

THE INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES OF THE DUBROVNIK REPUBLIC IN THE AUSTRO-TURKISH WAR, 1737-1739

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ABSTRACT: The author presents the general circumstances that led to the Austro-Turkish War (1737-1739), and analyzes the organization and activities of the Ragusan intelligence service, which was of essential value for the security and well-being of the Republic. The Dubrovnik's intelligence was established and developed as an integral part of diplomatic service and procedures, under the direct supervision of the Senate. Dubrovnik recruited its secret agents from its own subjects employed in the foreign service, as well as from the numerous merchants and seamen who acted as intelligence sources in times of war and peace.

It is true that Dubrovnik, being located between East and West, maintained a significant intelligence role over the centuries, notably in times of power struggle and diplomatic and military conflict. Upheaval, political disbalance, and particularly wars have always put its vulnerable stability to the test. The

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painful experience of the liberation campaign (1683-1699),¹ together with the fresh memory of the Republic's feverish diplomatic efforts in Passarowitz (1718),² made the Ragusans fully aware of the impending danger when they began hearing rumors that Austria was to side with Russia in the war against Turkey.

Therefore, the Ragusan Senate had very important matters to discuss: 1. What were the chances of Austria fighting the war or negotiating a peace? 2. How would the political situation develop further? 3. What were the attitude and territorial aspirations of Venice? It was a moment that required additional effort on behalf of the intelligence apparatus, a time when Dubrovnik decided to resort to its tested techniques of diplomacy: to be all ears, to lavishly display their smooth-talking talent, to step boldly into the arena, and to strive to make the best of things.

On the basis of unpublished documents filed at the State Archive of Dubrovnik the aim of this paper is to discuss the intelligence, counterintelligence, and diplomatic activities that Dubrovnik developed during the Austro-Turkish war.³

I

The Ragusan government was capable of gathering information on issues of interest whenever necessary. Information was obtained through its consuls, permanently appointed diplomatic officials (agents, *chargés d'affaires*), and specially accredited diplomatic representatives (emissaries, envoys), as well as through tradesmen and Ragusans living abroad.⁴

¹ Sharing the exaltation of the Christian world over the Turkish defeat at Vienna, the Ragusans broke off their diplomatic relations with the Ottomans and recognized an Austrian protectorate over the Republic of Dubrovnik. Thus, their position with the Turks deteriorated, but as luck would have it, a Turkish protectorate happened to be established over Dubrovnik soon after.

² In the course of the Veneto-Austrian-Turkish War 1716-1718, the Venetians had taken control over the Ragusan hinterland (Popovo and Trebinje), the territory they reluctantly withdrew from.

³ See particularly Mita Kostić, »Ustanak Srba i Arbanasa u Staroj Srbiji protiv Turaka 1737.-1739. i seoba u Ugarsku.« *Glasnik skopskog naučnog društva* 7-8 (1930): pp. 203-235; Adem Handžić, »Bosanski namjesnik Hekim Oglu Ali-paša.« *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju i istoriju jugoslavenskih naroda pod turskom vladavinom* 5 (1955): p. 136.

⁴ See Bogdan Krizman, *O dubrovačkoj diplomaciji*. Zagreb: Povijesno društvo NR Hrvatske, 1951.

At this critical moment when information from Vienna was needed most, they had no diplomat stationed there.⁵ Luckily though, a Ragusan, Dr. Petar Bianchi, was known to have resided in Vienna since 1731.⁶ The Austrian capital offered hospitality to yet another man from Dubrovnik: the patrician Frano Đ. Gondola.⁷ At the same time Monsignor Nikola Đivović, also a Ragusan, was provost in Pécs, Hungary.⁸

Although it had no official diplomatic representatives in Vienna, the Ragusan Senate still had a few reliable sources there. The decision whether to make any contacts in the Austrian capital or not initiated a lively discussion during the Senate session of 27 July 1736.⁹ The first motion to pass a definite decision on this delicate matter was denied, while the second motion was defeated by only one vote. They proceeded to vote on a proposal that the Minor Council be ordered to write to Frano Đ. Gondola, provost Đivović, and Dr. Petar Bianchi in Vienna. The motion passed with only three dissenting votes.

Gathering from the circumstances, the Senate was more than anxious to obtain information, for three letters were dispatched from the office the very next day. They were accompanied by a letter addressed to Marko Antun Orebić, Ragusan consul to Rijeka, a port town of the north Adriatic which at that time was under Habsburg rule. Orebić¹⁰ was petitioned to forward the letters to Vienna and to deliver the replies to Dubrovnik by special boat the moment they arrived from the capital.¹¹

⁵ Gabriel Hallberg was their agent until 1733. See Bogdan Krizman, *Diplomati i konzuli u starom Dubrovniku*. Zagreb: Poduzeće za izdavanje, prodaju i distribuciju knjiga, 1957: pp. 186-187.

⁶ On Petar Bianchi see Đuro Körbler, »Dubrovčanin Petar Bjanki i nećak mu Didak Arboscelli.« *Rad JAZU* 196 (1913): pp. 1-52; Risto Jeremić and Jorjo Tadić, *Prilozi za poznavanje zdravstvene kulture starog Dubrovnika I*. Beograd: Biblioteka Centralnog higijenskog zavoda, 1939: p. 75.

⁷ I have not been able to establish his position in Vienna nor the reason he was sent only one letter, which remained unanswered.

⁸ In 1748 Đivović was appointed coadjutor to the bishop of Syrmia and installed as bishop of Anamuria; in 1735 he became the bishop of Syrmia. In 1756 he was offered the seat of archbishop in Dubrovnik, which, at the prompting of Maria Theresa, he refused. By donating 2,000 florins to the Dubrovnik Cathedral, Đivović put up the altar of St. John of Nepomuk. *Diplomata et acta saec. XVIII* (hereafter cited as: *DA XVIII*), ser. 76, vol. 934 and 939 (State Archives of Dubrovnik, hereafter cited as: SAD).

⁹ *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, ser. 3 (hereafter cited as: *Cons. Rog.*), vol. 157, f. 159 (SAD).

¹⁰ Posted consul to Rijeka on 17 May 1736. *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 157, f. 115v.

¹¹ *Litterae et commissiones Ponentis*, ser. 27.1 (hereafter cited as: *Litt. Pon.*), vol. 54, ff. 146v-149 (SAD).

Each of the said letters were of more or less the same contents: the Senate wanted to have accurate information on whether the imperial army, already maneuvering along the border between Hungary and Serbia, would take part in certain operations against Turkey, and whether war between the two powers was really inevitable. “Therefore we require”—it said in the letter to Bianchi—“detailed information on the [imperial army’s] intents and possible future steps, or at least the latest news on the matter for us to acknowledge and abide by”. The Senate then expresses its hope that Bianchi, thanks to his connections with people in high positions, will accomplish the mission successfully.¹² “Your connections with notables will most surely enable you to gather the reliable information that the Senate, by whose order this letter is being written to you, expects from your virtue and punctuality”. They also tried to encourage Bianchi to perform his task to the best of his abilities, for thus, his work would be particularly appreciated by the Senate. “We assure you that your every effort in the matter will be acknowledged most accordingly.”¹³ Finally, all three addressees were instructed to send their reports via the Rijeka consul and back to Dubrovnik by special ship.

