have used it.¹⁵ Also of some value are *Correspondance secrète du Comte de Mercy-Argenteau avec l'Empereur Joseph II et le Prince de Kaunitz* (Paris, 1891) edited by Arneth and Jules Flammermont

¹³ Henceforth referred to as Arneth, *JuL.* II.

¹⁴ Entitled 'M. L'Empereur Joseph sur la campagne de l'année 1788', it is written in French and is found on pages 325-354.

¹⁵ Joseph's description is mentioned in Paul Bernard's article 'Austria's Last Turkish War'. But several chronological errors - that the Ottoman breakthrough occurred in May and not August, that the Ottomans retreated in August and not October - suggest that Bernard did not rely on Joseph's account.

and *Joseph II und Graf Ludwig Cobenzl: Ihr Briefwechsel*, vol. II, 1785-1790 edited by Adolf Beer and Joseph Ritter von Fielder (Vienna, 1901).

For locating unpublished primary sources, I have used Ludwig Bittner's index entitled *Inventare des Wiener Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv* (5 vols., Vienna, 1939-1940) and the *Inventare Österreichischer Archive* (published by the Austrian State Archives, Vienna, 1953). The most important collections of primary sources for this study have been the *Türkenkrieg - Hauptarmee - Alte Feldakten* (reports from the field, fond # 301-304) and the archives of Joseph's mentor in military affairs and chief of staff in the campaign of 1788, Field Marshal Moritz Graf Lacy (*KLA 194-205*). Both of these are found in the *Kriegsarchiv*. For Joseph's unpublished private correspondence, the *Familienarchiv* in the *Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv*, also found in the Austrian capital, have been consulted. There is also a small but valuable collection of Joseph's holograph letters written to one of his generals, Graf d'Aspremont, between the months of May-August 1788¹⁶ in the McLennan Rare Books Department at McGill University.¹⁷ These were particularly helpful in that d'Aspremont served in the Banat of Timișoara, which was the scene of pivotal developments in August 1788.¹⁸

¹⁶ The letters bear the call number *MS 763*.

¹⁷ Henceforth referred to as 'MUMRBD'.

¹⁸ They also helped solve a controversy over the authorship of a series of letters found in the Lacy Archives in the *Kriegsarchiv*, in Vienna. Since they were found in the Field Marshal's papers and were unsigned, it was only logical to presume that Lacy was the author. Yet their content and tone raised suspicions that they might be the work of Joseph himself. This doubt was eventually confirmed when two of the letters to d'Aspremont were found to be exact copies of the originals from McGill University. The letters from the Lacy Archives, it was deduced, must be drafts of Joseph's correspondence with his generals which were passed on to Lacy.

Of the three chapters of this thesis, the first deals with the antecedents of the war, from the origins of the alliance between Joseph II and Catherine II of Russia in June-July 1780, until the end of January 1788. The two subsequent chapters provide a narrative of events of the campaign itself reconstructed from the original record. Chapter two begins with the Austrian declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire of 9 February 1788 and runs until the end of July, while chapter three begins with the turning point of the campaign, the Ottoman breakthrough into the Banat on 7 August 1788, and ends with the Russian capture of the city of Ochakov on 17 December 1788.

As a point of departure, it is necessary that we determine why Joseph decided to enter the conflict in the first place. Was the *casus belli* Joseph's desire to acquire territory from the tottering Ottoman Empire, as some scholars have argued,¹⁹ or did he enter the conflict because of other considerations? In other words, before studying the operational aspects, we must try to establish what his aims were.

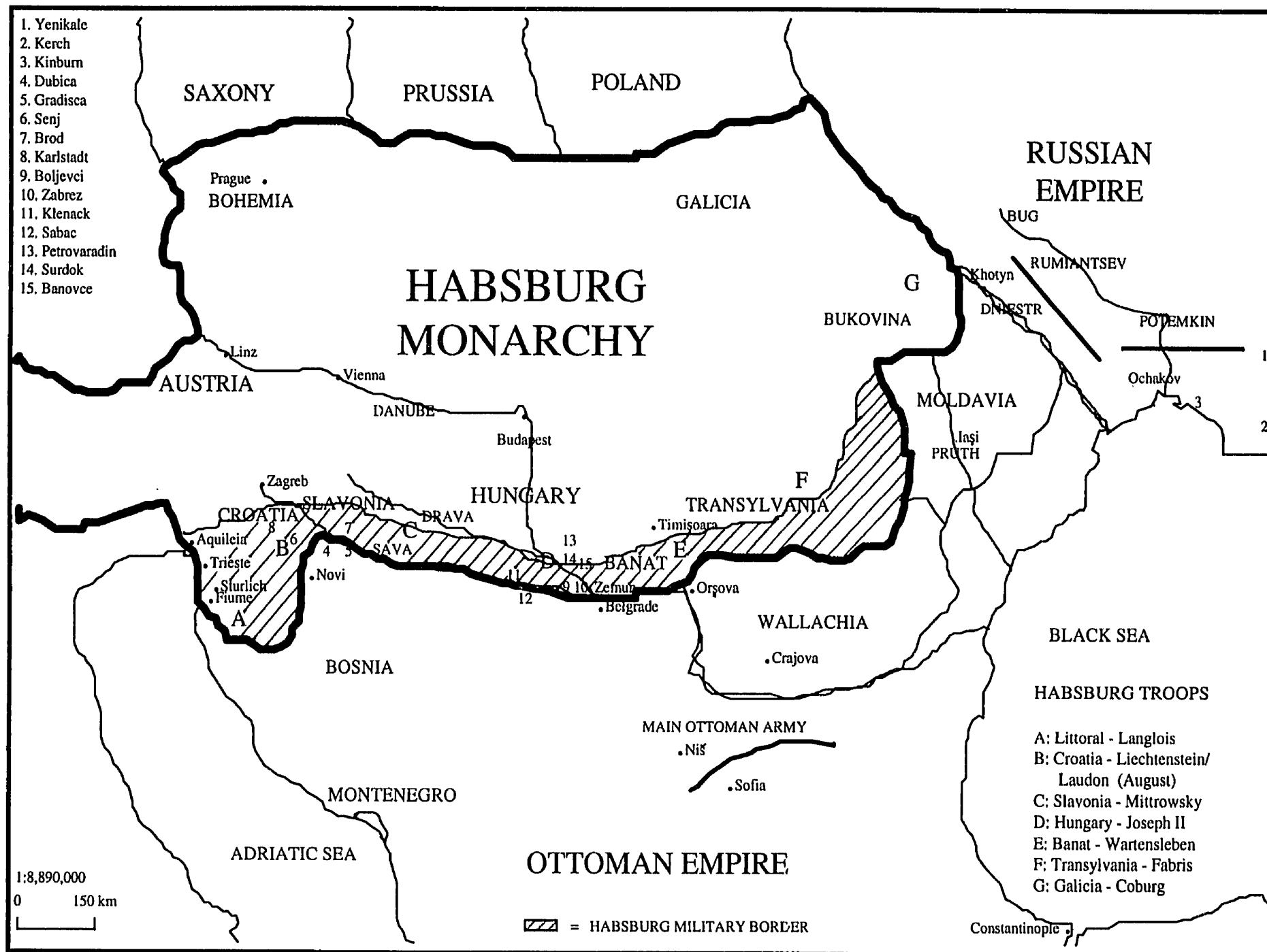
¹⁹ See Coxe, *op. cit.*, p. 513, Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

CHAPTER I

THE ROAD TO WAR

On 17 August 1787 the Porte declared war on Russia in its customary fashion, by imprisoning the Russian ambassador Bulgakov in the castle of Seven Towers in Constantinople. During the summer of 1787, while tension mounted between the Russians and Turks, Joseph II had been troubled by a developing crisis in the Austrian Netherlands. The incipient uprising was a reaction to political and administrative reforms which the Emperor had introduced there in January 1787 and which were seen as a threat to the legislative powers of the estates. Although tempers had cooled somewhat by late August, the situation was still volatile, as neither Joseph nor his recalcitrant Belgian subjects appeared ready to back down. When news of the Sultan's belligerent action finally reached him on 30 August, he shared his displeasure with his brother Leopold:

THE THEATRE OF WAR - JUNE 1788



The Ottoman declaration of war, despite all the efforts of my ambassador and the ambassador of France [to dissuade them], forces me to enter the conflict, since they are attacking Russia. Having just repaired some of the damage in the Netherlands I now find myself in a completely different set of troubles, having to wage war in that damned region [the Balkans]... facing disease, pestilence and famine, and with the prospect of little gain.¹

The reason for Joseph's commitment to Russia, and hence the campaign of 1788, date back to 1780 when Joseph, still co-regent to his mother, Empress Maria Theresa, first met Catherine II.²

Joseph II arrived in St Petersburg on 28 June 1780 with the intention of laying the basis of an Austro-Russian rapprochement.³ This was a key component of his plan to contain Prussia, which he, his mother and Kaunitz - the Austrian chancellor of state - still considered as the Monarchy's most dangerous threat. Indeed, Maria Theresa's foreign policy had been dictated by this fear since her accession to the throne. Frederick II had captured Silesia in 1740, had resisted Austria's attempt to regain it in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) and had prevented the Habsburgs from taking Bavaria by drawing them into the War of Bavarian Succession (1778-1779). As he began to assume greater control of the Austrian State from his ailing mother, especially as concerned foreign policy, Joseph realized that the security of his empire depended heavily on his ability to break the Prusso-Russian defensive alliance which was first

¹ J. to Leopold, 30 Aug. 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 115.

² See Karl Roeder, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*. and Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981 and 'The Secret Austro-Russian Treaty of 1781'. in *Slavonic and East European Review*, XXXVIII, No. 90, pp. 114-145.

³ de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*. pp. 431-438.

signed in 1764. His visit to the Russian capital was a move towards this. Joseph stayed until 18 July and met frequently with the Empress. His biographer called the trip 'the first step of Joseph's diplomatic revolution.'⁴

With the death of Maria Theresa on 29 November 1780 Joseph finally became sole ruler of the Habsburg Monarchy. He immediately tried to cement the friendly bond which he had formed with Catherine II only five months earlier. True to his habit, he moved quickly. In an exchange of letters dated 21-24 May 1781, he and Catherine signed a secret treaty of alliance, which was of a defensive nature.⁵ In the first letter, Joseph promised to come to Russia's assistance with 10,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry, if she were attacked by a third party anywhere but in Asia.⁶ Catherine agreed to assist her Austrian ally under the same conditions with the same number of troops, except if the attack came in Italy.⁷ In the second letter, which dealt specifically with the Ottoman Empire, each party guaranteed the other's possessions which had been taken from the Porte. Furthermore, if either power were attacked by the Sultan's army, its ally would declare war on the Ottomans three months after invoking the agreement and commit a military force equal to its own.⁸

⁴ Beales, *op. cit.*, p. 438. Isabel de Madariaga called Joseph's visit an 'outstanding success' in *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*. p. 384.

⁵ The letters are found in in Arneth, *Joseph II und Katharina von Russland, Ihr Briefwechsel*. Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1973, pp. 72-90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁸ For Joseph's pledge see *Ibid.*, pp. 78-81, for Catherine II see pp. 87-90.

Russia's motive was southward expansion of her influence and sea power, Catherine's so-called 'Greek Project', which aimed to recreate a Byzantine Empire with her grandson Constantine as the new emperor and to give Russia control of the Straits.⁹ But what did Joseph hope to gain from the deal? Did he enter into an alliance with Russia hoping to expel the Ottomans from Europe? Did he really see a war against the Porte, as some historians have argued, as an easy way to satisfy his need for aggrandizement?¹⁰

One of his letters to the Prince de Ligne from November 1787 suggests that Joseph intended to help the Russians take Constantinople:

... At the end of the first campaign we would control the southern bank of the Danube. We could then begin the second campaign by besieging Vidin and advancing along the road to Constantinople. Meanwhile the Russians would cross the Danube at Galati and together we could travel downriver and enter the Black Sea. From there, we could storm Constantinople and finish the job.¹¹

But he then adds, that he has merely expressed 'all his dreams'.¹² However, there is no doubt that he hoped for territorial gain from the arrangement. As he wrote to the Austrian ambassador at Versailles, Comte Mercy-D'Argenteau:

I would be content with the borders of the treaty of Passarowitz [i.e. the Banat of Timișoara, northern Serbia including Belgrade and part of Wallachia], with the addition of all of Bosnia and the city of Khotyn which

⁹ For Catherine's view, see Isabel de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, pp. 383-84, pp. 388-389.

¹⁰ Paul Bernard has written that the Greek Project suited Joseph's 'acquisitive instincts'. See 'Austria's Last Turkish War', p. 17.

¹¹ J. to Prince de Ligne, 23 Nov. 1787. KA, *KLA 191, Folio 45*.

¹² 'Toutes mes rêveries'. Ibid.

would help me protect my territory in Galicia. As you can see, my aim is not to destroy the Ottoman Empire nor to advance to Constantinople [but rather] to recover what was lost [to the Ottomans] at the Peace of Belgrade.¹³

Yet Joseph was ambivalent, as his dreams of aggrandizement were tempered by caution. He shared Kaunitz's view that, even though the Turkish Empire was in a state of decline, he still preferred it to Russia as a neighbour.¹⁴ In the end, he was forced into war by another of Kaunitz's arguments: Joseph had to honour his commitment to his ally otherwise Catherine II might renege on her pledge to assist the Austrians in the event of an attack by Prussia, the most serious threat to the security of the Monarchy. Russian assistance was necessary since its nominal ally, France, struggling with internal difficulties, could no longer be counted upon to help Austria against Prussia. Besides, Austria could hardly afford to let Russia expand too far south into the Balkans at Ottoman expense, because it would threaten its own position there.¹⁵

¹³ In that treaty, signed on 18 September 1739, the Sultan had recovered the lands which he had lost to Austria at the Treaty of Passarowitz, except for the Banat. J. to Mercy-D'Argenteau, 7 Jan. 1788. in Alfred von Arneth and Jules Flammermont, ed. *Correspondance Secrète du Comte Mercy-Argenteau avec l'Empereur Joseph II et le Prince de Kaunitz*. vol. II. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1891, p. 152.

¹⁴ Beales, *op. cit.*, p. 433. After the outbreak of war, Kaunitz expressed it thus: '... We would have preferred that the Porte and Russia could have maintained the peace, not only for the immediate future but perhaps even forever. Neighbours such as the Turks are, without a doubt, preferable to neighbours who are more enlightened, and more formidable.' Kaunitz to Mercy-Argenteau, 6 Oct. 1787. Beer and Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁵ In the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardzhi (1774), the Russians had acquired large tracts from the Ottomans on the northern shore of the Black Sea, including the ports of Kerch, Kinburn and Yenikale and the coast between the Bug and the Dniepr. In 1783 Catherine had annexed the Crimea to her lands. See de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

Thus geopolitical considerations and the fear of facing Prussia single-handedly were the key factors in Joseph's decision to enter the war alongside Russia against the Porte. Nevertheless, Joseph believed that the cost of the campaign need not be very great. If the Russians took most of the strain of the Ottoman forces it might then be possible to make gains. His main objective was to be Belgrade.

* * * * *

The Ottoman pre-emptive strike had caught Catherine II's military supremo, Field Marshal Potemkin, off balance. The Russians' main concern was whether a major Turkish offensive could be withstood before the deployment of the Yekaterinoslav army, under Potemkin, was complete. In the event, the Russians repulsed an assault on the port of Kinburn on the Black Sea on 21 September (2 October) 1787, but otherwise there was little movement. In fact it was the weather, which was to prove an important factor in the war, which caused the most damage to the Russians. In October, a fierce storm damaged most of their Black Sea fleet as it sailed out of Sebastopol.¹⁶

Joseph's forces were not yet engaged in the autumn of 1787. Although he was committed by the secret treaty of 1781 with Russia to declare war on any power within three months of the agreement being invoked, the Emperor had waited. Joseph could

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 397.

have entered the war in November 1787 and still respected his agreement, but this was too late in the season for a proper campaign. It would also have required him to position a greater number of troops along the military frontier during the worst season of the year and would reduce their capacity for an offensive that could not be mounted before the spring. Throughout the winter he kept the Turks wondering if he would enter the fray, while he sought assurances from his ally that, if ever the Prussian king, Frederick William II, tried to take advantage of Austro-Russian involvement against the Ottomans by acquiring territory in Poland or Bohemia, Russia would join the Habsburg army in driving back his forces.¹⁷

Meanwhile, Joseph prepared his army for what he hoped would be a quick and decisive campaign. His aims, as expressed earlier to Mercy-Argenteau, were to take Belgrade and to occupy Bosnia.¹⁸ An army corps, based at Zemun, was to take the fortress of Šabac and then move down the Sava to install its pontoon bridges. Belgrade itself would be stormed as soon as possible - before the spring floods began and before the main Ottoman army could reach the area. The assault would be launched from the south, with the Habsburg forces crossing the Sava over two bridges at Zabrez, and marching to Belgrade in three days.¹⁹ It was planned to erect another bridge across the Danube between Pancevo and Crvenka, but this may only have been an attempt to divert Ottoman troops from the area near Zabrez.

¹⁷ J. to Ludwig Cobenzl, 30 Aug. 1787. in Beer and Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹⁸ J. to Prince de Ligne, no date, but probably late November 1787, in KA, *KLA*, 191, *Folio* 45.

¹⁹ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

Although Karl A. Roeder Jr. has argued that, 'the Habsburg plans called for offensives from the Adriatic to Galicia',²⁰ the disposition of the other army groups were initially defensive, with the exception of Prince Liechtenstein's corps in Croatia. Prince Josias Coburg was based in Galicia and ordered to cover Khotyn. If joined by the Russians, he was to advance towards this city and hopefully divert a portion of the Ottoman army from advancing against Joseph. In Transylvania, General Fabris was charged with occupying the approaches to the Carpathians from the south. In the Banat, General Wartensleben was to guard against incursions from Wallachia, posting troops along the Danube from Orșova to Pancevo to prevent enemy landings and holding a reserve of seven battalions and two cavalry regiments at Bela Crkva. General Mitrowsky was to cover Slavonia, while General Langlois, based at Trieste, defended the Adriatic coast, from Aquilea to Senj.²¹

Covert operations were also planned. The populations of Bosnia would be encouraged to revolt, and both the Basha of Scutari and the Prince-Bishop of Montenegro would be bribed to defect from their allegiance to the Ottomans. This would remove a potential threat to the Habsburg flank and deprive the Ottoman army of recruits which had traditionally been among its best soldiers. The most audacious operation, however, was a surprise attack on Belgrade itself in December 1787. Joseph hoped it might capture the city without the considerable expenditure of men and material which a siege would require.

²⁰ In *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*. p. 180.

²¹ J. to Leopold, 14 June 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 182.

The plan, which called for a night assault on the great fortress, had been worked on for five years. Its success depended, in part, on the collaboration of two Muslim spies and one Habsburg officer in disguise operating within the city's walls. They were to be responsible for opening two gates through which a strike force of twelve Hungarian infantry battalions would enter. The attack was to be carried out on the night of 2 to 3 December 1787. The troops under the command of Generals Alvinzy and Gemmingen set out from Banovce, about ten kilometers upstream from Belgrade by water. However, a thick fog prevented the crews from arriving at the point of assembly on time and several boats eventually ended up on the wrong shore. When they realized that something had gone wrong, the three spies within the city fled.²² The plan had failed. According to Joseph, 'a lack of decisiveness on the part of the commanders' may also have been a factor.²³ In spite of this, a second attempt was planned and under the same commanders.