On 15 July 1736, following the established practice, Marko I. T. Bassegli was instructed to pay an initial visit on behalf of the Republic to Ali-pasha Hekim Oglu, the newly appointed pasha to Bosnia.¹⁴ The Ragusans already had the pleasure of knowing the pasha from the time he held the office of grand vizier. Anxiously waiting for the reply from Vienna on one hand, and deeply troubled by rumors of military movements along the Hungarian-Serbian border and the transfer of troops from Italy to Hungary on the other, the government of Dubrovnik dispatched additional instructions to Bassegli on 25 August.

Bassegli was instructed to pay a secret visit to the pasha, inform him of the menacing operations, and petition for protection against the Venetians, who might take advantage of the situation and provoke skirmishes along the border. Bassegli was specifically instructed to observe the pasha’s reactions, as well as memorize as much of the interview as possible. “It is imperative

¹² *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 147v.

¹³ Bianchi did not volunteer for the intelligence work, as stated by Körbler (»Dubrovčanin Petar Bjanki«: p. 19), but was asked by the Senate in a letter of 28 July 1736; *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 147v.

¹⁴ *Litterae et commissiones Levantis*, ser. 27.1, (hereafter cited as: *Litt. Lev.*), vol. 74, f. 22v (SAD).

that you make every effort not only to remember the statements His Excellency will deliver upon you during the meeting, especially with regard to the Venetian issue, but that you also observe his reactions that your presentation is likely to stir, so that you can inform us of everything in detail upon your return.”¹⁵

Commissioned as tribute envoys in Constantinople on 11 September 1736, Rafo I. Gozze and Jakov D. Bobali also acted as sources. In a letter of 13 November 1736, the Senate demanded that they continue informing about the relations between Constantinople and Moscow and the conflict between them.¹⁶ In case the Russians were to march into Walachia or Moldavia, they were instructed to dispatch a special messenger to provide the government and the merchants who did business there with the up-to-date information. For confidential reasons, the military and political reports were to be ciphered and sent by special delivery: “All news of war and pertaining to the political conditions, you are to cipher and send by special mail.”¹⁷ The envoys took their time at the Porte. In a letter of 7 May 1737 the Senate urged their reply, as they had received nothing for quite some time. The letters might have gone missing and they had no news whatsoever, “for we are here in absolute darkness.”¹⁸

However, Dubrovnik’s prime source in Constantinople was its consul, Luka Chirico.¹⁹ The Senate wrote two letters, one to the envoys and the other to Chirico, prompting him to keep them posted and to code the messages when the circumstances required.²⁰ On 30 May 1738, they insisted on yet greater secrecy, instructing him to address the coded letter to a fictive person by the name of Cileno Calerini. “We draw your closest attention to the fact,” the letter read, “that you dispatch your letters not only via Kotor, but via Bosnia as well, should a confidential and trustworthy person travel that way. You are to cipher these messages and address them to the name you are already

¹⁵ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 29v.

¹⁶ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 39.

¹⁷ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 53.

¹⁸ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 63v.

¹⁹ Consul to Constantinople from 1709 to 1744. Credited for the protection of Republic’s interests at the Congress of Passarowitz in 1718, where he acted as the Turkish language interpreter to the British delegation.

²⁰ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 64.

familiar with—Cileno Calerini—as to conceal both the sender and the addressee with due respect in the present circumstances. Furthermore, you are to put the letters in an envelope addressed to a certain person in Dubrovnik you have regular correspondence with, to keep it strictly confidential.”²¹ At the time, the Ragusans also had their dragoman (interpreter) at the Porte, Andrija Magrijin. This man soon became the leading figure of a scandal. Without the Senate’s permission, he was engaged by Dutch ambassador Cornelis Calcoen to act as his personal interpreter at the Nemirov Congress.²²

For gathering information from the West, the Senate established a number of intelligence outposts throughout Italy.

The Ragusan agent Trajan Lalic²³ was posted in Venice. His mission was of particular importance, as he was in position to obtain significant information concerning both Venice and Vienna.²⁴ He managed to decipher the messages sent by the Venetian ambassador to Vienna²⁵ and bailo in Constantinople.²⁶ He had his connections in Belgrade too,²⁷ and had ways of breaking into the confidential agenda of the Venetian Senate. In a coded letter of 6 October 1737, he informs about a report that the general of Dalmatia submitted before the Venetian Senate in which the Ragusans were blamed for supporting and encouraging the people of Popovo in Dubrovnik’s hinterland, in their intent to fight for the emperor.²⁸

In Rome, Abbot Frano Parenisi operated as an agent of the Republic of Dubrovnik.²⁹ His close relations with the highest Church dignitaries, and

²¹ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 84. On the cipher of the Republic of Dubrovnik see B. Krizman, *Diplomati i konzuli*: pp. 109-123.

²² *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, ff. 93, 131.

²³ A plate commemorating this noteworthy Ragusan was posted on the wall of the Rector’s Palace during his lifetime because in 1764 he saved Dubrovnik from starvation by obtaining the permit from Venice to export grain to the Republic of Dubrovnik. He died in Venice in 1774. For further details on him, see *L’Epidauritano, lunario raguseo*. Ragusa, 1912: p. 62. His correspondence is filed in *DA XVIII*, vol. 3133.

²⁴ *DA XVIII*, vol. 3133, no. 4, 7, 8, 13, 16, 17, 18.

²⁵ *DA XVIII*, vol. 3133, no. 7, 8.

²⁶ *DA XVIII*, vol. 3133, no. 8, 11.

²⁷ *DA XVIII*, vol. 3133, no. 14, 18.

²⁸ *DA XVIII*, vol. 3133, no. 25.

²⁹ Appointed to agent in 1713. B. Krizman, *Diplomati i konzuli*: pp. 183-205.

through them with the political elite as well, placed him in a position to dispatch reports of the highest reliability. His regular reports were either printed or written. In September 1736 he even sent a topographical map of the current military operations.³⁰

Both Lalić's mail from Venice and Parenisi's from Rome was delivered via Ancona. Lalić was instructed to dispatch the original letter directly, and its copy via Ancona. The Ragusan Senate followed the same procedure when sending mail to Venice.

The Ragusan consul to Ancona was Domenico Storani.³¹ Apart from sending mail and fostering the commercial affairs, dispatching reports was also one of his regular duties.

Naples was another important center in Italy, Giusto Vandenneuvel (Joost van den Heuvel) being appointed Ragusan agent to the Kingdom of Naples.³² His correspondence traveled via Barletta and Ragusan consul Filippo Bonelli, who, like the above-mentioned Storani, sent regular reports. Vandenneuvel would send leaflets printed in Naples or Foligno, but also hand-written dispatches. For instance, on 6 September 1739 he sent a report, printed in Mantua, on the battle that had taken place at Grocka on 22 July 1739 between the Ottoman Turks and the Austrians.³³

All the letters dated from this period, sent from Dubrovnik to either Venice, Ancona, Rome, Naples, or Barletta, were habitually rounded off with expressions of gratitude for the received reports and hearty requests for more information on "world current events" (*delle cose correnti del mondo*).