This time, eleven battalions would land on the right bank of the Danube and advance in three columns towards Belgrade starting at 4 a.m. on 17 January 1788. Yet Joseph was skeptical of its chances²⁴ and events were to justify this. Bad weather appears to have foiled the operation once more. 'We had planned a new operation [for

²² J. to Leopold, 13 Dec. 1787. Arneth, *JuL.* II, pp. 148-149.

²³ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

²⁴ Three days after the fact, unaware of what had transpired, he wrote: 'I hope, more than anyone, that the storming of Belgrade will succeed. However, after everything that has occurred, I have serious doubts [about the chances of success]. I would even consider it as a blessing, if I learned that nothing had been undertaken. J. to General Kinsky, 20 Jan. 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 301, I, Folio 6.*

the taking] of Belgrade,' Joseph wrote, 'but, although the troops were ready, a strong wind prevented them from setting off.'²⁵ His frustration was difficult to mask. To Leopold he admitted that the news was 'maddening' and one of his letters even suggests that he had difficulty believing that a well-planned undertaking could be dogged by such ill-fortune:

What else can I say, other than it is particularly unfortunate. I had initiated this plan several years ago and had been so careful in its preparation. After hesitating for four months I had finally given the order to carry it out.... In the beginning, it seemed assured of success. [But in the end] two nights were selected during which, according to reports, physical impossibilities prevented its execution.²⁶

Having failed to achieve his goal by two surprise assaults, it was time to resort to more traditional methods.

²⁵ J. to Leopold, 24 Jan. 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 59.

²⁶ 'Was kann Ich anders darauf sagen, als dass es besonders unglücklich ist, dass nachdem Ich diese Unternehmung Jahre her schon eingeleitet, deren Richtigkeit so einleuchtend gemacht, endliche ausführen befohlen und betreiben habe, man seit schier vier Monaten damit immer gezaudert und am Ende zu dieser Unternehmung, welche Anfangs fast unfehlbar war, zwei Nächte gewählt hat, in welchen, wie man berichtet, physische Unmöglichkeiten sich dargestellt haben, so die Ausführung nicht gestatteten.' J. to General Kinsky, 23 Jan. 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee*, 301, I, *Folio* 7.

C H A P T E R I I

THE AUSTRIANS ENTER THE FRAY

On 9 February 1788 the Austrian declaration of war was finally delivered to the Sultan by the Monarchy's ambassador in Constantinople, Baron Herbert. The Porte's declaration of war on Russia, Joseph claimed, forced him to respect his treaty of alliance with Catherine II, which stipulated that he must wage war against the belligerent power with 'forces equal to those employed by Her Majesty [Catherine].'¹

The success of the campaign, according to Joseph, depended on beginning the operations as early as possible.² His instructions to the commander of the advanced guard in Hungary, General Kinsky, accorded with this. Everything must be in place by

¹ See Arneth, *Joseph II und Katharina von Russland, Ihr Briefwechsel*. p. 80.

² J. to Leopold, 17 Jan. 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 158.

early April; magazines must be filled, the construction of causeways,³ including the main one at Beschania and smaller ones at Opava and Perlaswaros, should be completed by employing every possible effort; and the roads should be properly prepared and communication systems organized.⁴ But food soon proved a problem when a shortage of flour was reported. Joseph raised the issue in a letter to Count Zichy, the Hungarian magnate responsible for food supplies,⁵ after which the situation seems to have improved somewhat.

The Austrian army mobilized in early March 1788, with Joseph II as commander-in-chief and Field Marshal Lacy as his chief of staff. They confronted the formidable logistical requirements of supplying the largest Habsburg force to have ever entered the field. At the height of the campaign, it numbered 294,173 men and 64,914 horses,⁶ requiring 1,230,004 *zentner*⁷ of flour, 4,530,384 *metzen* of fodder and 307,891 hundredweight of straw for the entire campaign.⁸ The magazines situated at Timișoara,

³ Joseph uses invariably the French word 'digue' and the German 'Damm'. Given their emplacements, I have inferred that the word 'causeway' was the convenient translation.

⁴ J. to General Kinsky, 20 Jan. 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 301, I, Folio 6*.

⁵ J. to General Kinsky, 20/31 Jan. 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 301, I, Folios 4¼, 9*.

⁶ KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 301, I*.

⁷ A 'Zentner' was equivalent to 100 Vienna pounds, a 'Metze' to 61,487 l. See P.G.M. Dickson, *Finance and Government under Maria Theresia, 1740-1780*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 371.

⁸ KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, VII, 1246*.

Petrovaradin, Osijek and Brod contained six months of supplies; that at Gradisca three, and Karlstadt one.⁹ Although there was now an ample store of flour, several bad harvests had created a scarcity of oats, which made feed for the horses particularly costly.¹⁰

Joseph could draw on what was one of the largest artillery parks in Europe.¹¹ There were 898 field guns: of which 542 were three-pounders, 180 six-pounders, 58 twelve-pounders and 8 eighteen-pounders, a further 78 seven-pound and 8 ten-pound howitzers to be deployed with infantry and 16 guns and eight howitzers to be used with cavalry.¹²

The heavy (i.e. siege) artillery comprised 252 pieces: 40 twenty-four-pounders, 48 eighteen- and 40 twelve-pounders; 32 ten-pound howitzers; 4 hundred-, 24 sixty-, 26 thirty- and 6 ten-pound mortars; 20 ten- and 12 six-pound catapults, in addition to 176 700 cannonballs and 10,000 hundredweight of powder.¹³

There were 13,976 oxen¹⁴ for overland haulage and flotillas on the Sava and

⁹ Oskar Criste, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

¹⁰ J. to Leopold, 29 Nov. 1787. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 144.

¹¹ See Christopher Duffy, *The Army of Maria Theresa. The Armed Forces of Imperial Austria, 1740-1780*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 105.

¹² Criste, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

¹⁴ KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 301, I.*

Danube comprising 31 caiques, several cannon boats and a 42-gun frigate.¹⁵ In the Adriatic, the Austrians were to rely on the Russian Baltic fleet, which was supposed to arrive in the Mediterranean in the summer of 1788.

The Habsburg force was large but it was dispersed over a wide front. As Joseph subsequently explained, there was really no alternative:

To leave half of [my] border undefended for the sake of concentrating our forces for an advance into enemy territory would have meant losing one hundred to gain five. At the same time, we would have gone without supplies and transportation, for everything that we would have abandoned would have been pillaged, while Bosnia and Servia offered nothing which could have compensated us for the losses which we would have suffered.¹⁶

The complement of Habsburg troops amounted to 294,133 men and was divided into seven army corps, as shown in Table 1.0.

Though often criticized for his lack of ability as a military man,¹⁷ Joseph himself was not without experience. He had been encouraged to show an interest in the army from an early age and, after 1765, when he became co-regent to Maria Theresa, he had been allocated responsibility for military affairs.¹⁸ In addition to establishing

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 270. It is not certain if these were able to meet the requirements of the army. In June, the need to acquire a new cannon boat became a matter of the first priority. On the 28th of that month, Joseph authorized the immediate purchase of the 'Lancia Cannoniera' from the Nocetti shipyards. J. to Lacy, 28 June 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee*, 302, VI, Folio 9¼.

¹⁶ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

¹⁷ Of Joseph's talents as a commander, de Madariaga wrote that 'he was no Frederick II' in *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great.*, p. 403. Roeder argues that by 1788, 'Joseph had lost much of his confidence in military matters as well ...'. See *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*, p. 181.

¹⁸ Beales, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

TABLE 1.0
COMPLEMENT OF HABSBURG TROOPS
1 JUNE 1788

| | INFANTRY BATTALIONS | CAVALRY DIVISIONS | JÄGER | FREIKORPS | SHARP- SHOOTERS | TOTAL TROOPS ¹ |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| HUNGARY JOSEPH II | 47 | 31 | 390 | 0 | 520 | 96,174 |
| GALICIA COBURG | 12 | 18 | 120 | 0 | 0 | 29,518 |
| TRANSYL- VANIA FABRIS | 10 | 11 | 90 | 0 | 0 | 32,171 |
| BANAT OF TIMIȘOARA WARTENS- LEBEN | 20 | 12 | 0 | 235 | 0 | 39,542 |
| SLAVONIA MITTROW- SKY | 11 | 4 | 75 | 0 | 0 | 27,913 |
| CROATIA LIECHTEN- STEIN | 28 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 62,566 |
| LITTORAL LANGLOIS | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6,249 |
| TOTAL | 133 | 84 | 675 | 235 | 520 | 294,133 |

¹ Includes artillerymen and engineers.

a more efficient system of conscription, with Lacy's help he had increased the total number of troops and improved the army's training methods.¹⁹ He had served as the supreme commander of the Habsburg forces against Prussia in 1778, and though in practice he had been heavily dependent on his mentor Lacy, Joseph does seem to have played a prominent role in the successful defense of Bohemia.²⁰

Although hardly a professional general, his active participation in the War of Bavarian Succession had at least given Joseph an understanding of the cost and demands of war:

War is a horrible thing - the ravaging of fields and villages, the lamentations of the poor peasants, in short the ruin of so many innocent people, the ferment one is caught up in day and night... The importance of everything, however small, because it may turn out to be of the greatest consequence, the resulting anxiety to know whether one's judgement has been right - this makes it a dog's life. But you gradually get used to it.²¹

Furthermore, although there is evidence to suggest that he may have been overconfident at the outset of this Turkish war,²² he fully understood what Clausewitz called the 'uncertainty' of war, especially when the theatre of operations was an area that presented the invader with enormous natural obstacles. Besides, as the head of state,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 222.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 415-416.

²¹ J. to Leopold, 18 July 1778. Arneth, *MuJ.* II, pp. 351-352.

²² At least one passage from his correspondence with the Prince de Ligne indicates that he may have underestimated the Ottoman military: '[Of a potential Russian assault on the fortress of Ochakov in December 1787] The idea of trying to take Ochakov by surprise in the winter is plausible since everything is possible with the negligence and ineptitude of the Turks.' J. to Prince de Ligne, 8 Dec. 1787. KA, *KLA* 192, *Folio* 13.

Joseph had constantly to weigh the political objectives of the campaign against the cost of maintaining his army in the field, and the effects it would have on the difficulties which he was facing internally, especially in Hungary²³, which was adjacent to the scene of operations, and in the Austrian Netherlands, where the population was restless. A quick and successful war might bolster his authority over the Belgians and Hungarians, but he must have been well aware that a long and costly conflict would not only drain the central treasury but also further undermine his prestige in those countries.

The opening skirmishes between Joseph's advanced corps in Croatia and the enemy in early February were disappointing. Habsburg troops took the castle of Dreshnies,²⁴ but an attempt on Gradisca was unsuccessful. A platoon commanded by Lieutenant Gnosdanovich crossed the Sava but turned back without firing a shot.²⁵ Fruitless operations were undertaken at Sturlich, Novi, Dubica and Semendria in which casualties were sustained.²⁶

On 1 March 1788 Joseph II left Vienna for the front. He went through Trieste, Fiume, Croatia, along the edge of Serbia inspecting his troops and arrived in Petrovaradin, in southern Hungary, on the 25th. By the beginning of April, he had

²³ According to T.C.W. Blanning, several of Joseph's initiatives had antagonized his Magyar subjects. They included: his refusal to be crowned king of Hungary, his imposition of German as the language of the bureaucracy and the reorganization of the kingdom's administration into ten new districts. See Blanning, *Joseph II*. pp. 112-116.

²⁴ J. to General Kinsky, 16 Feb. 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 301, II, Folio 7a*.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

joined the main camp at Zemun, opposite Belgrade,²⁷ where he oversaw the final preparations for the taking of Šabac, a small but key fortress situated on the southern bank of the Sava. So long as it remained under Ottoman control, it hampered the transportation of supplies on the river, especially of timber destined for the causeway at Beschania. In addition, its geographical location blocked an Austrian advance to Belgrade, and threatened the rear of the forces which were to cross the river at Zabrez. And if the Habsburg forces could use it as a base, they could cut the Ottoman supply line between Bosnia and Belgrade.²⁸

Commanded by General Mitrowsky, eight infantry battalions, a unit of hussars, a heavy cavalry regiment and a detachment of engineers were to take the stronghold. They assembled near Klenack, on the northern side of the Sava and on the 21st, crossed the river a few kilometers downstream from Šabac. For the next three days Austrian guns bombarded the fortress, setting most of its buildings on fire; and, on the 24th, the Turkish garrison capitulated. According to the official count, the Habsburg forces lost only six men and eleven wounded, but took 800 prisoners, seventeen cannons and sixteen standards.²⁹

Joseph might have been expected to have followed up immediately by storming Belgrade. The city was poorly supplied, the garrison probably did not exceed 5,000

²⁷ KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee*, 301, II, *Folio ad12*.

²⁸ Report by General Brentano. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee*, 301, II, *Folio 7b*.

²⁹ J. to Leopold, 28 Apr. 1788. Arneth, *JuL*. II, p. 177.

men³⁰ and the morale of the Habsburg troops was riding high on the success of Šabac. Furthermore, Joseph had learned that the Ottoman army commanded by the Grand Vezir, Yusuf Pasha, had only just left Constantinople and that the Serbs were in open revolt and had promised him their support. Nevertheless Joseph decided to wait. He later explained why:

... It was argued that the big causeway at Beschania was not yet complete, that not all the bridges on the Sava and the Danube were finished and that the battalions coming from Austria had not arrived. [Also] the army had not yet practiced the square formation. Thus, the advance had to be postponed.³¹

By 26 May, the preparations had advanced to the point where the siege could be laid. Yet, once again, the Austrians failed to move. This time, Joseph attributed the postponement to Lacy's caution. In a written report, Lacy had compared the situation to that which Prince Eugene had faced in 1717,³² and concluded that the undertaking was too dangerous, more likely to fail than to succeed.³³ In Joseph's words:

³⁰ Report from Major Liedersoron, 19 April 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 301, IV, Folio ad 37*. To justify his decision to delay the siege of Belgrade until the fall, Joseph probably gave an exaggerated estimate of the size of the garrison, when he reported that it consisted of 15,000 men. See J. to Leopold, 13 May 1788. Arneth, *JuL*. II., p. 178.

³¹ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

³² Crossing the Danube near Pancevo in early August 1717, Eugene was eventually caught between the garrison of Belgrade and the Ottoman army under Halil Pasha, which may have numbered 120,000 men. On the morning of 16 August he left a corps of 10,000 to cover Belgrade while he advanced under the cover of a thick fog with 60,000 men towards the main Ottoman force. The Habsburg forces were victorious and the Ottomans fled to Niš. A week later, Eugene and his army entered triumphantly into Belgrade. See Derek McKay, *Prince Eugene of Savoy*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1977, pp. 161-165.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

He compared our forces to those of Prince Eugene, and argued that we could hold a bridge on the Danube, but only very precariously. [Moreover] nothing had been done [to allow passage through] the marshes, while the causeway [at Beschania], which was poorly constructed and angled in the wrong direction, forced us to occupy a larger area of territory than Prince Eugene had, and with fewer men than he had at his disposal. Also, the circumvallation had to be constructed with such care that it would take at least a few weeks before we could consider beginning the siege. Finally, the lateness of the season meant that it was more than probable that the Grand Vezir would come to the garrison's rescue before we had completed it.³⁴

The undertaking, Lacy argued, would be more feasible in the fall. By then, Ochakov would probably have fallen allowing the Russians to advance into Wallachia and Moldavia to meet Coburg, and forcing the Grand Vezir to split his army. In addition, the Turks usually suffered heavily from desertions late in the fighting season. Furthermore, the flooding would have stopped by then. This and the arrival of reinforcements would make a storm much easier.³⁵ Meanwhile the Austrians aimed to weaken the garrison's resolve by cutting off the main line of supply on the Danube. Lacy's arguments received the unanimous support of a council of war and so Joseph postponed the storming of Belgrade.

Lacy's assessment of the situation in late May 1788 accorded with his previous views on the timing of sieges. In 1769 he had written:

Without the most powerful motives you must never undertake a siege in an advanced season, let alone in winter. This is because sickness will carry off too many of your troops, and because the countryside can furnish no fodder. Even the early spring is somewhat inconvenient, owing to the continuing absence of green forage, though you can make up the deficiency

³⁴ Ibid., p. 331.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 332.

by establishing large magazines in the vicinity. The best time is undoubtedly the summer. By the same token, however, this is when it is easiest for the enemy to frustrate your enterprise.³⁶

Since Joseph had so much at risk, it seemed that the storm of Belgrade would not be undertaken unless every circumstance favoured success.

From a letter to the Prince de Ligne in December 1787, it is clear that Joseph had foreseen many of the difficulties which eventually occurred. He had also forecast how he would react if the Russians failed to assist him. In the end, he believed, he would be more at risk than his ally in the upcoming campaign. The Russians, fighting in foreign territory, only had the steppes to lose while he had to protect populated and developed lands against incursions along a border of 620 kilometers which he shared with the Sultan. If the Russian offensive went according to plan, he hoped to make territorial gains at the expense of the Ottomans. But,

... If [the Russians] do not advance in strength towards the Danube and force the Turks to divide their troops, I will stay on the defensive. This will prolong the war and make it very costly, and one could not be held accountable for events which could then occur.³⁷

The main consideration in the decision to delay the storming of Belgrade, therefore, appears to have been Joseph's fear of facing an Ottoman army which, he claimed, may have outnumbered him by a ratio of two to one,³⁸ with the city's garrison at his back

³⁶ Quoted in Christopher Duffy, *Fire and Stone. The Science of Fortress Warfare, 1660-1860*. Vancouver: David and Charles, 1975., p. 90.

³⁷ J. to Prince de Ligne, 8 Dec. 1787. KA, *KLA 191, Folio 13*.

³⁸ Joseph estimated the Ottoman army at 'perhaps 150,000 men'. J. to Leopold, 13 May 1788. Arneth, *JuL*. II, p. 178. The actual size is difficult to establish. De Madariaga writes that Yusuf Pasha, the Grand Vezir, advanced with 70,000 men, but does not give her source for this figure, in de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

and his line of supply dependent on the bridges on the Sava near Zabrez.

Instead, Joseph stayed on the defensive, while trying to delay the advance of the enemy by mounting raids into Serbia to destroy crops they might otherwise feed on. This task was to be carried out by the 'Frei Korps' of Serbian rebels, though some of Joseph's soldiers seem also to have played a part. As early as February, Joseph had instructed General Kinsky to offer a few hundred ducats to anyone who successfully set fire to Turkish magazines along the Danube between Niš and Sofia. Furthermore, Kinsky was authorized to use incendiary material from the artillery magazine but with the provision that 'no one who is on active service should be used to carry out this project'.³⁹ Whether or not these operations were successful, the Turks did experience supply problems. On 19 June Joseph received Turkish dispatches which had been intercepted by troops under the command of General d'Aspremont in Kovin. They contained the report of the Ottoman commander in Palanka who complained that he could not advance to Belgrade because of a lack of supplies. This was blamed on the commander of Morova who had been severely reprimanded for it.⁴⁰

The Ottomans, for their part, contrived to keep the Habsburg army confused and on its toes. They engaged Joseph's troops in minor skirmishes at various positions along the Danube, harried them with cannon fire from Belgrade and by launching sudden sorties from their fortresses. On 22 April Turkish troops landed near the main

³⁹ J. to General Kinsky, 18 Feb. 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 301, II, Folio 40*.