The Ragusans developed an impressive network of intelligence agents in Bosnia. The reports were sent as confidential correspondence and were double-checked through oral statements of persons arriving from Bosnia.³⁴ The Republic of Dubrovnik had its men posted all over Bosnia, assigned to gather information from all sources and keep the Senate posted. Those are the people that Bianchi in his letters refers to as "credible persons" (*persone di credito*), "merchants we are familiar with" (*mercanti a noi ben cogniti*),³⁵ "our

³⁰ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 4.

³¹ His correspondence (1710-1747) is filed in *DA XVIII*, vol. 3110.

³² Dubrovnik's agent from 1734 to 1762. The correspondence is filed in *DA XVIII*, vol. 3093.

³³ *DA XVIII*, vol. 3093, no. 179.

³⁴ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 29.

correspondents” (*nostri corrispondenti*),³⁶ “our agents” (*nostri accommessi*),³⁷ “men of confidence” (*confidenti*),³⁸ “persons specially assigned to see closer into the matter” (*espressi per riconoscer meglio le cose*),³⁹ “confident men assigned for urgent inspection” (*confidenti incaricati per la sollecita inspetione*),⁴⁰ and “our men specially assigned for gathering information” (*nostra gente in ciò espressamente impiegata*).⁴¹

The organization of the Ragusan intelligence network in Bosnia was best described in a letter of the Ragusan government sent to Bianchi in Vienna on 30 July 1737. In one of his reports Bianchi informed the government of the contradiction between the information provided to them and that in the possession of the Court. The reply letter read, “In reference to the matter [contradictory reports], we state that we received the information that we then provided you with from confidential persons who had been in Bosnia themselves, its reliability being confirmed by the merchants we are familiar with and who have returned from Bosnia. In addition, not only did we occasionally assign persons to see into the matter, but we also maintained elaborate correspondence with reliable persons on the spot. Therefore, it is beyond our understanding how such a contradiction might have occurred, unless reports of different dates were in question and their news were the latest.”⁴²

The agents permanently stationed in Bosnia were joined at times by special messengers assigned to observe the reliability of the information collected, with whom the Senate kept regular correspondence.⁴³ Moreover, they kept correspondence with the pasha’s ministers.⁴⁴ If the circumstances required it, the Senate expanded the intelligence network. On 11 September 1737, they delivered to Vienna the information acquired from the “new correspondent

³⁵ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 32.

³⁶ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 38.

³⁷ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 61v.

³⁸ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 74.

³⁹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, ff. 35v and 39.

⁴⁰ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 66v.

⁴¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 143.

⁴² *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 35v.

⁴³ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 35.

⁴⁴ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 11v.

in Albania”.⁴⁵ The list of all the places in which the agents were stationed is difficult to establish. There exist reports from Bijelo Polje,⁴⁶ Novi Pazar,⁴⁷ even the Ottoman camp in Vitovlje.⁴⁸

Thus those were the “good channels” (*buoni canali*), as referred to in the report sent to Vienna on 20 February 1738, through which the Ragusan intelligence service gathered necessary information. Unfortunately, no reports dating from this period and sent by the Bosnian agents have been preserved. Their content can only be partially reconstructed on the basis of the reports dispatched from Dubrovnik to Vienna.

More than one occasion of Ragusan agents acquiring foreign confidential mail have been recorded. For instance, the Ragusans intercepted the letter of a certain official of the Porte addressed to an agha, his subordinate,⁴⁹ and that of a merchant of Sarajevo to his merchant friend.⁵⁰ They also seized the letter a Jew from the Court of the Bosnian pasha had written to a Jew in Italy.⁵¹

Marco Cobasso was Ragusa’s vice consul to Durrës, Albania. On 13 November 1736 he was particularly instructed to provide the Senate with an “abundance of information” from Albania, but also from the Porte and elsewhere.⁵² He was to dispatch the reports by every ship available.⁵³

Whichever the means, the delivery of reports often was a problem in itself. At sea, mail was carried by merchant ships which happened to stop at one port or another or, in case of emergency, by special boats. The length of the voyage depended greatly on the weather conditions. Stormy weather frequently caused a delay of several days. For instance, one ship carrying mail for Barletta was unable to set sail from Dubrovnik from 12 February to 4 March 1736.⁵⁴ The journey from Barletta to Dubrovnik could have been made

⁴⁵ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 73.

⁴⁶ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 39v.

⁴⁷ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 33rv.

⁴⁸ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 210.

⁴⁹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 211v.

⁵⁰ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 222.

⁵¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 23.

⁵² *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 54.

⁵³ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 66v.

⁵⁴ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 125.

in less than 24 hours, but it usually lasted 2-3 days.⁵⁵ A letter from Ancona could reach Dubrovnik in three days. The mail from Rome usually arrived in Dubrovnik in 15 days,⁵⁶ but it could have taken as long as several months.⁵⁷ Venice-Dubrovnik was a 15-day journey as well,⁵⁸ while Rijeka-Dubrovnik took half the time.⁵⁹ Trpanj, on the Pelješac Peninsula, was the main stop-over on the route from Rijeka to Dubrovnik and back. A number of boats were harbored there, awaiting mail from Dubrovnik to be dispatched to Rijeka, where they would receive mail to be shipped back. These fishing boats (*gajetas*) were equipped with oars and sails and carried five-man crews: a captain and four sailors. Mail from Dubrovnik was shipped to Ston, carried by a messenger to the village of Trpanj, and then proceeded to Rijeka by boat. There was no possible means of sending mail to Vienna and receiving a reply in less than a fortnight.⁶⁰ According to the records, one letter from Rijeka to Vienna traveled from 21 July to 2 August 1738.⁶¹ On the average, the letters journeyed 18 to 20 days, with the fastest record being 13 days.⁶²

Gathering information from Bosnia was hampered by the rebellion of the Albanian tribes who marched into Novi Pazar in 1737. During the second Turkish attempt to take possession of the city, several persons were killed, including a Ragusan merchant, while the whereabouts of Frano Bogašinović, also a trader, remained a mystery for quite some time.⁶³ This incident aroused increasing suspicion and extra caution among the Turks.⁶⁴ They trusted no one. They closed all the passages and intercepted all mail without exception.⁶⁵

⁵⁵ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 125.

⁵⁶ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 236.

⁵⁷ The copy of the letter Abbot Parenisi sent from Rome on 23 August 1738 via Venice arrived in Dubrovnik in the last days of January 1739. *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 44.

⁵⁸ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, ff. 155 and 164v.

⁵⁹ Orebić's letters illustrate the great difference in the duration of journeys: seven to thirty days. *DA XVIII*, vol. 3120, no. 54, 58.

⁶⁰ *DA XVIII*, vol. 3120, no. 48.

⁶¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 229.

⁶² *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 40v.

⁶³ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, ff. 48v-49. Bogašinović managed to escape. He reached Dubrovnik, but was warned not to enter the city to avoid the Turkish petition for his extradition. *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 99v.

⁶⁴ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 48v.

⁶⁵ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, ff. 49v and 59.