⁴⁰ J. to General d'Aspremont, 20 June 1788. MUMRBD, *MS 763, Letter #5*.

causeway at Beschania. The sector commander, General Staader, sent in the d'Alton infantry regiment with its artillery, preceded by a detachment of Uhlans, against the Ottomans who were hiding in bushes and trenches nearby. But the Uhlans were driven back, and in their retreat collided with the d'Alton regiment. In the ensuing mêlée, the Habsburg troops tried to withdraw hurriedly by the only bridge available to them. The volume of traffic soon broke the guard rails and several men fell into the water, while a Turkish pursuit force killed a number of retreating soldiers and captured four pieces of artillery.⁴¹ Only a counter-attack by a company of the Samuel Gyulay infantry battalion repelled the Turks and prevented further losses. After this costly episode, a small contingent was left to defend the bridges, but work on the causeway ceased.

The Ottomans were equally successful in Croatia where Prince Liechtenstein, besieging Dubica, ordered a poorly-organized storming operation which ended in defeat. An Ottoman cavalry unit soon beat back the advanced Habsburg troops, and was able to evacuate the women and children, since the commanding officer of the Austrian contingent had neglected to surround the fortress. This same *sipahi* detachment, while trying to burn an Austrian bridge on the river Una, defeated a troop of Graeven hussars which had been sent to dislodge it.⁴² Eventually, the Army corps in Croatia abandoned the siege and, despite a reinforcement of eight infantry battalions and a cavalry regiment, attempted no further movements until Liechtenstein's replacement by the celebrated Field Marshal Gideon Laudon in August.

⁴¹ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 330.

All this and the stifling heat could not have helped the morale of the troops; and uncertainty about the enemy's strength and movements only exacerbated the situation. Although Joseph had spies operating within the Ottoman army, he did not trust their reports.⁴³ Before taking a decision, he would sensibly try to confirm their information by his officers in the field. Letters to his generals often concluded with exhortations to establish the strength of any approaching enemy troops and reporting this as quickly as possible to him. Yet a dearth of accurate intelligence persisted throughout the campaign of 1788 and was one of the key causes of Joseph's inaction. With his troops entrenched in Zemun in early June Joseph waited on the actions of his ally and his enemy. He explained his predicament to Leopold on 17 June:

I have no other choice at the moment but to wait quietly and see what the Grand Vezir will do. Will he divide his forces or not? Where will he go?... Will the Russians act and then what will occur?... Will [the Grand Vezir] march on me here or in the Banat? Will he attack or will he give me an opportunity to attack him? Finally, we must consider if it will be easier to lay siege to Belgrade and Orşova in the fall, when the Turkish armies can no longer wage war.⁴⁴

He confessed to his ambassador in St Petersburg, Ludwig Cobenzl, that the decision to put off the storming of Belgrade had taken 'a great rational effort' on his part, but added, 'everyone agreed that it was the only choice available to us for the moment'.⁴⁵

At the same time, Joseph also admitted that a second campaign would be

⁴³ In a letter to General Kinsky he wrote: '... I am sending you the list of spies which I have received from General Alvinzy. Although I do not trust these people very much, you will nevertheless pay them from the war treasury.' J. to Kinsky, 18 Feb. 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee*, 301, II, *Folio* 40.

⁴⁴ J. to Leopold, 14 June 1788. Arneth, *JuL.*, II. p. 183.

⁴⁵ J. to Ludwig Cobenzl, 17 June 1788. Beer and Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

necessary since, 'in this one, it will not be possible to force the Turks into accepting a fair and honorable peace.'⁴⁶ Kaunitz shared this view and added that, 'if it were possible, which is not the case at present, I would bring the war to an end sooner rather than later.'⁴⁷ However, despite being frustrated with the way in which the campaign was unfolding, Joseph did not, at this time, consider the possibility of coming to terms with the Ottomans. Instead, he sought to adapt his strategy to the evolving circumstances.

The failure to take Belgrade in April combined with the movement of the main Ottoman army to Sofia had changed the strategic imperative. An advance by Rumiantsev into Moldavia had become of prime importance. 'If Khotyn was taken,' Joseph believed, 'Prince Coburg and the Russian field marshal could advance towards the Danube, where they would be joined by the Habsburg troops of Transylvania and the Banat.' He then added:

This would force the Grand Vezir to divide his army and it would then be my responsibility to give battle to the first Turkish unit that I shall encounter and if I am successful, I shall then be in a position to begin the siege of Belgrade immediately.'⁴⁸

However, a month passed, and by mid-July, little had changed. Joseph now reviewed the way he could meet his two principal objectives: to protect the Banat and Transylvania against a possible Turkish attack and to strengthen his position for the assault of Belgrade in September.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 273-274.

⁴⁷ Kaunitz to Mercy-Argenteau, 29 June 1788. in Arneth and Flammermont, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-180.

⁴⁸ J. to Ludwig Cobenzl, 17 June 1788. in Beer and Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

One plan involved sending reinforcements to the Banat and Transylvania while Joseph's army waited patiently in Zemun until the early fall, when the withdrawal of the main Turkish army to winter quarters would hopefully facilitate the storming of Belgrade. Eight infantry battalions and two cavalry regiments were sent to Wartensleben in Mehadia. Half of these forces - four infantry battalions and one cavalry regiment - were eventually to be sent to Hateg to protect the strategic point between the two provinces.

Joseph also ordered Lacy to prepare a contingency plan with which to respond to a possible Turkish invasion in the Banat.⁴⁹ According to Lacy's proposal, submitted on 22 July, twenty-two infantry battalions and fifteen cavalry divisions would stay in Zemun under the command of General Gemmingen. The main army, twenty-five infantry battalions and nineteen cavalry divisions strong, would march into the Banat under Joseph's command. The infantry would cross the Danube on the second day at Surdok, rest on the third and sixth days of marching and arrive in Bela Crkva on the eighth day. The cavalry, starting out from Banovce, would make the trip in five days. Joseph approved the plan but, out of concern for the health of his men, added: 'If the current heat persists the marching period will be lengthened and the troops will only be able to march from seven in the evening until midnight.'⁵⁰

A less probable course of action depended largely on the collaboration of the Russians. If, after taking Khotyn, Rumiantsev and Prince Coburg were to advance deep

⁴⁹ KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 303, VII, Folio 6½*.

⁵⁰ J.'s margin notes. Ibid.

into Moldavia and Wallachia - the former towards Bucarest and the latter towards Craiova - General Fabris could send one part of his corps into Wallachia and the other into the Banat to cover the Mehadia valley. This would allow Wartensleben and his men to cross the Danube and storm Semendria, which would facilitate the assault on Belgrade.⁵¹

However, by the end of July, the collaboration of the Russians was no longer a possibility. In fact, Rumiantsev's assistance had always been uncertain. In May he had revealed to Joseph's envoy, Baron Herbert, that he had firm orders to remain between the Bug and Dniestr rivers and protect the right flank of Potemkin's corps in Ochakov.⁵² Count Ostermann, Catherine's vice-chancellor, appears to have attempted to reassure Joseph's ambassador in St Petersburg, Ludwig Cobenzl, that, because of the success of the Austrian advance into Moldavia, Rumiantsev would operate between the Dniestr and the Pruth, allowing General Saltikov to assist Coburg.⁵³ In the end, the Russian field marshal stayed put,⁵⁴ since the siege of Ochakov was proceeding slowly because of supply problems.

⁵¹ Joseph's margin notes to a report written by Lacy. KA, *AFA 1788*, *Hauptarmee*, 303, VII, *Folio* 6¼.

⁵² '[From Parafievka]... Prince Coburg has sent me to Count Rumiantsev to persuade him to come to his assistance. But [Rumiantsev] says he has strict orders to keep his army between the Bug and the Dniestr so as to cover Potemkin's army at Ochakov. He can, therefore, provide no succour to Coburg.' Herbert to Cobenzl, 4 May 1788. HHStA, *Türkei - Diplomatische Akten*, 19, *Cobenzl - Herbert, 1785-1793*.

⁵³ Ludwig Cobenzl to J., 24 May 1788. Beer and Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁵⁴ Of Rumiantsev's possible motives for holding back his troops, de Madariaga has suggested that he 'distrusted' Coburg in *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, p. 403.

Then, news came that the Swedes had declared war on Russia and attacked the Russian fort of Nyslott in Finland on 3 July.⁵⁵ Although it is difficult to determine just how many troops were taken from the southern front to help defend against a possible attack on St Petersburg, the Swedish threat was to have immediate consequences to the Habsburg effort in Moldavia. In mid-July, Coburg had briefly occupied Iași, but was forced to abandon it when faced with the approach of a force of Bessarabian Tatars.⁵⁶ Had he enjoyed Russian support, he might have been able to hold the city. Insufficient Russian assistance also prevented further attempts on Khotyn.

By late July, when the Turks were threatening to attack either Transylvania or the Banat or even both provinces simultaneously, disease had begun to assume the role of a more insidious enemy within the Habsburg ranks. Following the decision of 26 May to postpone the storming of Belgrade until the fall, Joseph had been much concerned about the health of his troops who would be encamped at Zemun during the hottest time of the year. Chief Surgeon Goepferth had made some recommendations which the Emperor now issued as orders which were to be obeyed to the letter. The most important concerned water supply. The troops were ordered to gather their water in the current and as far as possible from the bank, where human waste collected.⁵⁷

Despite these precautions, by 29 July, Joseph reported that the sick at the main camp in Zemun numbered 7,000; he himself had recently been bothered by a violent dry

⁵⁵ de Madariaga, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

⁵⁶ J. to Leopold, 29 July 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 186.

⁵⁷ J. to Lacy, 28 May 1788. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 302, V, Folio 13.*

cough and by diarrhoea.⁵⁸ The sick-list for the entire army was much higher. By the end of July, 23,312 were sick; of this number, 5,029 had been dispatched for convalescence and 749 had died.⁵⁹ With the main hospital unable to give proper care to all the men, new accommodations had to be found to accommodate the arrival of some 200 to 300 new cases every day.⁶⁰

An additional concern for Joseph was a growing refugee problem. This he had partly brought upon himself. On 13 June he had written to General d'Aspremont, ordering him to assist the emigration of Christian subjects from the right side of the Danube into his territory.⁶¹ This, he felt, would further impede the progress of enemy troops toward Belgrade, by removing the people who would provide them with provisions. Yet, by the end of July, the demands imposed on Joseph's own subjects to supply the army were compounded by the arrival of an increasing number of Serbian peasants which may have totalled 50,000 people, with 300,000 heads of cattle.⁶² Their housing and feeding became a burden to the imperial army.

The first months of the campaign had gone almost exactly as Joseph had

⁵⁸ J. to Leopold, 29 July 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 186.

⁵⁹ In Joseph's army, there were 11,908 casualties, including 389 dead and 2,423 in convalescence. KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 303, VII, Folio 4¼*.

⁶⁰ J. to Archduke Francis, 15 July 1788. HHStA, *FA Sammelbände*, 27.

⁶¹ J. to General d'Aspremont, 13 June 1788. MUMRBD, *MS 763, Letter #4*.

⁶² J. to Leopold, 25 June 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 184.

predicted to the Prince de Ligne the previous December.⁶³ The Russians had not accomplished what he had hoped for. Potemkin's siege of Ochakov was continuing, while Rumiantsev had yet to advance in strength into Moldavia. Furthermore, the main Russian fleet was still in the Baltic, in part because of the need to combat the Swedes but also because of British obstruction.⁶⁴ Joseph's efforts to bribe some of the Sultan's Balkan subjects had also foundered: the Basha of Scutari had taken his money but beheaded Joseph's emissaries. Then having failed to take Belgrade in April, and faced with an army he believed far to exceed his own in size, he had remained firmly on the defensive. Yet there were grounds for hope.

Although the sickness rate among his troops was rising, the incidence of death was still quite low. His patience might yet be rewarded by the advent of cool weather. This would help improve his health and that of his ailing soldiers. The Turks, according to their habit, would probably start deserting in large numbers due to a lack of food and the maintenance of the blockade of the Danube should have weakened the resolve of Belgrade's garrison. Joseph's strategy appears to have been based on the view of his contemporary, Frederick II, whom he had so much admired in his youth:⁶⁵

The greatest secret of war and the masterpiece of a skilful general is to starve his enemy. Hunger exhausts men more surely than courage, and you will succeed with less risk than by fighting.. [But] war is decided only by

⁶³ See p. 29.

⁶⁴ According to de Madariaga, 'Catherine was refused permission to hire British transports, to recruit British seamen, and to use British ports, in Britain or the Mediterranean, to refit and provision her ships.' In *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*. pp. 400-401.

⁶⁵ See Beales, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67, p. 303.

battles and is not finished except by them. Thus they have to be fought, but it should be opportunely and with all the advantages on your side.⁶⁶

However, the direction of the campaign was not to be determined by Joseph II. Rumiantsev's apparent inertia may have convinced the Ottoman commander that he could direct his sights on the Habsburg army. As the enemy approached ever so menacingly to his eastern provinces, Joseph was confronted by fundamental questions: Could the defensive positions of his advanced posts hold out against a Turkish attack until the fall? Could he still convince his ally to assist him in diverting this threat? And would it still be possible to take Belgrade before the onset of winter?

⁶⁶ Quoted from Frederick II, *Instructions for his Generals*. in Michael Howard, *War in European Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 71.

CHAPTER III

THE OTTOMANS ATTACK

Late in June 1788, Kaunitz had written to Joseph, expressing his views on the campaign:

... and I must admit to Your Majesty that, caring as I do for Your glory and interests, I am distressed by the fact that, having had the opportunity to take Belgrade at least four times since the first of April,¹ this was not attained.... [but] I shall not allow myself the liberty to say anything about the unfortunate state of things.... I only hope that Your Majesty will be better advised and better served in military affairs than He has been until now.²

¹ Only two attempts are recorded. See above pp. 16-18. No doubt Kaunitz included the two failed surprise attacks of December 1787 and January 1788.

² Kaunitz to Joseph, 24 June 1788. Beer and Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 277. Kaunitz's criticism was even stronger in a letter to the Austrian ambassador in France. 'As for the war', he wrote, 'I am afraid that the miserable way in which it has been fought by both imperial armies... will, in future, earn them disdain in equal measure to the fear which has characterized their operations so far.' Kaunitz to Mercy-Argenteau, 29 June 1788. in Arneth and Flammermont, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-180.

Philip Cobenzl, vice-chancellor and one of Joseph's most trusted advisers, also voiced his displeasure. He argued that the campaign should be fought without regard for the movement of the Russians and questioned the decision to delay the storming of Belgrade until the fall.³ Although Joseph admitted that the first months of the campaign had been disappointing, he believed that only those serving in the field could truly understand the circumstances which had prevented him from achieving the quick success which he and his ministers had hoped for.⁴

After the capture of Šabac on 24 April, Joseph had postponed the siege of Belgrade until the fall and the advance of the imperial troops had ground to a halt. He had refused to move to the offensive until the Russians diverted more Ottoman troops by advancing in conjunction with Prince Coburg in Moldavia. But by the beginning of August this plan had run aground. Potemkin, the Russian commander-in-chief, had laid siege to Ochakov in July, two months later than planned, and had ordered the army under Field Marshal Rumiantsev to remain behind the Pruth to cover his right flank. To make matters worse, a sudden Swedish attack in Finland led to the diversion of

³ Philip Cobenzl to Ludwig Cobenzl, 31 May 1788. in Beer and Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 270. Similar remarks had been directed at Joseph and Lacy and even at Frederick II of Prussia and his brother Prince Henry after the inconclusive campaign of 1778. See Beales, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

⁴ J. to Mercy-Argenteau, 4 Aug. 1788. Arneth and Flammermont, *op. cit.*, p. 186. Indeed, Kaunitz may have underestimated the Ottoman military when he wrote: '[February 9] From this moment forward we can hope to gain from this war everything that is within our grasp.... If it is pursued with as much vigour and fortitude... especially when one considers the pathetic state of the Ottoman army when compared to the European armies against whom these animals have the temerity to do battle.' Kaunitz to Mercy-Argenteau, 7 Feb. 1788. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

forces intended to assist the Austrians in the storming of Khotyn, and the Russian Baltic fleet, which was to support the allied effort in the Mediterranean, was stuck in the Baltic. The inaction of the Russian army may also have influenced the Ottoman commander-in-chief's decision to move out of Sofia - which he had chosen as a point from which he could react to either a Russian or an Austrian advance - towards Vidin and Craiova in Wallachia, where he now threatened to attack the Banat of Timișoara and Transylvania.

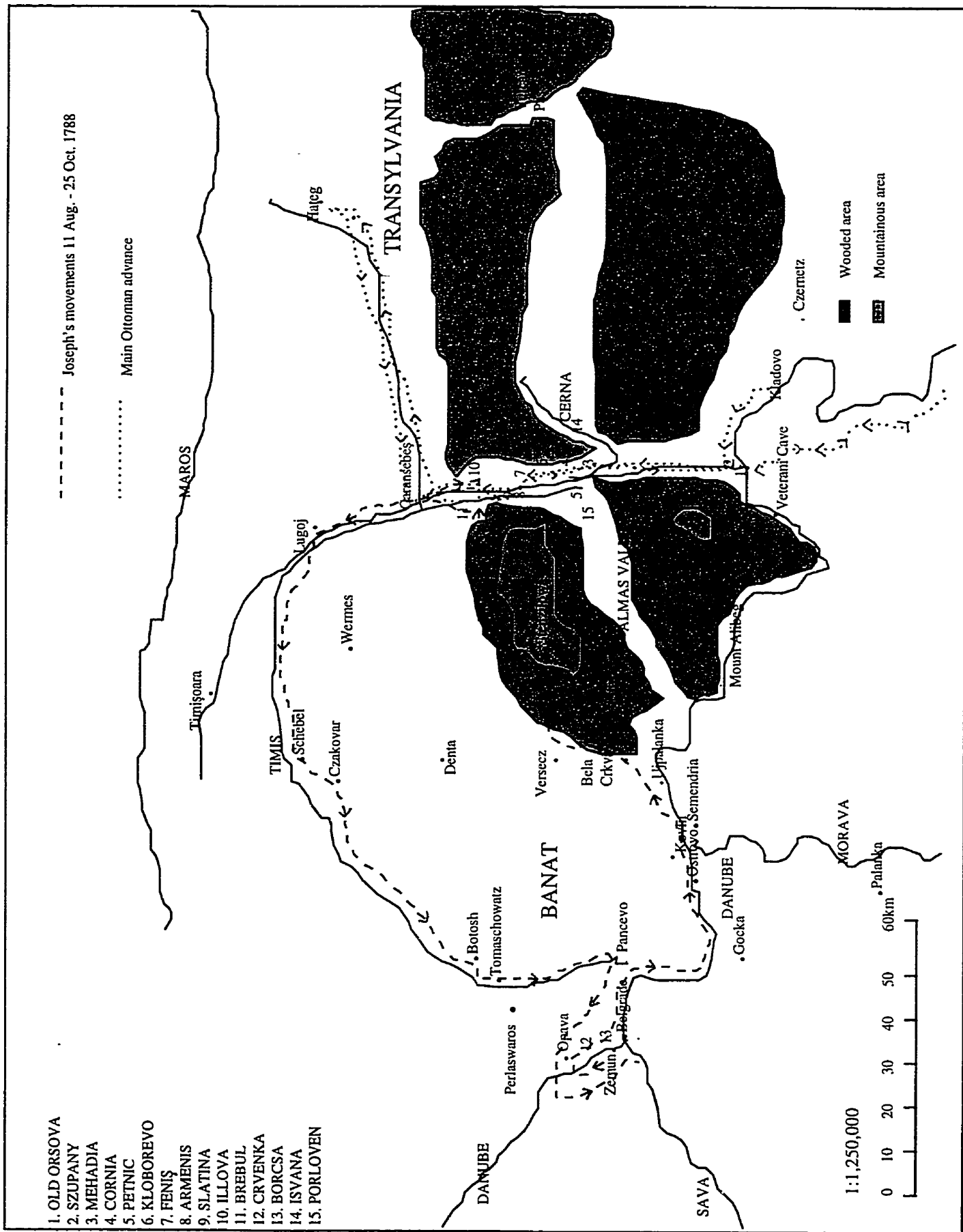
In the event, the caution of Joseph and his generals had allowed the Turks to take the initiative. They broke through the Habsburg line of defense into the Banat on 7 August. What follows is the first full account of what occurred and of the adequacy of the Austrian response.