Intelligence work became extremely dangerous.⁶⁶ On account of one letter the Turks took hold of, two Ragusan missionaries in Plovdiv, Radomirić and Bošković, were killed in May of 1738.⁶⁷ According to the letter of 18 August 1738 addressed to Bianchi, July or early August of the same year also marked the disappearance of the “ablest Ragusan agent,” who was always of assistance to the Republic.⁶⁸

The incident in Novi Pazar scared away the Ragusan tradesmen, who once had been scattered across the Ottoman lands, and significantly reduced the influx of information from these parts. Most of them fled, for no one wanted to do business in a place controlled by the Turkish police.⁶⁹

The problems in delivering the reports were diverse: messengers’ accidents,⁷⁰ loss of mail,⁷¹ or Turkish extra precautionary measures.⁷² All persons suspected of carrying information contrary to Turkish interests were denied passage.⁷³

The reports from Constantinople arrived via three routes: the main Constantinople—Sofia—Niš caravan route, then through Herzegovina via Bileća and Trebinje to Dubrovnik; from Constantinople, through the Vardar valley, to the mouth of the Drim, and then via Kotor to Dubrovnik; or by sea.⁷⁴ Although under ideal conditions the journey could be made in less than 20 days, the correspondence rarely traveled that fast.⁷⁵ The reports from Constantinople, later to be dispatched from Dubrovnik to Vienna, were occasionally

⁶⁶ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 216v.

⁶⁷ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 194v.

⁶⁸ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 230.

⁶⁹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 11v.

⁷⁰ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 130.

⁷¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 134.

⁷² *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 130.

⁷³ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 142v.

⁷⁴ In a letter to Bianchi dated 18 September 1738, the Senate confirms receiving the letter from Constantinople of 22 July. They did not receive the one dated 14 July and sent by regular mail, whereas the letter of 12 August reached Dubrovnik via Kotor. *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 248.

⁷⁵ See Bariša Krekić, »Kurirski saobraćaj Dubrovnika sa Carigradom i Solunom u prvoj polovini XIV. veka.« *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta SAN 1* (1952): p. 118.

thirty,⁷⁶ forty-five,⁷⁷ or even fifty days old.⁷⁸

II

Thanks to its well-organized intelligence service, the Ragusan government was fully acquainted with European events, on both the political and the military level, making every effort not to be taken by surprise. In this way, the Ragusans were preparing themselves, if and when the time came, for a possible change in rulership over the neighboring countries. Their major concern was Venice and the possibility of its creeping up on them from behind and thus cutting off their hinterland trade routes.

The episode of the Austro-Turkish War could be taken as a characteristic example of the political and diplomatic skill of the Dubrovnik Republic. For centuries, the needs of commerce and maintenance of independence had impelled the Ragusans to create suitable instruments for dealing with great powers. In view of the above war and the activities Dubrovnik undertook, I cannot but remember an old saying commonly used to describe a Ragusan in the east Mediterranean: “We are not Christians, we are not Jews, but poor Ragusans” (*Non siamo cristiani, non siamo ebrei, ma poveri Ragusei*).⁷⁹

In a letter of 28 July 1736 addressed to Bianchi, the Senate required information about the possible hostilities between Austria and Turkey.⁸⁰ In his reply of 18 August 1736, Bianchi wrote that if the Ottomans agreed to the Russian and Austrian conditions, there would be no threat of war, at least not until the end of the year, because the frontier fortifications had not yet been provisioned.⁸¹

The Senate contacted Bianchi again, demanding accurate information about possible launch operations, and whether they would be directed toward

⁷⁶ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 108v.

⁷⁷ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 61v.

⁷⁸ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 105.

⁷⁹ Joseph von Hammer, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches*, vol. VII. Pest, 1831: p. 29.

⁸⁰ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2. This bundle contains Bianchi's letters.

⁸¹ According to the Austrian terms, Turkey was to cede Walachia, Moldavia, and Bosnia, as well as break off trade relations with the imperial lands.

Walachia and Moldavia, or closer regions like Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸² This question was stimulated by their Italian source, who had informed them that Bosnia was to become part of the Habsburg Empire, either on a preliminary or a military basis.

Bianchi's letter of 20 October furnished them with the answers. Meanwhile, they received two more letters (dated 15 and 19 September), in which Bianchi reported that the capital talked of nothing but war, and that opinions on the subject varied. He exchanged views with two high-ranking generals who were against the war. However, the Russian empress urged the Austrian troops to march into Walachia and Moldavia, threatening to occupy the country herself and end her relations with Austria—if not openly, then by proclaiming to be under no obligation by former agreements. In Bianchi's opinion, the war would certainly break out the following spring, unless the winter brought a peace agreement negotiated by the Austrian emperor and two great sea powers, the Netherlands and England. He further informed them of General Schmettau's project concerning the formation of a corps, under the command of Prince Hilburghausen and the general himself, that was to strike Bosnia. Bianchi expressed his willingness to say a good word for the Senate to the two military officials, for he was well acquainted with both.

Bianchi's second letter contained alarming news. The decision to launch the campaign was made. The troops were to advance to Belgrade, attack Niš and Vidin, with one corps marching toward Buhać. Bianchi expressed his fear that the Austrian Army, due to the incompetence and inexperience of its two leading warmongers, Prince Hilburghausen and Baron Bartenstein, could suffer a major defeat.

This disturbing information must have reached Dubrovnik on 24 October. The Senate was facing a difficult decision.⁸³ They could send Bianchi's letter to Ali-pasha, contact Hilburghausen and Schmettau, as proposed by Bianchi, or both? In its session held the following day,⁸⁴ the Senate opted for the second possibility, slightly modified, and decided unanimously to write

⁸² The letter of 23 September 1736. *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 168v.

⁸³ This illustrates one of the weaknesses of the intelligence of the time. The Senate was ignorant of the latest events due to the slow communication (the letter containing the breaking news was already on the road for 15 days). Bianchi dispatched it on 10 October, informing them of the withdrawal of the war decision.

⁸⁴ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 157, f. 165v.

to Bianchi.⁸⁵ Bianchi was to make the best of his relations with the said generals and express, on his own behalf, the satisfaction his Republic would experience on learning about the emperor's decisions on Bosnia: that such a grand operation had been entrusted to none other but them. Furthermore, he was to mention the Republic's fortunate position for having such a powerful ruler, a fellow-Catholic, for its neighbor, who had always looked upon Dubrovnik with special affection, offering protection whenever necessary. Bianchi was further instructed to investigate the following strategic issues: would the entire territory taken from the Ottomans remain under the Habsburg rule, or portions of it be entrusted to Venice? If so, which part, in what way, and under what conditions? "We consider this a matter of the gravest importance," the letter read, "and thus, to the best of your ability, try to obtain this information from the said generals, as it could be available to them from their instructions." Due to the gravity of the situation, Bianchi was instructed to send coded weekly reports.

In the meantime, the Senate received two letters from Bianchi. In the first, he informed them that the war had been called off. In the second, instead of reporting as instructed in the Senate's letter of 23 September, he gave a detailed description of the course of the conference in which the decision about waging was reached and the reasons for calling it off.⁸⁶

When it was clear that the Porte had refused to come to terms with the emperor,⁸⁷ on 7 September 1736 a debate was initiated in the conference. During the meeting, the emperor ignored the opinions of the most experienced generals, who voted against war, and other military and government officials. Instead, at the prompting of the conference secretary Bartenstein and his creature Prinz Hilburghausen, he decided to declare war against the Turks without further delay.⁸⁸

As the armistice following the Treaty of Passarowitz was not yet over, the

⁸⁵ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 173v.