* * * * *

The Banat of Timișoara, formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, had been acquired by the Habsburg Monarchy at the peace of Passarowitz in 1718. Joseph knew its terrain and military installations well, having visited it three times, undertaking his first and most extensive trip in April 1768.⁵ Now, twenty years later, he thought he

⁵ On his subsequent journeys, he merely passed through the province on his way to Hungary in 1770 and Transylvania in 1773. See Beales, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-45.

THE BANAT AND TRANSYLVANIA



might have to return there to defend it against a potential Ottoman attack. On 22 July he had written to Lacy that,

since the circumstances may require us to move, from one moment to the next, with the largest part of the army into the Banat, I ask you to prepare everything that is necessary immediately.⁶

Lacy submitted his plan the same day and the preparations were completed within a week.⁷ However, Joseph did not move. On 6 August, in a letter to the commander of the Habsburg forces in the Banat, General Wartensleben, he made it clear that he would not leave Zemun unless it was absolutely necessary:

We can have no doubt that the main Turkish force has assembled at Vidin, Kladovo, Czernetz, between Transylvania and the Banat... [However] Although everything is ready for a march into the Banat with part of the army, our main intention must still be the siege of Belgrade.⁸

It is still unclear why, despite the ominous movements of the Ottoman army in Wallachia, he thought the siege should take priority. He may have suspected that the Ottoman manoeuvres along the south side of the Danube was a diversion, aimed to draw his army away from Belgrade. The storming operation was now due to take place in a month and Joseph may have feared that a premature movement into the Banat with his army might destroy any chance of achieving this objective.

Nevertheless, the enemy threat was serious enough to induce him to make a personal visit to review the defenses of the Vulcan Pass whose capture, he feared, might

⁶ J. to Lacy, 22 July 1788. HHStA, *FA Sammelbände*, 72.

⁷ J. to Leopold, 29 July 1788. in Arneth, *JuL*. II. p. 186.

⁸ J. to General Wartensleben, 8 Aug. 1788. KA, *KLA 201, Folio 28*.

open up Transylvania to Ottoman attack.⁹ He and Lacy had planned to travel through Caransebeş (10 August) to Haţeg (12 August) where, along with General Fabris, they would attempt to fortify the joint between the Banat and Transylvania. Before returning to Zemun, they were to continue their journey to Mehadia - the key to blocking a potential advance by the enemy up the main road to Timişoara - to inspect the defenses which had been set up by Wartensleben.

However, these plans were disrupted by what Joseph later called the 'decisive event of the campaign'. On 7 August the Turks routed General Papilla's forces, consisting of the Wallachian cavalry regiment and the De Vins infantry battalion, at Szupany, 2,5 kilometers north of the Danube at Orşova. After moving troops up along both sides of the Danube, the Ottomans had started bombarding the position at daylight on 4 August. A *sipahi* cavalry unit acted as a screen while 'several thousand janissaries' disembarked along the Danube. Papilla appears not to have contested the landing but simply to have withdrawn along the road northwards to Mehadia.¹⁰ He was eventually ambushed but broke through to safety with some of his men. In addition to artillery pieces, munitions and cooking vessels, the Austrians lost 'several officers and soldiers.'¹¹

Joseph claimed in retrospect that this reverse should never have occurred. Szupany had been considered by Habsburg military experts as impossible to defend and

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ In the event of an Ottoman attack, he was supposed to retreat into the Almas valley. It is unclear if the Ottoman attack forced him to take a different route.

¹¹ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-336.

if it had been occupied by a small unit in the spring of 1788, it was only to guard against possible enemy sorties from the Turkish fortress of Orșova, which was situated on an island on the Danube about one kilometer to the south. Rather than being trapped in the narrow valley of Szupany, Papilla's troops should have taken position under the cover of the mountains and woods which lay between the Almas valley and the Danube. Such a disposition would have protected Wartensleben's post at Mehadia and the left flank of the Brechainville infantry battalion which guarded the Veterani Cave.¹² But Papilla had either disregarded these instructions or they could not be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, when analyzing the Ottoman breakthrough from the Austrian point of view, it is difficult to determine if it was caused by incompetent generalship in the field, by inadequate preparations on the part of the high command or simply bad luck. Yet we cannot discount the achievement of the Ottoman commander, Grand Vezir Yusuf Pasha, who had taken the initiative and attacked a weak spot in the Habsburg line of defense with speed and strength.

Joseph received the first news of the disaster on 9 August in a letter from Wartensleben. His immediate reaction was to condemn Papilla:

[General Papilla] is not to be excused. He is responsible for everything that has occurred. He did not follow orders. He was aware of the enemy's movements on both sides of the Danube and was bombarded for

¹² Ibid., p. 335. The Veterani Cave was situated about 2.5 kilometers downstream from Kazan. It had 414,720 cubic feet and may have been able to contain 1,000 men. These estimates are based on the work of Anatole de Demidoff in *Voyage dans la Russie méridionale et la Crimée par la Hongrie et la Moldavie*. vol. II. Paris: Ernest Bourdin et Co., 1842, p. 278.

several days but [did nothing].... Also, he waited too long before retreating.... He did not act like a general, nor did he keep his troops together.... He should not have offered himself to the enemy in these defiles.... He also took too long to support his artillery and baggage.... In order to win time, he could have made better use of his cavalry.¹³

A closer examination of the incident did not lead him to alter this opinion.¹⁴

Joseph also blamed Wartensleben. As commander-in-chief in the Banat, he was aware of Joseph's order not to establish a magazine at Szupany but had not carried it out. Joseph also reprimanded him for assigning Papilla to defend the Veterani Cave after his defeat at Szupany. Instead, Joseph ordered him to be sent to Timișoara and placed under house arrest. He also demanded an undertaking from Wartensleben that he would obey his orders strictly in future.¹⁵

Joseph received more discouraging reports from Wartensleben while he was completing the final preparations for a march into the Banat to meet the Ottoman offensive. A Turkish force had climbed the steep path which led from the Danube to the entrance of the Veterani Cave to attack the Brechainville battalion stationed there.¹⁶ The enemy was also concentrating his main strength at the southern approaches to the Vulcan Pass, which suggested that he intended to advance into Transylvania.¹⁷ Farther west the posts at Ujpalanka, Bela Crkva and the town of Moldava were threatened,

¹³ J. to General Wartensleben, 9 Aug. 1788. KA, *KLA 201, Folio 33*.

¹⁴ J. to General Wartensleben, 11 Aug. 1788. KA, *KLA 201, Folio 37*. Unfortunately, we do not have access to Papilla's version of the events at Szupany.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ J. to General Wartensleben, 14 Aug. 1788. KA, *KLA 201, Folio 55*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

since they 'could be taken from the rear and were too weak to defend themselves'.¹⁸ To make matters worse, Wartensleben was ill and Joseph himself complained that he was 'plagued by a cough and a four-day fever'.¹⁹

Although he may have missed an opportunity to move into the Banat to block the Ottoman advance in late July, Joseph now moved quickly and with assurance. He left eight infantry battalions and two cavalry regiments under the command of General Gemmingen in Zemun, Beschania and Boljevcı and a reserve under General Hohenlohe between Šabac and Beschania.²⁰ He sent his own army group - consisting of fourteen infantry battalions, seven grenadier battalions, five cavalry regiments and one division of hussars - ahead towards the Banat on 12 August (the total amounted to 20,400 men). He also called up reinforcements of ten infantry battalions from Linz, and expected their arrival at the end of August.²¹

Joseph caught up with his troops on the 14th and crossed the Danube near Opava. Marching in three columns, they followed the river and passed through Pancevo on the 17th,²² where Joseph received good news for a change. General d'Aspremont had reported from Bela Crkva that the Turkish advance had halted in the valley just north of Szupany. Contrary to Joseph's initial belief, the Turks had not reached the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ J. to Laudon, 13 Aug. 1788. KA, *KLA 201, Folio 54*.

²¹ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

²² KA, *AFA 1788, Hauptarmee, 303, VIII, Folio 13*.

Almas valley. After resting in Kovin for a day, having completed six consecutive days on the march, Joseph and his troops pressed on to Bela Crkva where they arrived on 20 August. The immediate objectives were threefold: to block off the exits out of the Almas valley from the southeast, to strengthen Wartensleben's position at Mehadia and to control the navigation of the Danube between Belgrade and the Veterani Cave.

Joseph's primary concern was the safety of Wartensleben's camp at Mehadia. The breach of the line of defense at Szupany had exposed him to enemy attack and made his line of supply vulnerable. The Turks had also captured his food stores. Why he had chosen to locate these at Szupany, ahead of his own position, is unclear.²³ Whatever the reason, Joseph and his generals now had to find a way to feed him and his troops. Although there were sufficient provisions in Bela Crkva, both the distance and difficult roads between it and Mehadia made this alternative impossible. Also, if the Ottomans reached the Almas valley, Wartensleben would be cut off from Bela Crkva and his right flank would be totally exposed. But Joseph still believed that a Turkish attack on Mehadia coming from Szupany could not succeed. He therefore expected the enemy to move west rather than north in an attempt to break through to Belgrade.

Nevertheless the possibility of a Turkish strike northeastwards into Transylvania could not be ignored. Prince Coburg was therefore ordered, upon taking Khotyn, to prevent any incursions into Galicia or the Bucovina rather than to cooperate further with

²³ We have seen in Chapter One how, in June, Joseph had considered sending Wartensleben across the Danube to storm Semendria. Although no evidence of Joseph's authorization of this plan could be found, Wartensleben may have acted presumptively by preparing Szupany as an eventual base of supply.

the Russians.²⁴ Joseph also informed Field Marshal Laudon, who had by now assumed command of the troops in Slavonia and Croatia, that he could not send him reinforcements, since new troops arriving from Austria at the end of August would be needed either to augment the army in the Banat or for the storming of Belgrade.²⁵

If the Turks succeeded in taking the Veterani Cave, the key to preventing their further progress up the Danube was the retention of Mount Alibeg, which lay about ten kilometers downstream from the town of Moldava. A Habsburg battery had been stationed there but was fast running out of supplies. Joseph sent General d'Aspremont to them with munitions, food and water and, with instructions to clear out any Turkish units which might be in the vicinity, but not to take on a force superior to his own.²⁶ D'Aspremont's expedition was considered to be so important that he and his men were promised a reward totalling 1,000 ducats if they succeeded.²⁷

From Bela Crkva, Joseph tried to prevent a westward Ottoman advance along the road which followed the Danube on the northern side. To block the exits from the Almas valley from the southeast he sent reinforcements to Mount Stenzilowa and the town of Saska. The only other route available to the Turks was due north but, wedged in by the mountains, they could only take the road which follows the river Cerna. If they advanced along it, they would inevitably have to contend with Wartensleben's corps

²⁴ J. to Prince Coburg, 11 Aug. 1788. KA, *KLA 201, Folio 42*.

²⁵ J. to Laudon, 13 Aug. 1788. KA, *KLA 201, Folio 54*.

²⁶ J. to General d'Aspremont, 17 Aug. 1788. MUMRBD, *MS 763, Letter #9*.

²⁷ J. to General d'Aspremont, 18 Aug. 1788. MUMRDB, *MS 763, Letter #10*.

at Mehadia, composed of eleven battalions of infantry, the whole Wallachian regiment²⁸ and six divisions of cavalry, in addition to sharpshooters and *Jägers*.²⁹

On 21 August General Zechenter had arrived in Mehadia from Bela Crkva to coordinate a combined attack by the Habsburg forces on the Ottoman army which, according to reports, was still located in the valley north of Szupany. Wartensleben had argued repeatedly that if Joseph and his army joined him in Mehadia, there was every reason to believe that a decisive engagement could be forced on the Grand Vezir.³⁰ Although he did not rule out the possibility, the Emperor considered such a move as 'very doubtful'.³¹ To reach Mehadia would require a march of at least seven days. One had to expect, wrote Joseph, that the Turks, massed in such great numbers near Szupany, would try to break through somewhere in the intervening period. In addition, the rugged terrain posed logistical problems. The infantry and cavalry could travel through mountain passes to Caransebeş in six days, but they would have to wait there for the baggage carts and reserve artillery, which had to be sent by way of Versecz and

²⁸ Most probably the 'Walachisch-Illyrisches Gz-I-R' regiment. See Christopher Duffy, *The Army of Maria Theresa. The Armed Forces of Imperial Austria, 1740-1780*. p. 234.

²⁹ Joseph II. *op. cit.*, p. 334. According to Christopher Duffy, the *Deutsches Feld Jäger Corps* was disbanded in 1763, revived for the War of Bavarian Succession in 1778 but abolished thereafter. In 1768, a new unit of *Grenzscharfschützen* was created. See *The Army of Maria Theresa. The Armed Forces of Imperial Austria, 1740-1780*. pp. 67-74. Although both existed in the campaign of 1788 (on the orders of battle for the campaign, there are separate rows for each), it is not clear what differentiated a *Jäger* (hunter) from a *Scharfschützen* (sharpshooter).

³⁰ Apparently, Wartensleben did not provide any details on how this was to be achieved. See Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

³¹ J. to General Wartensleben, 21 Aug. 1788. KA, KLA 201, Folio 81.

Lugoj.³²

Furthermore, Joseph's detailed analysis of Wartensleben's defensive position indicated that the chances of a successful Turkish attack were rather slim:

If the redoubt on your left flank is properly constructed they will not be able to go around you, other than through Isvana, about which I have no knowledge.... Your right flank, according to what you have reported to me, is well protected by a redoubt which forces the enemy to climb the mountains nearby and move through the ravines.... This would surely be very difficult.... They could only attack you from behind if they move through the Almas and take the road which leads from Petnic to Mehadia or the other through Porloven, Kloborevo and Cornia. But if ever the enemy succeeds in crossing the mountains and finding one of these passes, you can rest assured that one of our scouts in the Almas will spot him, giving you at least twenty-four hours to retreat from your position.³³

But if the enemy succeeded in turning his defenses and attacking in the rear from the north, Joseph believed, 'it would then be time to beat a hasty retreat, with munitions, artillery pieces and baggage through the pass between Slatina and Teregon.' He should then head for Caransebeș, Lugoj and Timișoara.³⁴

However, after spending four days in Bela Crkva considering recent developments, Joseph had changed his mind. He now decided to join up with Wartensleben. His reasons were twofold. First, the stay in Bela Crkva had allowed his engineers to reconnoitre the exits from the mountains leading from the Almas valley as well as the main road which followed the Danube. They concluded that, given the narrowness of the defiles, the area could be defended by a small corps sheltered behind a few redoubts

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ J. to General Wartensleben, 16 Aug. 1788. KA, *KLA 201, Folio 67*.

and tambours.³⁵ Secondly, Wartensleben's persistence finally convinced Joseph and his advisers that only a combined effort from Mehadia would expel the Turks from the Banat.³⁶ On the 25th news that the Turks had attacked Wartensleben's position merely hastened Joseph's departure from Bela Crkva, where he left five battalions of infantry and one cavalry regiment under the command of General Brechainville. Joseph and Lacy took with them with seven infantry battalions and four cavalry regiments through the mountains that lie north of the Almas valley. They headed for Caransebeş, passing through Kölnök and Brebul.

In attacking Mehadia, the Turks concentrated their efforts on the tambour in front of Wartensleben's left flank. A detachment from the Lattermann regiment succeeded in repelling two enemy onslaughts, but then the palisades supporting its position gave way, forcing it to withdraw in confusion.³⁷ The consequences were disastrous. The Turks could now circumvent the mountains and attack from the rear. Realizing this Wartensleben was forced to retreat.

As he marched through Kölnök on the 29th, Joseph wondered if all was not lost. Not having heard from Wartensleben for the last four days, he wrote to his nephew Francis, who was serving in Transylvania:

The retreat of General Wartensleben, which he undertook without really being attacked or waiting for my arrival, leaves me in a state of confusion

³⁵ 'A small defensive work formed of palisades or earth, usually in the form of a redan, to defend an entrance or passage.' *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Second Edition. vol. XVII. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, p. 598.

³⁶ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

and ignorance.... I do not know if his retreat was successful, nor if we will arrive in Caransebeş before the enemy, [therefore] you must not join us there.... This situation is as regrettable as it is unforeseen.³⁸

Two days later, however, Joseph wrote to Francis again. Wartensleben's retreat had been successful, and he could rendezvous with him in Caransebeş after all.³⁹

Joseph subsequently blamed Wartensleben for making the defense of his position dependent on a single tambour.⁴⁰ Although this criticism may have been justified, it is difficult to question the general's decision to withdraw. When the Turks finally dislodged the advanced guard on his left flank and found an opening from which they could turn the Habsburg defences, he appears to have wisely evacuated his forces and equipment and made a successful fighting retreat.⁴¹ The Grand Vezir, Yusuf Pasha, had simply outmanoeuvred his Austrian rival. Just when Joseph was preparing to mount a counter-attack, he had pulled the rug from under his feet and had taken a key strategic position.

Even so, all was not lost. Since the Turks were burning and destroying everything in their path, it might be possible to starve them out and force them into a withdrawal. Brechainville and d'Aspremont were firmly in possession of the northern side of the

³⁸ J. to Francis, 29 Aug. 1788. HHStA, *FA Sammelbände*, 27.

³⁹ J. to Francis, 31 Aug. 1788. HHStA, *FA Sammelbände*, 27.

⁴⁰ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

⁴¹ It has not been possible to substantiate Oskar Criste's claim that, after repelling an Ottoman assault on the 28th, Wartensleben had received a report indicating that the Turks had sent a detachment through Transylvania to attack from behind. This, apparently, led to his withdrawal to Feniş on the night of the 29th. See Criste, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-163.