⁸⁶ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 5 and 6.

⁸⁷ The Ottomans were determined to resolve their conflict with Russia without the interference of Austria; their peaceful withdrawal from Bosnia was out of the question; and lastly, embargo in peacetime was contrary to natural rights.

⁸⁸ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 6.

emperor's conscience was soothed by his personal confessor, Father Teneman. Teneman heard from Zinzendorf that the emperor was fully informed about the Ottomans' intention to conclude peace and sign a pact with the Persians, to whom the Turks were prepared to cede all the soil once owned by Persia under the reign of Shah Abbas I (Armenia and Babylonia) if the Persians helped them recover the territories lost in the previous wars in Hungary and Albania.

Following the orders to launch an offensive, large military forces were being concentrated in Futak, as well as Hilburghausen's regiments around Osijek. Marshal Palfi was first ordered to advance to Zemun, build bridges across the Danube, and march toward Vidin, keeping the Turks busy while "our hero Hilburghausen," as Bianchi styled it, could invade Bosnia. In Bianchi's words, the wise men expected nothing but a disaster.

Luckily though, new letters from Constantinople arrived almost at the same time as the report on the army Palfi had sent to the emperor through Duke Tirain. The letters were concerned with the ensuing peace agreement between Turkey and Persia, and Russia's consent on the matter, the latter having settled with Azov only. The report on the state of the army was shocking: it was worn out from exhausting marches and disease; the Danube had flooded and destroyed its hay; and morale was low. As the emperor intended to launch operations against the Turks there and then, Marshal Palfi demanded an immediate transfer for he had no intention of losing his reputation after fifty years of loyal service. In addition, he implored the emperor not to put his troops into the inexperienced hands of Hilburghausen, whose projects were nothing but deceitful. Duke Tirain himself informed the emperor to have the duumvir taken to hospital and treated with hellebore. These arguments helped convince the emperor to withdraw his decision on war.

This decision brought some peace onto the European political scene. Bianchi sent no further reports to Dubrovnik until 15 January 1737, meaning that the Ragusan government practically received no news from him between the end of November 1736 and the beginning of March 1737 when two of his letters arrived, dated 15 January and 6 February.⁸⁹

Dubrovnik was experiencing days pregnant with great suspense. Alarmed by the rumors and anxious to have the most reliable information on all the

⁸⁹ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 8 and 9.

current issues, the Senate composed two letters, dated 11 January and 4 February 1737.⁹⁰ In the latter, they asked to be informed, according to the Senate resolution of 30 January 1737,⁹¹ of the exact procedure and the possible intermediaries for obtaining an audition during which they could submit their demands if need be. This evidence speaks in favor of the prevailing opinion in the political circles of Dubrovnik and Europe alike that the Ottoman Empire was dissolving.

The contents of the two impatiently awaited replies from Bianchi revealed most interesting facts: the president of the War Council requested the grand vizier to come to terms with the tsarina of Russia, or else Austria would enter the war; military preparations were on the way despite⁹² the generals' estimate according to which it was hard to believe that Turkey would fight against two very powerful armies—those of Russia and Austria; in case of war, the Venetians would have to make a payment or carry out diversions at the expense of the emperor. Moreover, Bianchi asked the Senate, if it be in their interest, to provide him with a bit of accurate information about the Turks that he could use to trade with the emperor, a doing the Senate could soon profit from.

The Senate was finally furnished with some concrete information according to which they could act, and thanks to which they decided to side with Austria. The situation was discussed twice in the Senate. In its session of 1 March, it was concluded that Bianchi should be informed of the agenda in writing and not, as some members suggested, through a special envoy.⁹³ The Senate also authorized Bianchi to negotiate on behalf of the Republic at the Court.⁹⁴ During the later session, held on 6 March, it was decided to send two copies of the letter. The dispatches left the Republic's chancellery that very day, to be carried to Rijeka by special ship delivery (*cum cymba de Zaptat*).⁹⁵ Two most carefully wrought letters, each the result of lengthy dis-

⁹⁰ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, ff. 192rv and 206-207.

⁹¹ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 157, f. 200v.

⁹² Marshal Palfi bet 10,000 Hungarian golden coins that there would be no war, while another military official bet 20,000 that Palfi was wrong. Bianchi himself believed in the possibility of war. *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 9.

⁹³ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 157, f. 217v. Fourteen senators voted for the assignment of a special representative to Vienna, whereas 21 voted against.

⁹⁴ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 157, f. 217v.

⁹⁵ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 157, f. 218.

cussion, were thus heading for Vienna. Both were addressed to Bianchi, although only one was actually intended for him. The other, containing the news from Bosnia and Herzegovina, was intended for the minister who, in Bianchi's opinion, would be most appropriate. The carefully chosen minister was to get the impression that it was the Senate's first letter to Bianchi. This explains the duplicate scheme. Had, perhaps, the letters got into Turkish hands, the Senate would have been victim of incomparable rage. The letter read as follows:

It has been the long-standing and ever-present disposition of this Republic to witness the glorious armies drive the barbarians away from these here borders and free us from the chains to which we are geographically doomed. We now thank the Almighty, for it seems the hour for our wishes to come true has arrived, and we trust that we shall not only leave behind the troubles you are so well acquainted with, but also feel the grace of Your Royal and Catholic Highness, as we once did of Your father Leopold, who assured us that the borders of his and our land were certain to meet.⁹⁶

They continued with how uneasy they were over Venice's claims to the neighboring territory, a position most disagreeable for His Highness and disastrous for the Republic. They deeply hoped that the emperor would let no other power interfere between the imperial and the Ragusan territory, referring to the agreement of 20 August 1684, and the resolutions of the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718).

The Ragusan government was fully aware of the gravity of the situation. Therefore, Bianchi was particularly instructed to take the greatest precautions in step one, for the slightest mistake could jeopardize the entire plan with irreparable consequences.⁹⁷ The minister whom Bianchi was to choose had to be of utmost confidence. The operation was to remain top secret, and Bianchi was instructed to deny the minister's possible proposition that the Ragusans send their envoy ad hoc. Bianchi was further instructed to encode his reply containing the name of the minister involved. Accepting Bianchi's proposition to provide him with information about the Turks, the Senate also sent

⁹⁶ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 214.

⁹⁷ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 213.

news on the most recent military preparations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 7 March 1737 the Senate replied to the letter of Provost Đivović, dated 9 February, in which he informed about the imperial army being on the alert, citing the exact words from the emperor's proclamation according to which extra expenditures were needed for "the war against Turkey, which, no matter how hard we try to avoid, we shall have to fight." In case the war operations took place, Đivović was instructed to keep the Senate posted weekly.⁹⁸

On that same day, the Senate also produced some supplements to the letter to Bianchi. They required information about the peace negotiators, the English and the Dutch, along with the general attitude of France and Spain.

As mentioned earlier, the letters were dispatched by special boat to Rijeka. Orebić, the Ragusan consul to Rijeka, was instructed to urge Bianchi to speed up the whole operation, and to delay the boat's return until the reply from Vienna.⁹⁹

The reply reached Dubrovnik around 20 April,¹⁰⁰ but the results concerning the given assignment a month later.¹⁰¹ Namely, Bianchi could not organize an urgent audience with Bartenstein, a most influential figure, whom he had chosen for consultation.¹⁰² Thanks to Baron Saidowitz, a mutual friend of Bianchi and Bartenstein, the latter subsequently received Bianchi.

The report containing the results of the audience was composed in Vienna on 13 April.¹⁰³ Bianchi felt more than satisfied. Bartenstein proved cooperative and willing to discuss it with the emperor. On the other hand, Bartenstein suggested that Bianchi persuade the Senate to send highly confidential information on the Turks as often as possible and thus contribute to the Republic's position with the emperor. Bianchi followed his advice, estimating it a very efficient means of approaching Bartenstein.

As for the Venetians, Bianchi wrote: "Most convincingly I assure Your

⁹⁸ *DA XVIII*, vol. 3061, no. 37.

⁹⁹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 220.

¹⁰⁰ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 234v.

¹⁰¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 246.

¹⁰² An audience with Bartenstein was hard to get. Imperial ministers were also among those queuing up for audience. *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no.13.

¹⁰³ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 17.

Excellencies that the Venetians will not do anything I myself had not had the knowledge of earlier and in detail, nor will anything you dread take place before I accomplish the plan."¹⁰⁴

He further reported on the arrival of the messenger with the grand vizier's answer to Königsegg, president of the War Council. The grand vizier has been asked whether he opted for war or peace. Peace was his answer in intent to please the Russians. A congress was to be held in Soroki near the Prut River, but in Vienna this move was understood as a means of buying time. As a result, measures were taken for the army to withdraw from the winter camps and group in Uipalanka, with the strategy of attacking Vidin, and later Bosnia and Albania.

Bianchi's letter of 27 April¹⁰⁵ contained even more information on the war operations and the structure of Hilburghausen's troops, which were ready to launch the attack against Bosnia. In the company of General Palavicini, Bianchi intended to pay a visit to Hilburghausen. He further informed the Senate of Palavicini's scheme to make an official demand, through the emperor, for the Republic to man four frigates built on the Danube, as the Ragusans were reputed to be worthy mariners. Bianchi managed to talk Palavicini out of this scheme, which could expose the Republic.¹⁰⁶

The information available to the Ragusans spoke in favor of the hostilities, their anxiety being further increased by the letter of 1 May.¹⁰⁷ Still, the Ragusans were well aware of their favorable position in Vienna. According to Bianchi, Bartenstein, impressed by the Republic's attitude, had talked with the emperor about Venetia's pretensions, assuring the Ragusans of their safety with Austrians at its borders. Bartenstein, whose wish was the emperor's command, as quoted by Bianchi, persuaded the Republic that no foreign military force would be allowed to approach the Ragusan borders, following the

¹⁰⁴ It is true that Bianchi established very good connections. He made the acquaintance of Marshal Guido von Starenberg, General Palavicini, and Hilburghausen. Baron Saidowitz was a friend of his. He paid frequent visits to Baron Bartenstein and Weber, the military executive. Duke Hamilton, cavalry general, was his close friend and patron, the hospitality of whose home Bianchi enjoyed. He also had connections with Baron Engelhart, commander of Orsova, Marshal Kewenhüller, General Maulli, Russian envoy to Vienna, etc.

¹⁰⁵ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 17.

¹⁰⁶ These frigates and other vessels on the Danube were crewed by men from Hamburg, Senj, Bakar, Rijeka, Trieste, Livorno, and Genoa. *DA XVIII*, vol. 3120/13, letter no. 34.

¹⁰⁷ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 18.

imperial victory, the Republic would enjoy the fruits of its sincere intentions and devotion to the imperial cause. Thus Bartenstein asked the Republic to keep him posted about everything taking place in the Ottoman lands, Bosnia in particular. He also stated that he had been ordered by His Imperial Highness to inform Seckendorf and Hilburghausen of the decision, inviting Bianchi to visit him in Luxemburg as soon as he got hold of some new information.

Bianchi's letter was imbued with optimism. His lines had a soothing effect upon the Ragusans. According to him, the situation was under control as long as it remained secret and information was exchanged regularly. "I cannot explain why, he wrote, I happen to be warmly welcomed by the gentlemen in the government... Chief councilors of the Chamber are my confidants."

The most striking piece of information in the letter read, "Bosnia will most surely come under Austrian rule, either by force or agreement. The Republic is certain to border with the imperial state."¹⁰⁸ These were the emperor's exact words as quoted to Bianchi by Bartenstein. Bianchi considered the whole matter settled. Well-established in Vienna, it was not surprising that the following idea crossed his mind: it would be very wise for the Republic to purchase some of the land the emperor was about to take control over. He asked the Senate to let him know if they were interested and, if so, send him the chart of the entire Republic borderland so that he could negotiate with Baron Bartenstein.

A single reply to Bianchi's three letters was dated 23 May 1737.¹⁰⁹ The certainty with which Bianchi reported on the occupation of Bosnia¹¹⁰ and the news coming from the region itself—no military preparations were taking place—led the Ragusan government to believe that the Turks would suffer a defeat and the imperial army would advance to the Republic's borders. The Senate acted accordingly: Bianchi was instructed to keep a sharp eye on the imperial army, for, prior the Bosnian offensive, Dubrovnik had to secure its interests with the emperor. The payment of tribute (*haraç*) was the major issue. In the preliminaries the emperor was expected to draw up certain conditions by which Dubrovnik was to be exempt from paying tribute to the Turks. Moreover, Vienna had to be informed that the Republic did not border di-

¹⁰⁸ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 18.

¹⁰⁹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, ff. 248-257.

¹¹⁰ Provost Đivović was also to report about the ensuing conflict. *DA XVIII*, vol. 934 and 939, no. 3.

rectly with Bosnia but with Herzegovina, and if Austria had confined the campaign only to Bosnia during the preliminaries, the Ragusans would have found themselves in a far more difficult situation than before.

In terms of Bianchi's suggestion to take advantage of the territorial acquisition (*qualche acquisto*) the Ragusans showed an interest in regaining what they once had and what had been taken from them by the Turks—and in expanding their territory, if the circumstances allowed.

The letter, as Bianchi had requested, was accompanied by a geographic chart, news from Turkey, description of roads through Herzegovina, plus the coded names of all the officials taking part in the negotiations.¹¹¹

The reply from Vienna was expected with the greatest anxiety, as it was to decide whether the Senate would authorize Bianchi to present their cause officially or not. In the Senate session of 27 May 1737, it was decided that the Minor Council was to call the Senate into session immediately upon the arrival of Bianchi's letter.¹¹² Bianchi was strictly instructed to keep the contents of the letter to himself and proceed no further until he received new instructions.

The reply from Vienna soon arrived. On 8 June the Senate decided to instruct Bianchi to acquaint the said minister with the issue of tribute, but keep the matter strictly confidential and use the letter for purposes none other than the stated until further instructed.