Danube and the exits which led into the flatlands of the Banat, while the contingent in the Veterani Cave were continuing their stout resistance. On 2 September Joseph joined forces with Wartensleben at Illova, which lay about ten kilometers south of Caransebeș, and his staff drew up a new plan to expel the invaders from Habsburg territory.

As much as Joseph hoped for an attack on the enemy, there was no immediate action. The gathering of accurate intelligence on the size and location of the Grand Vezir's forces was still wanting.⁴² And Zechenter, Wartensleben and other generals who knew the country well advised that the Ottoman forces could not be engaged successfully unless they advanced further out of the ravines near Mehadia.⁴³ In any case, Joseph still believed that the Grand Vezir planned to advance along the right bank of the Danube to relieve Belgrade and that the move on Mehadia was only intended to divert him and draw his forces.⁴⁴

But then came news that the Turks were moving near Feniș, ten kilometers south of Illova. On 10 September, a force of about 6 000 *sipahis* suddenly appeared. This,

⁴² J. to Laudon, 10 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA 202, Folio 31*. Due to the fact that most of the inhabitants from the immediate area had fled in the wake of the Ottoman advance, Joseph constantly asked his commanders in the field to help remedy this situation. In a letter to General Brechainville of 7 September 1788 he wrote: 'Try to find a few soldiers who come from the area and know all the roads and paths in the mountains and forests so that they can spy on the enemy and give us an estimate of his strength and position.' KA, *KLA 202, Folio 27*. Subsequent letters do not indicate if Brechainville was successful in obtaining more accurate information.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

it transpired, was a reconnaissance in force,⁴⁵ and it soon withdrew to rejoin the main Ottoman camp. At this point, Joseph and his generals decided to attack the Turks the next day. But as the commanders were being briefed on one of the hills, the Turks changed direction, moving northwest toward a point near the ravine of Armeniş which, according to Joseph, was precisely where the Habsburg troops had planned to set up camp.⁴⁶

For the next seven days, the belligerents were caught in a stalemate, with the Ottomans occupying the ravines near Armeniş and the Habsburg army guarding the southern approaches to Illova. Joseph now struggled with a dilemma: on the one hand, his presence in Illova prevented the enemy from advancing into Transylvania through Hațeg; on the other hand, he was aware that the troops stationed along the Danube might not withstand an attack by a superior force and required his support. By 10 September, therefore, he had arranged to travel back across the mountains with his army to Versecz, from where he could await his adversary's next move.⁴⁷

However, the Ottomans soon tested Joseph's forces near Illova. A regiment of hussars came under heavy fire but succeeded in repelling the Turkish cavalry charge which followed.⁴⁸ The enemy also bombarded the Habsburg right under Wartensleben near the Timis river, and inflicted casualties. Joseph's staff prepared a new plan of

⁴⁵ J. to General Brechainville, 10 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA* 202, *Folio* 30.

⁴⁶ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

⁴⁷ J. to General Brechainville, 10 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA* 202, *Folio* 30.

⁴⁸ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

attack to silence the Turkish battery, but then a council of war decided that it was unlikely to succeed for a number of reasons. The bulk of the artillery, which was supposed to be Joseph's strongest advantage, had to be left behind in Illova guarded by three infantry battalions. Attacking troops could only take one road from Illova through the ravine of Armeniş and, since their position was on lower ground than the enemy's, artillery cover would be ineffective. Furthermore, the grenadiers, on the left, would have to dig a passage out of the ravine while being exposed to enemy fire, while Wartensleben, in command of the right column, feared that he would be outflanked and warned that he could not advance until the centre column had captured the height on which the enemy was entrenched.⁴⁹

In effect, then, the difficulty of the terrain compensated for any advantage which the Habsburg army may have had over its Ottoman antagonist. Nevertheless, on the 15th Joseph set aside the cautious advice of his generals and ordered a two-pronged attack for the following morning.⁵⁰ This, he believed, would be easier to execute in the new circumstances, with the Turks beginning to advance out of their protected position.⁵¹ Then news from another front again disrupted his plans.

After taking Szupany, the enemy had sent a strike force to dislodge the Brechainville battalion from the Veterani Cave, whose battery prevented the passage of Turkish craft up the Danube. Although Joseph's troops had resisted for twenty-one days,

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 344.

⁵⁰ J. to General Fabris, 15 Sept. 1788. KA, KLA 202, *Folio 50*.

⁵¹ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

they had finally capitulated in the first week of September. Then, on the 7th, Joseph asked General Brechainville to confirm the reports of Serbian refugees who claimed that a considerable number of Ottoman troops under the Seraskier Memish Pasha⁵² were moving along the southern bank of the Danube from Kladovo towards Semendria. Joseph expected them to assemble directly opposite the towns of Ujpalanka and Moldava, where they would use their pontoon boats to cross over and capture these and other Habsburg posts along the river, in the process opening up their main line of supply to Belgrade.⁵³ Although they had lost the Veterani Cave, the Austrians could still count on the De Vins infantry regiment and its battery posted on Mount Alibeg to impede the passage of Ottoman boats near the town of Moldava.

However, on 13 September, Major O'Reilly and his men retreated from Mount Alibeg having observed the approach of 29 Turkish caiques with 600 men on board. With his left flank exposed, General d'Aspremont evacuated Moldava and Brechainville withdrew his men from Stenzilowa, Stinapat and Potok.⁵⁴ Although they all reached Bela Crkva safely, their retreat left the Ottomans in control of the Danube and opened up the avenues into the southern plain of the Banat.

With his line of supply exposed, Joseph prepared to retreat to Lugoj. This would allow the Ottomans to take the road between Caransebeş and Haţeg and threaten the right flank of General Stader's post which guarded the entrance to the Vulcan Pass from

⁵² The Seraskier was the Grand Vezir's second in command.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ J. to General Fabris, 15 Sept. 1788. KA, KLA 202, *Folio* 50.

the south. Therefore, Joseph ordered him to withdraw his troops and proceed to Hațeg. If he were forced from this position, he was to retreat behind the Maros River.⁵⁵

It is still unclear what had prompted the retreat of the Habsburg troops stationed along the Danube, since Joseph gave several accounts. When he first received the news on 15 September, he immediately blamed Major O'Reilly. He was to be relieved of his command and brought before a court of enquiry.⁵⁶ To the Prince de Ligne, he wrote that Brechainville had left his post without seeing a Turk and without firing a shot,

and all this because of the misinterpretation of a verbal order, which everyone interprets in his own way and uses to construct his own lie.⁵⁷

In his subsequent description of the campaign, Joseph was to confirm his first surmise that,

Major O'Reilly and General d'Aspremont quit their posts along the Danube, without seeing the approach of the enemy and without firing a single shot.⁵⁸

In the end, d'Aspremont, O'Reilly and a certain Lieutenant Marowitz were all found guilty.⁵⁹

But the scanty evidence available shows that General Brechainville had been

⁵⁵ J. to General Stader. 15 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA* 202, *Folio* 50.

⁵⁶ J. to General Brechainville, 15 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA* 202, *Folio* 50.

⁵⁷ J. to Prince de Ligne, 20 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA* 202, *Folio* 66.
Unfortunately, it was not possible to find out what this verbal order consisted of.

⁵⁸ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

⁵⁹ J. to General Brechainville, 20 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA* 202, *Folio* 63.
D'Aspremont and Papilla were pensioned off at 1500 fl on 28 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA* 202, *no Folio* #.

preparing to withdraw five days before the incident involving O'Reilly. On 8 September, Joseph wrote to him indicating his disapproval of Brechainville's sending his stores to Bela Crkva, and stressing how important it was to hold his position.⁶⁰ However, after learning of the success of the Ottoman offensive, Brechainville may have been simply obeying Joseph's earlier instructions, which placed great importance on the need to withdraw at the approach of an enemy force superior in number to his own, and, above all, stated clearly that 'he should not risk anything.'

Furthermore, Joseph's contention that the retreat from the Danube had occurred without the enemy approaching was inaccurate. Not only had Major O'Reilly's initial retreat been prompted by the sight of 29 caiques with approximately 600 Turks on board⁶¹ but significantly more Turkish troops may have been on their way. On 15 September, refugees reported that as many as 8,000 Turks had arrived in the town of Moldava.⁶² And so, only three days later, Joseph himself had ordered Brechainville to remove his artillery from Ujpalanka and retreat towards Timișoara.

Although he was prepared to withdraw towards Lugoj, Joseph himself was still in Illova on 18 September. Brechainville had not sent him a report since the 13th, and so he was unsure if the Ottomans had pursued his troops to Bela Crkva or if they had been stopped near the Danube. Fearing that the Turks might have moved between him and Brechainville and were intercepting their correspondence, Joseph sent his adjutant,

⁶⁰ J. to General Brechainville, 8 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA 202, Folio 27*.

⁶¹ J. to General Fabris, 15 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA 202, Folio 50*.

⁶² J. to General Brechainville, 18 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA 202, Folio 54*.

the Prince of Preuss, through Timișoara to determine what had happened.⁶³ In the event, Joseph had no reason to fear. The Turks had not cut his line of communication and Brechainville turned out to be in Bela Crkva where, for fear of being surrounded, he had assembled his troops in preparation for a retreat to Timișoara by way of Versecz. As for his failure to send reports in the days following the abandonment of his posts, according to Joseph, 'he had simply forgotten.'⁶⁴ With the confirmation that the Turks could break into the plains of the Banat and cut off his line of supply, Joseph finally headed for Lugoj.

But as he marched with his army towards Caransebeș on the night of the 21st, there was another contretemps, which he described in detail:

Everything was proceeding in the greatest order and we would have arrived in Caransebeș without the enemy's knowledge for it was night. All of a sudden a group of Wallachians... became alarmed and fired their rifles which threw a unit of hussars and dragoons into confusion.... They answered this fire before finally attacking the infantry.... The column in which I found myself was completely dispersed. Cannons, wagons and all the tents were turned over, it was horrible; [my] soldiers shooting at each other! Eventually calm was restored, and we were lucky that the Turks were not on our trail otherwise the whole army would have been destroyed. Nevertheless, we lost not only all the pots and tents with considerable damage to other baggage but also three pieces of artillery.⁶⁵

⁶³ J. to General Brechainville, 18 Sept. 1788. KA, *KLA* 202, *Folio* 54.

⁶⁴ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

⁶⁵ J. to Leopold, 26 Sept. 1788. in Arneth, *JuL.* II, pp. 198-199. In his version of the incident, Paul Bernard recounts that, 'during a night march a false report that the Turks had been sighted led to a panic and a *sauve-qui-peut*, which the enemy promptly took advantage of, and before order could be restored over 10,000 men had been lost'. Bernard, *Joseph II.* p. 137. Since Bernard fails to give his source, Joseph's description must be seen as the more accurate of the two. The cause of the initial panic may have been a drunken quarrel between infantry and hussars over the sale of brandy. See Blanning, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

Order having been restored, the army continued its march and after a few skirmishes with Turkish cavalry, arrived safely at Lugoj.⁶⁶ Luckily the Turks had not been able to capitalize on the disorder of the Habsburg army. So Joseph and his troops remained in camp and awaited further developments.

Joseph's forces were carefully drawn up in a defensive manner. The main force - formed into two squares southeast of Lugoj with an additional three battalions and two cavalry regiments in the town itself - sought to prevent the Grand Vezir's corps from pushing into Hungary. General Brechainville's detachment was posted at Wermes, with a cavalry division at Denta. Patrols were sent in the direction of Lugoj and an advanced post of hussars ordered to Versecz. General Lilien was positioned on the western side of the Timis near Botosch, with cavalry at Czakovar which patrolled the area in conjunction with those of Brechainville's troops.

On 30 September, after a chaotic fortnight, Joseph's prospects were looking much brighter. The enemy had not advanced past Caransebeş and Habsburg patrols had not seen any movement from this camp for the previous three days.⁶⁷ Moreover, the Ottomans did not have the large corps of troops on the northern bank of the Danube

⁶⁶ This incident has been misunderstood by more than one historian. Stanford Shaw has written that the Ottomans routed the main Austrian army at Slatina on 20 September. He may have confused the Habsburg army's fight with itself with an Ottoman attack. See Shaw, *Between the Old and the New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 30. In her biography of Catherine the Great, Isabel de Madariaga was similarly misled when she wrote: 'Further fierce fighting in September culminated in a Turkish attack on the Austrian camp at Lugoj on the night of 9/20 September, in which Joseph just escaped.' in *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*. p. 403.

⁶⁷ J. to Laudon, 30 Sept. 1788. KA, KLA 202, Folio 91.

as Joseph had initially feared. Instead, small patrols of Bessarabian Tatars and some of the Emperor's own Wallachian subjects were looting and burning parts of the southern plain of the Banat.⁶⁸

The Habsburg high command still hoped that the Ottoman force might advance so that they could force an engagement. But the material damage caused by the incident near Caransebeş made further operations more difficult. In addition to three cannons and several baggage carts, Joseph reported that they had lost half of their cauldrons and tents.⁶⁹ Subsequent events were even more destructive. In the initial turmoil on the night of the 21st, some of Joseph's own servants had fled ahead to Lugoj where they reported that all was lost. This had encouraged the local inhabitants to loot that part of the army's baggage train which had been left there.⁷⁰ Henceforth the scarcity of flour made it difficult to provide the troops with adequate rations, and so curtailed their battle effectiveness. Thus Joseph spent the first week of October in Lugoj, with the Turks still massed to the south of Caransebeş.

Better news came at last on 9 October, when Joseph learned that General Stader had successfully repelled an enemy attack against Haşeg.⁷¹ Of even greater significance was the report of a *Jäger* who had succeeded in escaping from Ottoman captivity. He

⁶⁸ J. to Leopold, 7 Oct. 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 203.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁷⁰ According to Joseph, the scene was a complete disaster: '... et tout ce grand endroit, de même que ce qui se trouvait sur la route jusqu'à Temeswar, fut pillé, des gens de tués, tout brisé, cassé, enfin une horreur que je ne puis pas vous décrire, mais que je sens cruellement.' *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

⁷¹ J. to General Stader, 9 Oct. 1788. KA, *KLA* 203, *Folio* 40.

personally informed Joseph that the Turks were crossing the Danube on their way back to winter quarters, leaving only a small contingent in Mehadia.⁷² This was soon confirmed by General d'Alton, at which point Joseph moved out of Lugoj and headed north then south along the Timis, determined to clear out any remaining Turks from his lands.⁷³ But he proceeded cautiously, since he knew that the Ottomans had assembled 10,000 to 12,000 *sipahis* near Pancevo.⁷⁴

In Croatia, meanwhile, Laudon had advanced with vigour and assurance. After taking Dubica in August, he laid siege to the important fortress of Novi and took it on 3 October.⁷⁵ He was about to continue his offensive by besieging Gradisca when he was diverted by false reports that the main Ottoman army was threatening Zemun; and once he learned the truth, the lateness of the season put a stop to his operations.⁷⁶

The troops in Galicia had also distinguished themselves. With the support of the Russians, Lieutenant-Colonel Köpiro had retaken Iași - which Fabris had briefly occupied in July - and Coburg had finally won Khotyn on 19 September. Though pleased by this, Joseph nevertheless expressed disappointment that it had not occurred earlier. Had Khotyn been taken in July, he mused, the Grand Vezir, being unable to devote his entire army to the breakthrough into the Banat, might have adopted a

⁷² J. to General d'Alton, 9 Oct. 1788. KA, *KLA* 203, *Folio* 37.

⁷³ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

⁷⁴ J. to General d'Alton, 9 Oct. 1788. KA, *KLA* 203, *Folio* 37.

⁷⁵ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

different strategy.⁷⁷

On 12 October, having left Wartensleben with eleven battalions of infantry and six divisions of cavalry at Lugoj with instructions to regain Caransebeş and advance as far south as possible, Joseph and his army marched along the River Timis towards the Danube, passing Schebel and Czakovar without incident. Since his advance was uncontested, he sent four battalions to reinforce General Harrach in Versecz. On the 18th, a minor setback occurred near Tomaschowatz, when a detachment of *sipahis* attacked and killed Habsburg soldiers who had been sent to set up a pontoon bridge over the Timis. Nevertheless, Joseph's troops joined up with the corps commanded by General Lilien near Botosch and decided to march to Pancevo to attack the Turks who were under the command of the Seraskier, Memish Pasha. Because of a problem with supplies, though, it was decided to put off the attack until the following morning. The Turks exploited this delay by burning Pancevo, before fleeing over the Timis towards Borcsa.⁷⁸ Pursued by a unit of Wurmser hussars, they eventually crossed the Danube and succeeded in reaching Belgrade, but without the Seraskier who had been killed in the chase.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, a corps under General Harrach had moved east along the Danube and cleared the Ottomans out of Ujpalanka. With the assistance of General d'Alton's troops, they had retaken the posts which had been abandoned by Brechainville,

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 348.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 352.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

d'Aspremont and O'Reilly in September.⁸⁰

But the Turks were still not finished. On 25 October Joseph's men intercepted a dispatch from the Grand Vezir, who had retreated to Mehadia, ordering the Seraskier to take Zemun at all costs.⁸¹ Joseph reacted immediately. Leaving General Clerfayt in the Banat with fourteen infantry battalions and three cavalry regiments,⁸² he marched to the rescue with the rest of his force, arriving in Zemun on 27 October.⁸³ The Ottoman attack never materialized and a large number of Turkish caiques and gunboats were observed moving downstream. The Habsburg artillery sank about twenty of them as they floated past Ujpalanka.⁸⁴

The campaign was drawing to an end in better circumstances than Joseph might once have feared. His troops in the Banat under General Clerfayt harassed the remaining Ottoman force at Mehadia, who set fire to their camp and retreated to Orşova. After more than two months of playing cat and mouse, the Habsburg forces had cleared the Banat of the invader.

Then, having informed Prince Coburg in mid-October that he had never intended to advance into Moldavia and now considered the campaign to be over, only a week

⁸⁰ J. to Prince de Ligne, 25 Oct. 1788. KA, *KLA* 203, *Folio* 87.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² J. to Laudon, 27 Oct. 1788. KA, *KLA* 203, *Folio* 90.

⁸³ Joseph II, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 353.

later Field Marshal Rumiantsev made a surprising offer:⁸⁵ if Coburg could supply his army, he was ready to move with the Habsburg commander as far as possible into Wallachia and Moldavia before the onset of winter.⁸⁶ Coburg referred the offer to Joseph who ordered him to accept, provided that the armies could forage for the bulk of their provisions in these two provinces. Presumably they decided that they could not because nothing ever came of the project. In any case, winter was almost upon them and on 4 November, with the Turks in general retreat and 'the season already very hard and cold', Joseph announced that his army would return to winter quarters.⁸⁷

Despite the disappointments of the preceding months he rejected a suggestion from his brother Leopold that he bring the war to an end.⁸⁸ And though still troubled by difficulty breathing, Joseph was already busy with the preparations for a campaign the following year. He spent his final weeks in Zemun giving orders regarding the disposition of his troops over the winter, trying to extract a promise from his ally that the next campaign would see a combined Austro-Russian force advance into Moldavia and Wallachia towards the Danube,⁸⁹ and planning his return to Vienna. On 18 November 1788 he left the front, travelling by way of Petrovaradin, Osijek and Pest to his capital.

⁸⁵ J. to Prince de Ligne, 14 Oct. 1788. KA, *KLA* 203, *Folio* 59.

⁸⁶ J. to Prince de Ligne, 25 October 1788. KA, *KLA* 203, *Folio* 87.

⁸⁷ J. to Leopold, 4 Nov. 1788. in Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 209.

⁸⁸ Leopold to J., 4 Oct. 1788. Ibid., p. 201.

⁸⁹ J. to Prince de Ligne, 4 Nov. 1788. KA, *KLA* 204, *Folio* 37.

Almost a month later, on 17 December, Potemkin finally captured the stronghold of Ochakov on the north shore of the Black Sea. This Russian victory encouraged Joseph to expect greater assistance from them in 1789. The story of that campaign, however, must be the subject of a different study.

Although the Ottoman breakthrough had not resulted in any loss of territory, it had caused severe devastation in the southern part of the Banat. Many villages were burned, people and cattle driven away. Most importantly, it had prevented the Habsburg army from storming Belgrade.

In all, the Habsburg side had suffered 80,000 casualties, including military personnel, civilians and subjects who had fled or been taken away by the Ottomans. In monetary terms, the campaign had cost slightly less than the entire Seven Years' War.⁹⁰ On the other hand Joseph had gained Iași, Khotyn and 150 villages in the surrounding area, as well as Šabac, Dubica, and Novi. The Habsburg State had also gained 100,000 new souls who were to be resettled along the military frontier.

⁹⁰ It is unclear if this estimate took inflation into account. Philip Cobenzl to Ludwig Cobenzl, 28 Nov. 1788. in Beer and Fielder, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

C O N C L U S I O N

Rather than seeking to condemn or exonerate Joseph II, our purpose has been to explain the arduous campaign by taking into account the factors which determined its course. Some of the more important questions to have required our attention were: Why did the Habsburg army fail to achieve their main objective, the capture of Belgrade? Was it due to Joseph II's failings as a military commander or to the incompetence of his officers and soldiers or to other factors?

In a passage on the uncertainty of war Clausewitz wrote:

Countless minor incidents - the kind you can never really foresee - combine to lower the general level of performance, so that one always falls far short of the intended goal.¹

This generalization is repeatedly exemplified in Joseph's campaign of 1788 against the Ottoman Turks. Carefully-planned surprise attacks on Belgrade failed on two occasions, the first on 2 December 1787, the second on 17 January 1788, because of bad weather. In May 1788 the storming of Belgrade was postponed because of flooding, incomplete

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. Ed. and Trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 119.

bridges and causeways and above all, the fear of facing what Joseph believed to be the entire Ottoman army. Finally, in August the Turks unexpectedly broke the Habsburg line of defense in the Banat, laid waste to the southern fringe of the province and tied down the bulk of the Emperor's army group until the end of the fighting season in October. By the time the Habsburg troops returned to winter quarters in early November 1788 Joseph had failed to achieve his primary objective - the capture of Belgrade - despite an enormous expenditure of men, material and money.

However, one cannot conclude that the campaign of 1788 was an unmitigated catastrophe, as some historians assert. When Karl Roider writes that, 'the Habsburg plans called for the offensives of five separate armies from the Adriatic to Galicia...'², he misunderstands the strategic aims of the campaign. As we have seen, Joseph initially planned two offensives, by his corps against Belgrade and by the troops of Liechtenstein in Croatia. The advance of Prince Coburg to Khotyn was only authorized in June. Paul Bernard's strictures are generally discredited by the inaccurate information on which they are based.³ The Ottoman breakthrough, which according to him occurred in May, in fact happened in August; and, he states that the Ottomans withdrew from the Banat in August, whereas in fact they returned to winter quarters in October.⁴ The evidence adduced in the preceding pages also suggests that Bernard gave a mistaken assessment of Joseph's ability to conduct the campaign:

² Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question*. p. 180.

³ Bernard, 'Austria's Last Turkish War'.

⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

[By October] Most important, perhaps, in its effect on Austrian operations, was the circumstance that Joseph's health had now become so precarious that it no longer allowed him to exercise more than intermittent control over the direction of affairs.⁵

Although Joseph's illness limited his physical movements somewhat from July on, as we have seen, he was always firmly in charge. On 19 October, he wrote to Leopold:

[I still have] difficulty breathing and a cough [but],... my health is stable. I am able to look after my business and even to spend a few hours riding, despite the unpleasant season.⁶

As was his wont, he acquainted himself with the most minute details of military operations - from the daily reports of units to the organization of winter quarters for his men to the preparations for the next campaign - until his departure for Vienna on 18 November.

It is true that the performance of the Habsburg army during the campaign of 1788 was sometimes disappointing. As early as February, Joseph complained that his advanced forces in Croatia had launched impromptu raids in which, for the most part, they suffered casualties 'without gaining an inch of territory.' Costly encounters with the enemy continued in April. The loss of men and the damage caused by the Turks at Beschania contributed, in part, to the abandonment of the construction of the main causeway. In August General Papilla was routed at Szupany, Wartensleben was forced to withdraw from his camp at Mehadia, and the troops stationed along the Danube retreated to Bela Crvka at the approach of Ottoman forces. In a clear case of

⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

⁶ J. to Leopold, 19 Oct. 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 207.

ineptitude, the army under Joseph fired on itself and caused severe material damage as it marched to Caransebeş from Illova on the night of 20 September.

Yet Joseph's army had also distinguished itself, both in offensive and defensive operations. Šabac was taken after only two days, while the men under Laudon had captured Dubica and Novi and Coburg's force had taken Khotyn and Iași. Furthermore, after pushing into the Banat, the Ottomans were eventually checked by the effective defensive manoeuvres of Joseph's army corps and by the valiant stand of the men at Hațeg. Thanks partly to the effective pursuit of Habsburg units which speeded the Ottoman withdrawal to winter quarters, by the third week of October, the enemy had been completely expelled from Austrian territory.

Until now, Joseph has received much of the blame for his army's difficulties. One of his critics has attributed the reverses encountered during the campaign to his lack of self-confidence and indecisiveness.⁷ But the evidence suggests that Joseph may have lacked confidence in the determination of his generals rather than in his own abilities. After the failure of the second surprise raid on Belgrade in January 1788, Joseph told Leopold that 'given the lack of resolve [of the commanders], I have ordered them not to undertake another attack.'⁸ In May, when he postponed the storming of the great Danubian fortress, he wrote, 'in addition, I must admit that I find neither will, nor zeal, nor energy in our generals.'⁹ In September, he told the Prince de Ligne that the

⁷ See Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁸ J. to Leopold, 24 Jan. 1788. Arneth, *JuL.* II., p. 59.

⁹ J. to Leopold, 13 May 1788. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

devastation of the Banat had been caused, in part, by the ineptitude of generals Papilla, d'Aspremont, Brechainville and Lilien. He went on to thank de Ligne for the zeal which he had showed in his efforts to promote the welfare of the State and added:

'... it would be far easier to manage things if many people thought and acted in this way; but, believe me, they are rare, and this year has convinced me more than ever of this sad reality.'¹⁰

However, this may have been a device to shift blame to his subordinates rather than an accurate appraisal of the competence of his officers. Indeed Joseph's own extreme caution may have been the principal cause behind this 'lack of energy'. One of his instructions to General Kinsky is characteristic of the glib maxims with which he often ended his letters to his commanders in the field:

[Of the highest importance] is that nothing should ever be undertaken unless one has superiority.... Knowledge and preparation should precede everything.¹¹

As commander-in-chief and head of state he had to balance the complex relationship of strategy and grand strategy, by weighing the costs of reaching the objectives of the campaign (strategy) against the political goals of the war (grand strategy). As we have seen,¹² Joseph may have been particularly sensitive to the fact that every move on the battlefield entailed a potential loss of men, horses and equipment, all of which were very costly to replace. When seen in this light, Joseph's reluctance to fight battles, or to put off the storming of Belgrade until every possible condition would favour its

¹⁰ J. to Prince de Ligne, 14 October 1788. KA, *KLA* 203, *Folio* 59.

¹¹ J. to General Kinsky, 18 Feb. 1788. KA, *AFA* 1788, *Hauptarmee*, 301, I, *Folio* 11.

¹² See p. 25.

success, seems more understandable.¹³

But the fear of sustaining losses was not the only factor prompting caution. Before reaching a decision on strategy or tactics Joseph usually invited the advice of his generals, with Lacy's being the most important. The postponement of the storming of Belgrade gives us a clear illustration of this. Even though the capture of Šabac in late April seemed to favour the immediate opening of the siege of Belgrade, the main army still lacked supplies at Zemun, and the main bridges on the Sava and Danube, as well as the causeway at Beschania, were incomplete. The Emperor eventually accepted his chief of staff's view that the capture of the fortress would be much easier in the fall and it received the unanimous endorsement of a council of war. The role played by Joseph's supposed lack of self-confidence and indecisiveness may have been exaggerated. Instead, key decisions were based on a rational assessment of terrain, climate, logistics and the probability of success.

If Joseph's conduct of the campaign appeared hesitant, it was mostly due to a lack of accurate intelligence. The postponement of the capture of Belgrade until the fall seems to have been based on uncertainty about the true strength of the Grand Vezir's army. Although he received reports that the Ottomans were massing troops near his border in Transylvania and the Banat in late July, he did not move to meet this threat since he did not know how large the enemy force was nor where it was located. In September, when he and his army were concentrated in the ravines near Illova, three

¹³ If we believe Michael Howard, Joseph's conduct's may have been the rule rather than the exception among military commanders in his age. See *War in European Society*. p. 71.

orders to attack the enemy were called off because of the failure to determine its size and location. Indeed, when accurate information was finally received, it was often too late to act upon it.

Nevertheless, one historian has gone to great lengths to prove that Joseph's chances of defeating the Ottomans had never been greater.¹⁴ Theoretically, the Austrian and Russian armies were better-trained, equipped and supplied than the Sultan's forces. However, the superiority of professional standing armies has often been exaggerated and their weaknesses glossed over. The combination of well-trained infantry and heavy and light cavalry supported by light field artillery meant that, in a pitched battle on favourable terrain, the allies might very well have an advantage over the Ottoman army. Yet to feed, equip and maintain large standing armies in the field was an expensive undertaking, which often stretched the financial and material resources of a state. It is no coincidence that Joseph II faced rebellion in the Netherlands and Hungary in 1789. The cost of the campaign of 1788 exacerbated a tense political situation by draining men, material and food out of his many provinces and subjected the central treasury to massive debts.¹⁵ The protests might well have been muted by victory on the battlefield. As it was, Joseph's failure to achieve his strategic objectives, especially the capture of Belgrade, did nothing to raise his popularity with his Belgian and Hungarian subjects.

¹⁴ According to the argument, he had a sound knowledge of the condition of the Turkish fortresses along the Danube, the support of Christian subjects within the Ottoman Empire and his army was well-supplied and well-equipped. See Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question*. p. 177.

¹⁵ See Michael Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

The cost of maintaining a large standing army in the field was only part of the problem. There was also the need to keep open the lines of communication and supply over bad roads and swollen rivers. One of the main considerations in the decision to postpone the storming of Belgrade was the fear of being caught on the other side of the Danube depending on the bridges over the Sava for a line of supply and retreat. We have also seen how the withdrawal of the Habsburg troops stationed along the Danube on 13 September forced Joseph to leave his camp at Illova and to abort his plan to attack the Grand Vezir's army.¹⁶ Had he not done so, the Ottomans could have cut his line of communication and imperilled his entire army group.

Epidemic and geography also presented the military commander fighting in the Danubian region with imposing obstacles. Illness afflicted the Habsburg army in the summer of 1788, and Joseph II himself was among the victims, dogged by his malady from July onwards. Difficult terrain was a constant obstacle. The flooding of the Danube and marshes both played an important part in delaying the assault on Belgrade. In August, when Joseph marched into the Banat to expel the Ottoman army from it, the better discipline and greater fire power of his troops gave him an insufficient advantage. The Ottoman commander had carefully chosen a position in the mountains which prevented Joseph from bringing up his artillery and from his using his cavalry, which would have been vulnerable in the narrow defiles. Several orders to attack were countermanded, because the risk of attacking in the mountainous terrain outweighed the possibility of success. Thereafter he limited himself to minimizing his losses so that he

¹⁶ See p. 58.

could begin the following campaign in 1789 from a solid strategic position with as many men as possible at his disposal.

A further element to consider was foreign interference. Throughout the campaign, Joseph feared that Prussia might take advantage of his involvement against the Ottomans to make territorial gains along the northern provinces of his border.¹⁷ The realization of this could not have lessened Joseph's caution and his hesitancy to engage his army unless it was absolutely necessary. The Swedish attack on Russia had also had an indirect affect on his campaign - because it diverted Russian troops that were destined to help Coburg in Moldavia. It also allowed the Grand Vezir to concentrate his forces against the weakest point in the Habsburg line of defense.

The fact that the Russians were able to provide less assistance than had been expected played a key role in determining his strategy. Potemkin's siege of Ochakov due to begin in May did not get under way until July. Although General Saltikov had joined Coburg in June, a portion of his troops might have been recalled to defend St Petersburg in July. As for Rumiantsev, his assistance had been insufficient to divert the Grand Vezir's army in Moldavia. This undermined Joseph's entire strategic plan.

As stated,¹⁸ these developments allowed a powerful Ottoman thrust to be made into the Banat. Even so Joseph underestimated the enemy's capability. The poor performance of the Sultan's army in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 had led him to believe that, 'one could expect anything from the negligence and ineptitude of the

¹⁷ See p. 15.

¹⁸ See p. 42.

Turks'.¹⁹ Though often outnumbered, the Russians had, after all, won several important victories. Divided command,²⁰ difficulties of supply, the Porte's inability to raise a sufficient number of troops and poor morale had all contributed to the Ottoman defeats.²¹ However, following the comprehensive defeat of his army at the hands of Rumiantsev's forces in the battle of Kozludzhi in 1774, Sultan Abdul Hamid I had ordered a significant program of military reform under the guidance of a French expatriate, François Baron de Tott. As a result the fortresses along the Danube had been strengthened, a rapid-fire artillery corps had been set up and the Turks could now organize the construction of pontoon systems which allowed their forces to cross rivers and streams more effectively.²²

As a result, the Ottoman military capability had since greatly improved and as the campaign of 1788 showed, the Ottomans had been particularly formidable on defense. As Field Marshal Laudon remarked:

It is beyond all human powers of comprehension and description to grasp just how strongly these places [Ottoman defensive works] are built, and just how obstinately the Turks defend them. As soon as one fortification is demolished, they merely dig themselves another one. It is easier to deal

¹⁹ J. to Prince de Ligne, 8 Dec, 1787. KA, *KLA* 192, *Folio* 13.

²⁰ Part of the problem was that two chanceries influenced the strategy of the campaign: one which accompanied the Grand Vezir to the theatre of war, the other based in Constantinople under the *Kaymakam*, who assumed the Grand Vezir's duties in the capital. See Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700-1783*. Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1995, pp. 130-131.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-134.

²² Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. vol. I. p. 251.

with any conventional fortress and with any other army than with the Turks when they are defending a stronghold.²³

Above all, the Ottomans were led by a particularly able commander-in-chief, the Grand Vezir Yusuf Pasha. In the first months of the campaign, Yusuf's troops had kept the Habsburg forces in Croatia and in Zemun off balance by their sorties from their many fortresses along the Sava and Danube rivers. Then in August, he had broken through Joseph's line of defense in Szupany and exploited his success by taking Mehadia. By drawing Joseph and his corps away from Zemun and into the mountains of the Banat he had levelled the playing field between the two armies. Although the confrontation near Illova had resulted in a stalemate, the diversion had prevented the Habsburgs from obtaining their principal strategic aim: the capture of Belgrade.

But the Ottomans were not without weaknesses. They were incapable of mounting a sustained offensive against the Habsburg army. They were unable to consolidate their initial gains in the Banat in 1788, and could not take advantage of the confusion which gripped Joseph's army near Caransebeş on 20 September. Moreover, although the Grand Vezir's use of cavalry raids to carry out a scorched-earth-policy was clearly intended to prevent the Austrian forces from living off the land, in the event it had a more negative effect on his own troops. Since everything had been burned on their own line of march, they could not advance any further.

In the end, for all the tactical errors committed by the Habsburg forces during

²³ Laudon to J., 22 Sept. 1788. Quoted in Christopher Duffy, *The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great 1660-1789*. London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p. 244.

the campaign of 1788, and, despite the failure to take Belgrade, the campaign was not without some success. That the largest Habsburg army to have ever entered the field was, at times, inefficient and inept cannot be denied. As for Joseph, he clearly lacked the consummate skill of Prince Eugene or Frederick the Great, who often outguessed opponents, took risks and won battles by a combination of cleverness, boldness and chance. But, when Eugene took Belgrade in 1717, he did not have to worry about a Prussian invasion in the north, nor was Frederick II's military acumen tested by the terrain and climate of Danubian warfare.

Despite encountering many setbacks, at the end of the campaign of 1788, Joseph II and his commanders had improved their strategic position. The acquisition of part of Bosnia was to allow them to launch the campaign of 1789 with a two-pronged attack on Belgrade from both the north and the south. Moreover, now that Potemkin had finally captured Ochakov, Russian troops could join Coburg in an advance in Moldavia, forcing a diversion of the Ottoman army which Joseph considered necessary for the capture of Belgrade. In fact the campaign of 1789 was to be one of the most successful campaigns in the history of Austrian arms. It was to result in the capture of both Belgrade and Bucharest and advances deep into Wallachia and Moldavia. This would hardly have been possible but for the achievements of the 1788 campaign.

A P P E N D I X I

Joseph II's letters to General d'Aspremont¹

Letter #1

Lieber General Aspremont!

Wenn der Major Liedersoron vom General Quartiermeister Staab, welche Ich eigends in das Bannat abschicke um in der Gegend von Fakuba einige Arbeiten zu machen, von Ihnen zu seiner Unterstützung hiebey, das zu Panczowa liegende 3te Bataillon von Anton Esterhazy nebst einer Escadron von Würtemberg Dragoner anverlanget, so werden Sie demselben das eine und die andere unverzüglich verabfolgen lassen, welches Ich Ihnen hiemeit zu Gewinnung der Zeit unmittelbar auftragen will,

¹ This is an exact reproduction of the original letters, with spelling mistakes, awkward punctuation and archaisms intact. In the English translation, I have used current place names.

obschon Ich unter einstens hierwegen auch dem Feldmarschall-Leutnant Wartensleben den Befehl ertheile. Semlin, den 20ten. May 1788.

Joseph II

P.S. Wenn Sie einige sicher Nachrichten von einen Anmarsch der Türken erhalten, haben Sie Mir solche unmittelbar selbst hieher anzuzeigen, indem Mir solche sonst durch den Umweg über Mehadia viel zu spät einlaufen würden, doch haben Sie immer auch wie gewöhnlich den Feldmarschall-Lieutnant Wartensleben hievon zu verständigen.

Letter #2

Semlin, den 27ten May 1788

Lieber General D'Aspremont!