The Senate brought this decision based on Bianchi's letter of 18 May,¹¹³ in which he assured them that the outbreak of war was a matter of days, its main goal being the occupation of Bosnia. He expected that General Hilburghausen would march into Bosnia in mid-June, cross the Sava at Gradiška, and advance toward Banja Luka.

Bianchi received detailed instructions about his visit to Bartenstein.¹¹⁴ He was to express the Republic's joy and gratitude for the fulfillment of their prayers to see the victorious army of His Catholic Highness liberate the neighboring territories occupied by their barbarous mutual enemy. In addi-

¹¹¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 54, f. 252.

¹¹² *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 158, f. 30v.

¹¹³ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 19.

¹¹⁴ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, ff. 6-8.

¹¹⁵ None of this was achieved, for very soon things went wrong for Austria.

tion, he was instructed to ask Bartenstein to notify them of the exact date of his meeting with the emperor.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, Bianchi received the Senate's letter of 23 May with news that were well received (*molto gradite*) and the geographic chart he showed to Baron Saidowitz, indicating the territories Venice had pretensions over and the danger it could cause to both Austria and the Republic. He also emphasized the importance of the occupation of Herzegovina. On his way to the congress in Nemirov as the first official negotiator, Marshal Wilcek submitted the memorandum of the Bosnian borders to Bartenstein. Deeply convinced that the war would soon be over,¹¹⁶ Bianchi's patriotic self kept dreaming of the acquisition of new territory (*un nuovo acquisto*). He elaborated on the matter in cipher: the transaction contract should be made in the utmost secrecy; an accurate topographic chart should be drawn with exact measures and descriptions (lowland, hill, forest, river, road, village, town, population); revenues should be estimated and the price proposed; the emperor was to send commissaries to investigate on the very spot. The commissaries were to be warmly received and honored with gifts in hope of a favorable estimate. Bianchi resumed the same subject in his next letter, dreaming of the Republic carving out new borders through "part or all of Herzegovina."¹¹⁷ Here is Bianchi's plan: the Senate should prepare ready money, as Vienna seemed to be deficient in, a fact that was likely to contribute to the success of the transaction; the Ragusans should immediately start working on the contract before the Germans realize what they were selling and before the Venetians saw through the whole scheme. This should all take place prior the dismissal of the congress so that the contract could be officially ratified. And most of all, it must be carried out in the greatest secrecy to avoid other offers. Ciphred out, this letter also contains Bianchi's report of his official intervention regarding the tribute issue.

Bartenstein and Saidowitz¹¹⁸ witnessed the emperor's promise to reward the Ragusans for their ardent informing by introducing a separate clause in

¹¹⁶ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 22.

¹¹⁷ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 23, dated 13 July 1737.

¹¹⁸ Bianchi had acquainted Saidowitz with the matter, while the latter informed Bartenstein. They both discussed it with the emperor.

¹¹⁹ The emperor put such confidence in the Ragusans that he decided to reveal the plan of the forthcoming military operations to them.

the peace treaty, according to which Dubrovnik would be exempt from paying tribute and be placed under Austrian protection.¹¹⁹ The part of the report which was to the best of the Ragusans liking concerned the emperor's hostile attitude towards Venice. The emperor had no intention of having Venice side with him, as their pretensions over Bosnia and Herzegovina coincided. With Hilburghausen already on his way to Bosnia, Bianchi asked the Senate for further instructions, so that he would be able to act accordingly.

The letter was acclaimed by the Senate on 30 July and it was decided to reply¹²⁰ on the same day.¹²¹ Promising to invest more energy into collecting information, the bulk of the letter concerned the instructions that should be forwarded to Hilburghausen. They insisted on the fair treatment of the Ragusan merchants during the annexation of Bosnia, so that this shift would have a minimum effect upon their state of affairs and free trade. As for the acquisition of new territory, about which Bianchi wrote so enthusiastically, the Senate aimed to bring him down to earth with all due respect for his deep patriotism, which led him to believe that the Republic had the means and desire to expand. "Actions such as these, they wrote, may have grave implications and cannot be undertaken with haste." To be more precise, the right moment had not yet come. Thus Bianchi was instructed to leave the matter be.¹²²

In the days to follow the Senate received a couple of letters in which Bianchi reported on the siege of Banja Luka, the seizure of Niš, Seckendorf's advance toward Bosnia, where things did not go as planned, on Bosnia "falling into the imperial hands sooner or later."¹²³ But, prior to this, on 12 August, Dubrovnik learned of the Austrian defeat near Banja Luka, which had taken place on 4 August. The following day the Ragusans were informed of Ali-pasha's proclamation according to which the defeat of the Christian army was to be celebrated throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹²⁴

At first, the Ragusans were stunned by the news of the Austrian defeat.

¹²⁰ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 158, f. 45v.

¹²¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, ff. 35-36.

¹²² The Ragusan government devoted considerable time to the sifting of Bianchi's reports, the evaluation of which always induced them to ask for more details, as in this letter. They wanted to know whether Austria was also inclined to occupy the entire coast of Albania, or just a part of it.

¹²³ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 24-26.

¹²⁴ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 44.

Yet they were the ones who had informed Vienna only a few days before of Ali-pasha's offensive towards Banja Luka and his multiplying troops consisting of volunteers ready to defend their faith and homes.¹²⁵ They were the ones who, soon after the battle at Banja Luka, informed Bianchi of the Turks being so furious that they did not care for their lives but for their faith and hearth, fighting *pro aris et focis*.¹²⁶ Although they had no special food provisions, the Turkish forces proved resistant to all kinds of trials, helping themselves to what they considered common property at times such as these.¹²⁷ This was the Turkish army as described by the Senate, an army practically invincible. The likelihood of a Turkish victory was even greater due to the prevailing discord in the Austrian headquarters, as accounted by Provost wivović.¹²⁸

Nevertheless, the Ragusans were still encouraged¹²⁹ to believe that Austria would make one or two more moves before the season was over.¹³⁰ They did not allow this one defeat to interfere with their regular weekly reports to Vienna,¹³¹ although Bianchi had informed them of the change in plans.¹³² A whiff of hope could still be traced in the news from the capital. According to Bianchi, the strategy to occupy Bosnia before the peace agreement was still on the table.¹³³ Moreover, their anticipation was such that on 21 September 1737 the Senate asked Bianchi to arrange the special delivery of the letters

¹²⁵ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 42.

¹²⁶ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 52v.

¹²⁷ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 52v.

¹²⁸ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 40 and 41.

¹²⁹ In Dubrovnik the Turkish victory was not viewed as a major one, the way the Turks presented it. However, the Ragusan interpretation of the Ottoman defeat at Banja Luka was obviously exaggerated. In the report of 18 August 1737 they speak of 12-15,000 Turks killed. *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 49.

¹³⁰ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 66.

¹³¹ Ragusan reports were highly valued in Vienna and they served as reliable sources at conferences. (*DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 47) According to Bianchi, the reports on Bosnia were excellently worded. (no. 30) From then on, they had to write two copies of the reports, one for the conference, and the other for Bartenstein. (no. 47) Ragusan dispatches are among the richest sources of information about the conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 87.

¹³² *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 27.

¹³³ Bianchi informed on the matter in his letter of 31 August 1737, as well as in those dated 7 September and 11 September. The last letter expresses his doubts about a positive outcome because of the disagreement between the generals, whom he refers to as greedy traders, innkeepers, and butchers.

to the commanders posted in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹³⁴

The events, however, proved different. The commander-in-chief, Marshal Seckendorf, was imprisoned on 14 September. General Doxat surrendered Niš on 18 September.¹³⁵ The Austrian army suffered a shameful defeat which, as Bianchi put it, “shocked the entire world, a debacle hardly comparable with any a battle in human history, and certainly never witnessed in the history of the Habsburgs.”¹³⁶

The Senate finally realized that betting on one horse for more than a year was a fruitless and even a dangerous game. In their letter of 23 October they informed Bianchi of the anxiety with which they looked upon the current events and their development.¹³⁷ Disconcerting news poured in: the defeated and demoralized Austrian troops were retreating; marshals and generals were being tried in Vienna; the Turks were boasting triumphantly, Ali-pasha, a hero, was decorated by the Porte. Could all this be measured with their freedom, and was it worth the risk? Far from it! Not for His Imperial and Catholic Highness nor the Pope of Rome himself. Consequently, they decided to send their envoy and appease Ali-pasha with gifts of silk, sugar, and lemons. The covering letter read: “This here man we send you to pay our respects and share the joy over the glorious deeds your most worthy wisdom has begotten and your valor beyond compare.”¹³⁸

This resolution was passed with only one dissenting vote on 14 November 1737. The man chosen for the mission was dragoman Miho Zarini (not a nobleman as proposed by some). He was to present the Bosnian pasha with 6 rolls of silk, 30 sugar loaves, and two horses laden with lemons.¹³⁹ On 26 November, Zarini received the following instructions: “The events having taken place in Bosnia this year and the news we have lately received, urge the Senate to send a person of particular confidence to the said pasha entrusted with the tasks as follow...”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 74.

¹³⁵ Executed in Belgrade on 28 March 1738.

¹³⁶ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 35 and 36.

¹³⁷ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 85.

¹³⁸ *Copiae litterarum diversarum*, ser. 27.2 (hereafter cited as: *Cop. litt.*), vol. 2, f. 98 (SAD).

¹³⁹ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 158, ff. 60v-61.

¹⁴⁰ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, ff. 69-74v.

Firstly, Zarini was instructed to congratulate the pasha on his masterly and courageous handling of the situation and glorious victories, assure him that it must have been providence trusting him with the wheel of Bosnia in the circumstances, and express most sincere congratulations on behalf of all Ragusans, for there was nothing they treasured more than the well-being of the Porte, and nothing would please them more than the happiness of His Excellency, who had already helped them and would hopefully continue to work for the benefit of the Republic.

The following set of instructions was more delicate. Zarini had to be prepared for all kinds of expected and unexpected questions the pasha could pose, such as why the Republic had kept silent for so long. The pasha's objection could be grounded on the fact that in the period between the arrival of Marko Bassegli to greet the new pasha on 15 July 1736 and Zarini's mission a year later, no special contacts were made with Ali-pasha, nor were any reports exchanged. The embarrassing interview could proceed with the question as to why the Ragusan boat frequented Rijeka, why the Ragusans refused to sell gunpowder to Trebinje, why they imprisoned a certain Jew, and lastly, how they accounted for the incident involving merchants in Novi Pazar.

Although carefully instructed by the Senate, Zarini was faced with a difficult and responsible task. How was he to account for the Ragusan silence? He was to assure the pasha that the Ragusans had always respected and appreciated him, that they did, at first, provide the emins and mirimirans of Trebinje with information on the Venetians, warning certain Turks about the borders. The answers they received had been confusing, for the sultan was on friendly terms with the Germans, whose emperor was an intermediary in negotiating peace with Russia. Their assistance denied, the Ragusans decided to stop informing, as their knowledge was based solely on what they saw and heard from the Turks themselves.¹⁴¹ With the outbreak of hostilities, there seemed to be no point in informing and disturbing His Excellency with the things he was far better acquainted with than they were.¹⁴² Leaving the timing to Zarini, the Ragusans particularly instructed him to inform His Excellency of the Senate's disposition to congratulate him immediately upon the victory at Banja Luka, but having taken into consideration the urgency of the matter and the uncertainty of his whereabouts, they were forced to delay it to

¹⁴¹ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 71v.

¹⁴² *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 71v.

the day, while at heart the Ragusans never forgot their duties.¹⁴³ As for the frequent passage of ships to Rijeka, Zarini was instructed to say that merchants often launched vessels to Venice, Ancona, and Rijeka for business purposes. Trade not being his line, Zarini could say no more. In this “unfamiliar with—uninformed about” pattern Zarini was to answer all other questions.¹⁴⁴

Zarini’s mission to Bosnia was to be kept highly confidential. By no means was he to disclose his cover as a salt dealer travelling to Makarska. One of the precautions was that he could not contact the pasha outside Sarajevo or Travnik unless authorized by the Senate.

Zarini’s audience took place on 7 December 1737 and it turned out to be a complete success. The Ragusan effort bore fruit. How contented and exultant the Ragusans must have been reading Ali-pasha’s letter:

Respected among the Christian princes, honored among the rulers of the Christian people, to the rector of Ragusa and other beys (virtuous be their last hour), following the sincere greetings, I inform you of the arrival of your sincere letter you have sent me through Miho, your dragoman, the contents of which exhibit your centuries-long loyalty, fidelity, and submission to the worthy Ottoman Porte, and the affection and disposition you have shown towards my person. The display of your devotion and friendship joyed me so, in the name of which I have penned and sent, through your dragoman Miho, this warm letter, upon the delivery of which feel disposed to continue with this amiable friendship, peace be upon them who follow the right path.¹⁴⁵

Having received a response well beyond their expectations, the Ragusan Senate decided to resume its old tactics.¹⁴⁶ From then until the end of the war, they kept sending regular reports both to Vienna and to Bosnia. The information they gathered on the Turks was sent to Vienna, while the news received from Vienna and other centers was forwarded to Bosnia.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 72.

¹⁴⁴ *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 72.

¹⁴⁵ *Acta Turcarum*, B 14/61 (SAD).

¹⁴⁶ See Jorjo Tadić, *Španija i Dubrovnik u 16. veku*. Posebna izdanja, 93. Beograd: SKA, 1932: p. 56.

¹⁴⁷ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 56; *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74; *Cop. litt.*, vol. 2, *passim*.

The double role they played had its weaknesses, too. In early 1738, one Viennese newspaper severely criticized the Ragusans for collaborating with the Turks. This was occasioned by the transit of food from Morea to Bosnia via Dubrovnik,¹⁴⁸ as well as the crossing of the Albanian troops across the Ragusan territory on their way to Bosnia.¹⁴⁹ However, Ministers Weber and Bartenstein showed a lot of consideration for the matter,¹⁵⁰ and the Ragusans themselves felt no remorse. They considered it no sin; moreover, each and every ruler should sympathize with them. "After all, our relations with the Turks can be easily understood by every ruler or even a