Ich habe einige Ihrer Schreiben und so eben jetzt jenes vom 26ten diese empfangen. Ich bin Ihnen für die im letzere enthaltenen, besonders für die ganz wohl detaillierte Nachrichten des Popper verbunden. Ich glaube, dass sie ziemlich wahr sind und ersuche Sie damit fortzufahren, da selbe für Mich dermalen ausserst wichtig sind, jedoch weiss Ich wohl, dass man in solchen Gelegenheiten vieles sammeln muss, um eine Wahrscheinlichkeit herauszubringen; es wird Mir also höchst angenehm seyn, öfters

Nachrichten von der Beschaffenheit, wie die letzere wovon Ihnen zu erhalten. Auch ersuche Ich Sie, in Panczowa die Einleitung zu treffen, damit Mir Ihre Berichte immer auf eine verlässigere Art zukommen als der letzere, der Mir ein Marquetender, der zum Einkaufen hierherfuhr, und sich einige Tage verständen hätte können, überbracht hat. Nach seiner Aussage ist ihm dieser Brief von einem Regiments Adjudanten, vermutlich von dem Adjudanten von Wurtemberg übergeben worden. Leben Sie wohl auf!

Joseph II

Letter #3

Lieber General D'Aspremont!

Ihre zwey Berichte habe Ich beyde heute Morgen richtig überkommen, und bin Ihnen für die Mir darin mitgetheilte wichtige Nachrichten verbunden. Dasjenige was Sie Mir von Vorrückung der Türken in verschiedenen Gegenden melden, trifft mit jenem vollkommen überein, was Ich in einem Türkischen einem Tartare abgenommenen Briefe von ihr Anstalten schon ersehen hatte.

Dass sich das Frey Corps auf die Insel Ostrova zurückgezogen hat, ist ganz recht; nur werden Sie besorgt seyn, dass Mihanovich sammt dem Frey Corps bey einer gar zu überlegenen Macht, und welche Schiffe zusammen brächte, in dieser Insel nicht zu schon komme, sondern auf unser Ufer sammt allen Inwohner und ihren Habsenligkeiten des

darauf befindlichen Dorfers herübergebracht werden. Um auch nicht unschuldige Menschen zu ihren und des Staats Nachtheil zu verlihren, werden Sie strengstens an alle ausserste Gräntz Dörfer der Befehl erlassen, dass bey mindester Wahrscheinlichkeit eines Überfalls sammtlicher Populations Stand, alles Vieh, Wägen und so viel möglich alle andere Geräthschaffen, selbst mit Gewalt wenn es nicht anders seyn konnte, aus diesen Dörfer herausgebracht, und die rückwärtige hinlänglich entfernten Ortschaften, sie mögen vom Provinciali oder vom Militari seyn zurückgeschafft werden; damit bey nicht zu vermeidenden Überfällen der Schaden so gering als möglich ausfallen möge. Übrigens thun Sie sehr wohl alles mögliche zur herüber Vorsicht zu veranlassen; diese müssen aber auf sogleich in die rückwärtige Gegenden verschafft werden.

Die an ihren Plätzen schon angekommene Cavalerie wird auch ganz wohl dem Cordon zur Unterstützung dienen, so wie Ich glaube, dass die Infanterie bereits bis Übermorgen als den 8ten das Lager bey Weisskirchen wird beziehen können. Die Herbeybringung von Schiffe oder Versammlung derjenigen, die die Türken schon wirklich aus der Donau haben, muss Ihnen an sichersten am Punkt unterwärts anzeigen, wo am meisten ein Überfall zu besorgen seyn wird.

In Erwartung Ihrer weitere Nachrichten welche nicht anders als wichtig seyn können, kann Ich nicht anders als Ihnen auf Ihrer Huth und auf alles was jenseits vorgeht sehr aufmerksam zu seyn, anempfehlen. Semlin den 6ten Juny 1788.

Joseph II

Letter #4

Lieber General Aspremont!

Ich habe Ihren Bericht gestern erhalten. Aus den beygebrachten Nachrichten sieht man, wie sehr es doch den Türken daran liegt ihre ausgewanderte Christliche Unterthanen zurück zu bekommen, die übrige aber von der Auswanderung abzuhalten, da sie wohl einsehen, dass sie diese Entvölkerung allenthalben in ihren Operationen hemmen müsse, aus eben dieser Ursache aber muss unserer Seits die Transmigration der jenseitigen Unterthanen auf alle mögliche Weise zu befördern getrachtet werden. Sie werden sich daher bestens angelegen halten, das von den Türken verbreitete Gerücht des hergestellt seyn sollenden Friedens zu zernichten, und den jenseitigen Unterthanen, es sey durch Poppen, oder durch was immer vor andere Weege die Unwahrheit dieser Austrennung beyzubringen suchen; nicht weniger aber werden Sie besorgt seyn von den weiteren Anmarsch der feindlichen Truppen und deren Stärke die verlässlichen sich zu Verschaffe, welche Sie Mir als denen auf das fördersamste einzusenden haben. Semlin den 13te Juny 1788.

Joseph II

P.S. Wenn Sie Erfahrung bringen, das die Türken in ihrer Gegend Schiffe auf die Donau bringen sollten, so ist auf alle thünliche Weise zu trachten solche zu zernichten, oder ihnen solche weg zu nehmen; wie dann wirklich die Meldung geschehen ist, dass einige Schiffe von den Türken aus der Morawa in die Donau gebracht worden seyn

sollen.

Letter #5

Semlin den 20ten Juny 1788

Lieber General D'Aspremont!

Ich habe Ihre Schreiben vom 19ten mit den Briefen in türkischen Sprache empfangen. Sie haben ganz recht gethan, Mir solche zu überschicken, weil sie wirklich Nachrichten von einigen Erheblichkeit mittheilten; nämlich der Kommandant von Hassan Bassa Palanka beschwert sich sehr wegen Abgang an Lebensmittel nicht vorrücken zu können, er sagt auch, dass der Kommandant in Morova einen scharfer Verweis diesfalls bekommen hatte; durch einen andere Brief werden ihm die Lebensmittel innerhalb 3 Tagen versprochen und er meldet weiters, dass nun die Wege ganz offen und hergestellt seyn; übrigens verlangen sie sehnlichst Nachrichten von Belgrad zu erhalten.

Darin besteht der Haupteinhalt dieser Schreiben und dieses stimmt auch ziemlich mit dem überein, was bereits durch die Kundschafter gemeldet worden.

Ich sehe Ihren weitere Nachrichten mitgegen; Sie werden sich daher immer in verlässiger Kenntniss zu erhalten suchen, von allen was die Stärke und den Marsch dieser türkischer Korps betrifft. Leben Sie wohl auf!

Joseph II

Letter #6

Lieber General Aspremont!

Da nunmehr die Zeit des türkischen Bayrams heranmachet, der beylaufig zwischen den 3ten und 4ten folgenden Monats eintrifft, und die Türken dazumal am meisten zu allerley Unternehmungen aufgelegt sind, wie sie dann auch zufolge eingegangener Nachrichten wirklich in dieser Zeit einige auszuführen des Vorhabens seyn sollen; so werden Sie, um den auf Sie kommen könnenden Aufällen entweder zuvor zu kommen, oder solchen gehörig begegnen zu können, Ihre Aufmerksamkeit um diese Zeit verdoppeln, besonders aber, wenn die Türken etwa Fahrzeuge auf die Donau bringen sollten, ohne welche sie nichts zu unternehmen vermögend sind. Ihre Augenmerk darauf richten, ob man solche nicht beykommen können, um sie ihnen wegzunehmen, oder zu vertilgen. Um aber die Mannschaft desto mehr zu einen solchen Unternehmen anzueifern, bewillige Ich für ein jedes von derselben herüber gebracht werden des türkisches Schiff, oder wenn solche ein derley Schiff vertilget, und hievon glaubwürdige Zeugnisse beybringt eine Belohnung von 6. bis 12. Ducaten, je nachdem ein solches Schiff grösser oder kleiner ist, die Mannschaft, die solches ausführt, möge nun von dem Frey Corps, von den Gränzere oder von den anderen Truppen seyn. Ich glaube um so mehr, dass diese Verheistung bey Ihnen auch von guter Wirkung seyn wird, als der Erfolg diese in Slavonien bereits bestätigt hat, da man sich daselbst schon mehrerer türkischen Schiffe dadurch bemächtigt, oder sich ihrer entlediget hat.

Ich habe mit nicht geringer Mühe den Kotsha, welcher wieder zu Ihnen nach

Cubin zurückkehrt, dahin gebracht, dass er mit seinen Leuten von neuere seine Dienste fortsetze, und hat sich selber gegen Mich anheishig gemacht in dem türkischen Gebiet die angebauten Felder so viel möglich zu vernichten, um dem Feind in seiner Subsistenz an fourage Abbruch zu thun. Sie werden also nicht allein trachten demselben in diesen guten Dispositionen zu erhalten, sondern ihn auch nach aller Möglichkeit dazu aneifern, dass er dieses Unternehmen nicht etwa bloß auf das türkische Donau Ufer einschränke, da dieses keinen sonderlichen Vortheil so tief als es sich nur immer thun lassen wird, in das Land extendieren, als wodurch allein dem Feind ein empfindlicher Abbruch geschehen könne, wozu Sie solchen dann mit der erforderlichen Mannschaft vom Frey Korps zu unterstützen haben werden.

Da Ich übrigens dem F.M.L. Wartensleben unter einstens auftragen gedachten Kotsha mit seinen beyhabenden Leuten dem Frey Korps ein zu verleihen, und letzteren, so wie der Mannschaft vom Frey Korps, Montur, Löhnung und Brod abrechnen zu lassen; so will Ich Sie hiemit vorläufig davon verstandigen, damit Sie, bis Ihnen das weitere hierüber von dem FML Wartensleben zukommt, diese Leute mit Geld und Brod verpflegen lassen. Zugleich aber werden Sie den Kotsha, als ein Zeichen Meiner Zufriedenheit über seine geleistete Dienste, und zur weitere Aneiferung, die ihm zugedachten Medaille ausfolgen lassen. Semlin den 26. Juny 1788.

Joseph II

Letter #7

Lieber General Aspremont!

Ihre Kundschafts Nachrichten, welche Sie Mir unter gestrige dato eingeschickt haben, sind Mir heute richtig zugekommen. Ich bleibe Ihnen, in Erwartung Ihrer weiterer Anzeigen dafür verbunden, und zweifle nicht, dass Sie auch dem General Lilien die Mittheilung hievon werden gemacht haben.

Da übrigens zu vermüthen steht, dass die - den von Belgrad ausgerissenen Türken entwichene und zu uns herüber gekommen Sklavin von den Umständen in welchen sich dieser Platz befindet, und von dem was da vorgeht, oder gesprochen wird, verschiedene Auskünfte zu geben im Stande seyn wird. So werden Sie solche hierüber vernehmen, das was sie aussaget Mir einberichten, und wenn sie finden, dass diese Weibsperson so gut unterrichtet ist, dass noch mehreres von ihn zu erfahren wäre, solche, so wie die 4. von Belgrad entwichene Knechte, wenn von solchen Auskünfte zu erlangen seyn sollten, auch allenfalls hieher schicken, um sie auch hier ausforschen zu können. Semlin den 13ten July 1788.

Joseph II

Letter #8

Lieber General Aspremont!

Nachdem die Nachrichten von allen Orten einlaufen, dass der Feind in der Almas und Glissur eingedrungen, auch das Bataillon von Brechainville so hinter der Veteranischen Höhle auf dem Berge stand, theils zusammengehauen, theils zerstreut worden ist; so wird der Feind ganz Gewiss auf Moldawa, Ujpalanka und Weisskirchen vordringen, und die alda gegen die Donau zwar ganz gut postierte, im Rücken aber nicht gesicherte Truppen ebenfalls aufreiben.

Ich will also aus billigen vertrauen in Ihre Einsicht und Tätigkeit Ihnen hiemeit den Auftrag machen, sich sogleich bey Empfang dieses Schreibens an jenen der vorbesagten Oerter zu begeben, wo Sie es am nöthigsten finden werden, um mit Infanterie, Cavalerie und Artillerie dasjenige zu rechter Zeit zu veranlassen, was Sie den Umstände zur versicherung der Truppen gegen allen überlegenen Feind angemessen finden werden. Ich weis, dass Moldawa und Weisskirchen offen und nicht haltbar sind, die Ujpalankaer Schanze aber in einer Insel steht, wo man ihr, wenn sie abgeschnitten ist nicht beystehen, sie sich selbst hingegen nicht souteniren kann. Es bleibt diesen Posten also nichts anders übrig zu thun, als dass sie sich bey Anrückung einer überlegenen Macht zu rechter Zeit geschlossen zurückziehen, und sich nicht engagieren.

Hier werden Sie also zu mitschicken haben, ob Sie noch einen Theil der Infanterie gegen Oroviza in die Bergwerke zu deren Deckung zu detachieren Zeit haben? Mit dem übrigen aber werden Sie sich immer gegen die Armée, die in vollem

Marsch zurückziehen. Diese wird den 16ten in Panczowa, den 19ten in Kubin, und beylaufig den 21 in Weisskirchen eintreffen. Wenn solche nicht noch einen Rasttag zu machen nöthig haben wird. Können Sie sich aber auf vorgedachten Posten noch erhalten, oder in dem ein oder dem anderen näher zusammenziehen; so wird es gut seyn, doch müssen Sie nichts risquieren und daher wohl informiert zu werden suchen, was entweder aus der Almas oder der Glissur von Feinde auf Sie kommen kann. Oppowa den 14 August 1788.

Joseph II

Letter #9

Cubin den 17. August 1788

Lieber General Aspremont!

Ihren Mir überschickten Brief vom 16te habe Ich heute früh beym Abmarsch Panczowa empfangen.

Wir sind nun hier in Cubin mit der Armée eingerückt, und da selbe seit Semlin keinen Rasttag gemacht hat, auch die Gefahr, wie Sie Mir melden, nicht so dringend zu seyn scheint, nebst diesem der heutige Marsch ziemlich stark ware; so werde Ich wohl Morgen hier einen Rasttag halten lassen, aber ganz sicher den 20ten in Weisskirchen

einrücken.

Ich begnehmige vollkommen die von Ihnen ganz vorsichtig getroffenen verschiedenen Anstalten, und wünschte wohl sehr in die Veteranische Höhle so wohl die vom Major Stein anverlangte Munition als Lebensmittel besonders aber Zwieback zu Wasser dahin verschaffen zu können. Zu mehrerer Aneiferung können Sie denjenigen Leuten, welche diese Transporte dahin zu bringen sich getrauten, eine besonders gute Belohnung zusagen, wenn Sie solche richtig dahin überbringen. Ich fürchte aber dass es zu spät seyn wird, weil sein Brief vom 11ten datirt war, heute schon der 17te und ihm noch nichts zugeschickt worden ist. Die stärkere Besetzung des Bergs Alibeg schiene Mir sehr erwünschlich, und wenn Sie von den Gränzere des Cordons, wohin um die Armée zu stehen kommen wird, besonders auch von jenem die sich in der Glissur befinden, einige herbeygezogen werden könnten, um den Alibeg stärker zu besetzen, so würde dieses sehr vortheilhaft seyn, weil dieser Berg zugleich Moldava in etwas dekt, und die weitere Vorrückung des Feinds in die Glissur erschwert.

Keinen Affront muss sich die Truppen in Moldava und nirgends aussetzen, wohl aber bey Annäherung einer überlegenen feindlichen Macht sich zurückziehen.

Der Hauptmann Klein von deutsch Bannatischen Regiment ist gestern abgeschickt worden, und alles dasjenige, was Sie werden nöthig haben, von Seiten des Cantons zu heranstalten. In einigen Tagen hoffe ich das Vergnüge zu haben Sie selbst zu sehen.

Joseph II

Letter #10

Cubin den 18ten August 1788

Lieber General d'Aspremont!

Ihren heutigen Bericht habe Ich eben empfangen. Da es von der ausserste Wichtigkeit ist, die Höhle mit den verlangten Munitions Sorten und auch Flinten Patronen in einer ziemlichen Anzahl zu versehen, so wie in dieselbe Lebensmittel besonders Zwieback zu verschaffen, so werden Sie das Möglichste thun, um dieses zu Standen zu bringen, und wann Sie in Moldawa die Schiffe mit diesen Erfordernissen schleunigst geladen haben werden, so werden Sie trachten nicht allein mit dem Harumbasha und den Gränzere sondern mit Verwendung der nöthigen Mannschaft vom Palffyschen Regiment, wenn es auch ein Bataillon wäre, die bestehenden türkischen Posten oberhalb der Veteranischen Höhle zu attaquieren und zu vertreiben um, ohne mit der Truppe selbst an die Höhle zu gelangen, nur so viel zu erhalten und Zeit zu gewinnen, dass die geladen Schiffe abwärts bis an die Höhle anfahren können. Sollte auch für nöthig gefunden werden, auf diese Schiffe Soldaten zu geben, die den feindlichen Posten auf der Insel Widerstand leisteten; so könnte es geschehen zugleich werden Sie an den Hauptmann Maswatz und Majors Stein schreiben, dass sie mit dieser Gelegenheit als dann die überflüssige Mannschaft, welche den Vorrath nur unnöthig allda verzehret, wo möglich zurückzuschicken hätten. Den Schiffleuten aber und der Truppe, die diese Unternehmung gut ausfuhrten, wollte Ich auch 1,000 Ducaten geben.

Wenn die Truppe der Weeg degagirt hat, hat nicht nöthig allda Posto zu fassen, indem es genug ist, wenn das Ravitaillement vollbracht worden ist.

Joseph II

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Letter #1

Dear General Aspremont!

I have sent Major Liedersoron from headquarters to the Banat on an assignment near Fabuka. If he should require [your] assistance, [let him have] the 3rd Anton Esterhazy Battalion together with a squadron of Wurtemberg dragoons. Although I will be issuing this order to General Wartensleben, I wanted [you to receive it] immediately so as to save time.

Joseph II

P.S. If you receive reliable reports of a Turkish advance send them to me directly. But [be sure] to always notify General Wartensleben as well [in Mehadia].

Letter #2

Zemun, 27 May 1788

Dear General d'Aspremont:

I have received a few of your letters, most recently the one from the 26th. I am very grateful for the contents of the last one, especially for the very detailed reports of the windbag [Popper].² I think that [these reports] are pretty true and would like you to pursue [your investigation] of the matter, since it is of the utmost importance to me. But I realize that, in order to establish the reliability [of these reports], one must gather much information. I would therefore be pleased to receive reports of this nature from you more often. Also, I would like you to establish a system in Pancevo which would allow your reports to be sent to me in a more reliable fashion than the last one. I finally received it from a sutler, who could have been delayed for a few days. He told me that he had gotten it from an adjutant, presumably from the Wurtemberg Regiment. Farewell.

Joseph II

² The translation of this obscure word caused some difficulty. After consulting with several German experts, I finally decided that 'windbag' was the most appropriate.

Letter #3

Dear General d'Aspremont:

I received your two reports this morning in good order, and I am especially grateful for the important information which they contain. What you report about the Turkish advance in different areas confirms what I had already learned about their preparations. [This information came to me] through a Turkish letter which we had taken from a Tatar.

The withdrawal of the 'Frei Korps' to the island of Ostrovo was the right [thing to do]. If ever a numerically superior enemy force should arrive with a concentration of ships, bring [commander] Mihanovich and the 'Frei Korps', as well as the inhabitants with their belongings from the village on the island [Ostrovo] to our side [of the Danube]. For the benefit of the State as well as for the sake of innocent people, order all villagers who live along the border to leave at the slightest possibility of an [enemy] attack. They should be prepared to take all their cattle and wagons and as much equipment as possible. Use force [to accomplish this] if necessary. [You must] do everything in your power to avoid the damage of an assault. Moreover, you must provide for the transferral of refugees and their immediate resettlement in [our territory], as far inland as possible.

The cavalry which has recently arrived at their post will serve to support the cordon. I think that this will allow the infantry to arrive at their station near Bela Crkva the day after tomorrow. As for the bringing of Turkish ships on the Danube or

the gathering of those that are already there, you must try to establish the most advantageous point downstream from which we can launch an assault on them.

In anticipation of your next report, I can only urge you to be on your guard and to keep an eye on what is happening on the other side. Zemun, 6 June 1788.

Joseph II

Letter #4

Dear General Aspremont:

I received your report yesterday. It is clear from the news [which was included] that the Turks would like to recover the Christian subjects who have emigrated from their side [to ours]. They would also like to prevent those who remain from doing the same thing. They realize that this depopulation is having a negative effect on their operations. For this reason, we must do everything [in our power] to assist the emigration of [Ottoman] refugees to our side. You must try to dispel the rumour which the Turks have been spreading among their subjects, that a peace treaty has been concluded. Whether you use windbags [Poppen] or other means, you must try to convince the subjects who live on the other side that this is untrue. You must also observe the further advance of the enemy's troops, establish their strength as accurately as possible and be sure to send this [information] to me expeditiously. Zemun, 13 June

1788.

Joseph II

P.S. If you should receive any evidence that the Turks are bringing ships on the Danube in your area, try to destroy or capture them. It has in fact been reported that some Turkish ships have entered the Danube from the Morava river.

Letter #5

Zemun, 26 June 1788

Dear General d'Aspremont:

I have received your report from the 19th along with the letters in Turkish. You did the right thing by sending them to me, since they contain news of some importance: namely, the commander from Hassan Basha Palanka complains that, because of the lack of food, he cannot advance. He adds that the commander in Morova has been sharply reprimanded because of this. In another letter, the food is being promised to him within three days. And he now reports that the road ahead of him is open and secure. He also expresses a strong desire for news from Belgrade.

These are the main contents of these letters and confirm more or less what had

been reported by spies.

I eagerly await further news from you. You are to stay informed [on the movements of the enemy] especially concerning the strength and [line of] march of this Turkish corps. Farewell.

Joseph II

Letter #6

Dear General Aspremont:

With the advent of the Turkish [holiday of] Bairam³ sometime between the 3rd and 4th of the following month [July], you can expect anything from the enemy. For this is usually the time when they are willing to undertake all kinds of activities. According to some news, they have actual plans to undertake some of these things. In order to either prevent or respond to their action, you must be especially vigilant around this time. Be particularly alert for Turkish vessels on the Danube, for without these they will be unable to accomplish anything. Try to determine if it is possible to get close to those ships, so that you can either capture or sink them. In order to encourage the

³ 'Bairam' refers to either of two annual Moslem festivals (Lesser and Greater) after Ramadan. *The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*. New York: Lexicon Publications Inc., 1988, p. 73.

troops to accomplish this goal, I am offering a reward of 6 to 12 ducats, depending on the size of the boat, to anyone who succeeds in stealing or scuttling a Turkish ship. [But] they must provide conclusive proof of their deed. The team that carries out this task can be chosen from the 'Frei Korps', border troops [*Gränzer*] or other units. I think that this pledge [of a reward] will prove to be as strong an incentive with you as it has been in Slavonia, where several ships were either captured or eliminated.

With much effort I have convinced Kotsha and his men to continue their service. He is now on his way to join you in Kovin. He has assured me that he is capable of destroying cultivated fields in Turkish territory, [which will] hamper the enemy's effort to supply [his army] with fodder. Not only will you try to keep him in this good mood, but also encourage him to expand his devastation as far as possible into enemy territory. Only in this manner can [we] harm the enemy, and it is therefore of little use to us if he [Kotsha] limits his activities to land on the Turkish bank of the Danube. In order to assist him, you are to supply him with the necessary manpower from the 'Frei Korps'.

I have ordered General Wartensleben to combine Kotsha and his men with the 'Frei Korps' and to defray the cost of their clothing, wages and food. In the meantime, you shall supply these people with money and bread, until Wartensleben gives you further instructions. At the same time, as a token of my appreciation for his good service, and to encourage him further, you are to award Kotsha the medal which has been made for him. Zemun, 26 June 1788

Joseph II

Letter #7

Dear General Aspremont:

I received your spy's report - which you sent me yesterday - today in good order. I thank you for it and trust that I shall receive more information. I presume that you have also informed General Lilien of this.

There is reason to believe that the female slave who escaped from a group of Turks - who had left Belgrade and come over to our side - will be able to provide us with information on the situation in and around that city, or what is being discussed. You are to interrogate her and inform me of what she said. And if you find that this woman is well-informed, and that even more can be learned from her, you shall send her to me. If the four servants who ran away from Belgrade are able to provide information, send them as well, so that we can interrogate them. Zemun, 13 July 1788

Joseph II

Letter #8

Dear General Aspremont:

Reports from all sides indicate that the enemy has advanced into the Almas

[forest] and the 'Glissur'⁴. Also, the Brechainville Battalion, which was located on the hill behind the Veterani Cave, has been partially beaten and partially dispersed. It is, therefore, certain that the enemy will head for [the posts] at Moldava, Ujpalanka and Bela Crkva. The troops along the Danube are well-positioned but they are incapable of withstanding an attack coming from the rear, and so they will be defeated as well.

Since I have full confidence in your judgment and abilities, I want you to carry out this order: as soon as you receive this letter, see to it that the most threatened of the above-mentioned positions is provided with infantry, cavalry and artillery so as to protect the troops against an assault by a superior force. I know that [the towns of] Moldava and Bela Crkva are open and no longer tenable. [Furthermore] if Ujpalanka is cut off from the island which shields it from the enemy, we cannot help it nor can it support itself. If these posts are attacked by a superior force, they have no other option than to withdraw as a group at the appropriate time and not engage in combat.

You shall have to decide if you still have time to send part of the infantry to protect the mines of Oroviza. With the remainder, you must always withdraw towards the main army which is now on the march. It will be in Pancevo on the 16th [August], in Kovin on the 19th and probably in Bela Crkva on the 21st, if it does not have to take a day of rest.

It would be very good if you can hold the above-mentioned positions or

⁴ Unfortunately, it has not been possible to determine where exactly this was nor to find an appropriate translation. From the references in these letters, it may refer to the area which lies on the north side of the Danube, between the Veterani Cave and Mount Alibeg.

concentrate them somewhere else. But you must not risk anything. You must, therefore, try to be well-informed about what the enemy is sending you from the Almas or the 'Glissur'. Opava, 14 August 1788

Joseph II

Letter #9

Kovin, 17 August 1788

Dear General Aspremont:

I received your letter from the 16th [August] early this morning as I left Pancevo. We have now entered Kovin.

According to your report, the danger is not as great as I [had initially] feared. And since today's march was particularly difficult, this will allow us to rest here tomorrow for the first time since leaving Zemun. We will definitely be in Bela Crkva on the 20th.

I fully approve of your careful preparations. I wish I could send to the Veterani Cave by water the munitions, food and, most importantly, rusk which Major Stein has asked for. As an added encouragement, you can promise a generous reward to those who dare bring these things there and succeed in this task. I fear, though, that it might

be too late. His [Stein's] letter was dated the 11th and it is already the 17th, and he has yet to receive anything. A reinforcement of Mount Alibeg appears to be of the highest importance. You can use border troops from where the army will soon be arriving and others whom you may find in the 'Glissur' to accomplish this. A stronger occupation of [Mount] Alibeg would be very advantageous, since this mountain covers [the town of] Moldava somewhat and hampers the further advance of the enemy into the 'Glissur'.

You must not allow the troops [in the town of] Moldava and the surrounding area to expose themselves to any attack. At the approach of a numerically superior enemy force, withdraw.

Captain Klein of the German Banat Regiment was sent [to your camp] yesterday to organize everything which you may need from the supply depot. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in person in a few days.

Joseph II

Letter #10

Kovin, 18 August 1788

Dear General Aspremont:

I have just received your report from today. It is of the highest importance that the [force in the Veterani] cave be supplied with a sufficient amount of the requested kinds of ammunition and gun cartridges, as well as with food, especially rusk. Therefore, you will do your utmost to accomplish this. As soon as the ships in [the town of] Moldava have been loaded with these supplies, [you should] attack and drive away the Turkish unit which is posted above the Veterani Cave. In addition to the [men of] the Harumbasha and the border troops, you will need to use soldiers from the Palffy Regiment, even if it means a battalion. You do not have to reach the cave yourself. Only go as far as necessary to open up a passage and provide enough time for the ships that are carrying the supplies to reach the cave. You can place troops on these ships should you find it necessary to resist the enemy posts on the island. At the same time, write to Captain Maswatz and Major Stein [instructing them] to send back superfluous troops on these ships, so that they do not consume supplies unnecessarily. The sailors and soldiers who successfully carry out this mission shall receive 1,000 ducats [collectively]. When the troop has opened up the passage [on the Danube], it will not be necessary to set up posts there. The resupply [of our troops] will be enough.

Joseph II

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

KRIEGSARCHIV

Alte Feldakten 1788 - Türkenkrieg - Hauptarmee / I - XII / 301 - 304

Staats- und Konferenzminister Moritz Graf Lacy - 1788 - KLA 194 - 205

HAUS-, HOF-, UND STAATSARCHIV

Familienarchiv, Sammelbände, 27, 72

Josef II - Briefwechsel, Band 26

Türkei - Diplomatische Akten - Faszikel 19 / Cobenzl - Herbert 1785-1793

PRIMARY PUBLISHED SOURCES

Arneth, Alfred Ritter von. ed. *Joseph II und Katharine von Russland. Ihr Briefwechsel.* Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1973.

—. *Joseph II und Leopold von Toscana. Ihr Briefwechsel von 1781 bis 1790.* 2 vols. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1872.

—. *Graf Philip Cobenzl und seine Memoiren.* Vienna: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1885.

Arneth, Alfred & Jules Flammermont, eds. *Correspondance Secrète du Comte de Mercy-Argenteau avec l'Empereur Joseph II et le Prince de Kaunitz.* 2 vols. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1891.

Beer, Adolf und Joseph Ritter von Fielder. eds. *Joseph II und Graf Ludwig Cobenzl. Ihr Briefwechsel.* 2 vols. Vienna: Carl Gerolds Sohn, 1901.

Brunner, Sébastien. *Correspondances Intimes de l'Empereur Joseph II avec son ami le Comte de Cobenzl et son Premier ministre le Prince de Kaunitz.* Mayence: François Kirchheim, 1871.

Schlitter, Hanns. *Kaunitz, Philipp Cobenzl und Spielmann. Ihr Briefwechsel, 1779-1792.* Wien: Druck und Verlag von Adolf Holzhausen, 1899.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Aksan, Virginia H. *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700-1783*. Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1995.
- Austrian State Archives. *Inventare Österreichischer Archive*. Vienna, 1953.
- Beales, Derek. *Joseph II. In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- . 'The False Joseph II.' *The Historical Journal*. XVIII, 3 (1975).
- . 'Mozart and the Habsburgs'. *The Stenton Lecture 1992*. London: University of Reading, 1993.
- Bernard, Paul P. 'Austria's Last Turkish War.' *Austrian History Yearbook*. vol. 19-20, 1983-1984, pp. 15-31.
- Best, Geoffrey. *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870*. London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1982.
- Bittner, Ludwig. *Inventare des Wiener Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv*. 5 vols. Wien: A. Holzhausens Nachfolger, 1936-1940.
- Blanning, T.C.W. *Joseph II*. London: Longman, 1994.
- . *Joseph II and Enlightened Despotism*. London: Longman, 1970.
- Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Ed. and Trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Coxe, William. *History of the House of Austria*. vol. III. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847.

- Criste, Oskar. *Kriege unter Kaiser Josef II.* Wien: Verlag von L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1904.
- Davison, R.H. 'Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility: The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered.' in *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923.* Austin, Tx.: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- Dickson, P.G.M. *Finance and Government under Maria Theresa, 1740-1780.* 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Duffy, Christopher. *Fire and Stone: The Science of Fortress Warfare, 1660-1860.* Vancouver: David & Charles, 1975.
- . *The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great.* London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.
- . *The Army of Maria Theresa. The Armed Forces of Imperial Austria, 1740-1780.* New York: Hippocrene Books Inc., 1977.
- . *Russia's Military Way to the West.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.
- Earle, E.M. ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy. Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944.
- Henderson, Nicholas. *Prince Eugen of Savoy.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964.
- Howard, Michael. *War in European History.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- . ed. *The Theory and Practice of War.* London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1965.
- Ingrao, Charles W. *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618-1815.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Ligne, Prince Charles Joseph Emmanuel de. *Lettres et Pensées.* Paris: Tallandier, 1989.
- . *Oeuvres du Prince de Ligne.* vol. II. Bruxelles: Fr. van Meenen et Cie., 1860.
- Longworth, Philip. *The Art of Victory. The Life and Achievements of Generalissimo Suvorov, 1729-1800.* London: Constable, 1965.
- Macartney, C.A. *The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968.

Madariaga, Isabel de. *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981.

—. 'The Secret Austro-Russian Treaty of 1781.' *Slavonic and East European Review*. XXXVIII, No. 90, 1959-1960, pp. 114-145.

Magocsi, Paul. *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

Mayer, Dr. Franz Martin. *Geschichte Österreichs: vom Jahre 1526 bis zur Gegenwart*. vol. II. Wien und Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller.

McKay, Derek. *Prince Eugene of Savoy*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1977.

Mitrofanov, Paul. *Joseph II. Seine Politische und Kulturelle Tätigkeit*. V. von Demelic trans. 2 vols. Vienna and Leipzig: C.W. Stern, 1910.

Ragsdale, Hugh. 'Evaluating the Traditions of Russian Aggression: Catherine II and the Greek Project.' *Slavonic and East European Review*. Vol. 66, 1988, pp. 91-117.

Rodger, A.B. *The War of the Second Coalition, 1798 to 1801*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Roider, Karl A. *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700-1790*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

—. *The Reluctant Ally. Austria's Policy in the Austro-Turkish War, 1737-1739*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972.

—. 'Kaunitz, Joseph II and the Turkish War.' *Slavonic and East European Review*. Vol. LIV, No. 4, 1976, pp. 538-556.

Scott, Franklin D. *Sweden: The Nation's History*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Shaw, Stanford J. *Between the Old and the New. The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971.

—. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. vol. I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Stoye, John. *Marsigli's Europe, 1680-1730. The Life and Times of Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, Soldier and Virtuoso.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1994.

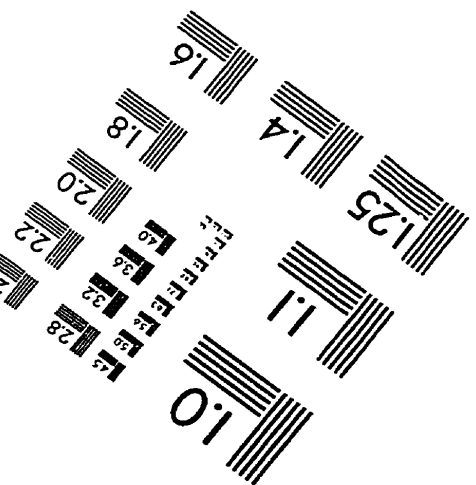
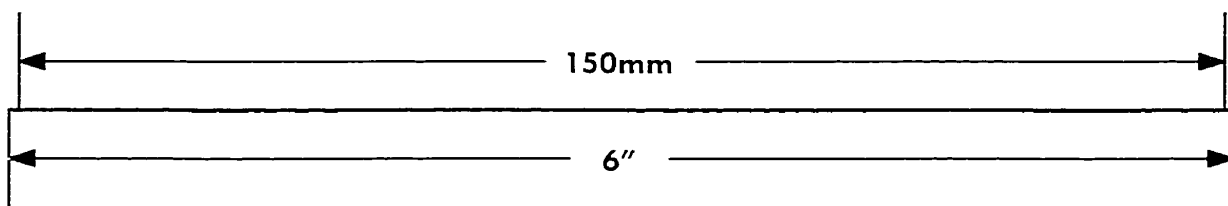
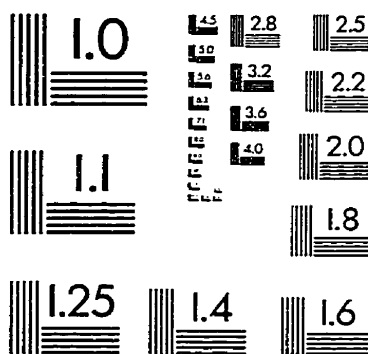
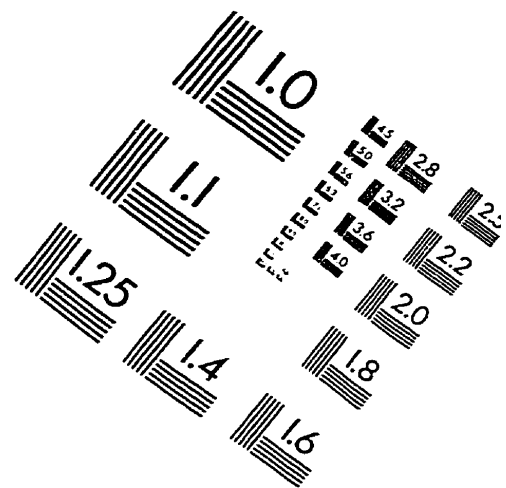
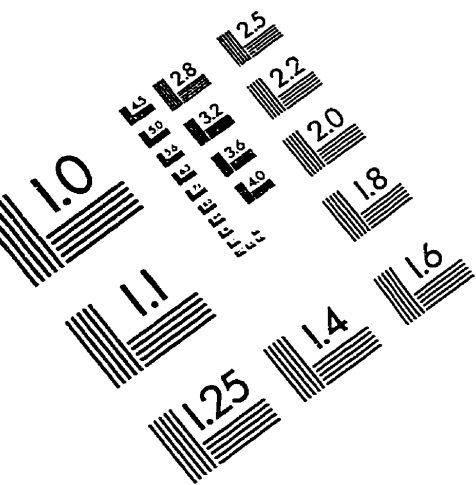
Tapié, Victor. *Monarchie et peuples du Danube.* Paris: Fayard, 1969.

Taylor, A.J.P. *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

Tott, François Baron de. *Mémoires du Baron de Tott sur les Turcs et Tartares.* 2 vols. Amsterdam: 1785.

Zimmermann, Jürg. *Militärverwaltung und Heeresaufbringung in Österreich bis 1806.* vol. III. Frankfurt am Main: Bernard und Graefe, 1964.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved

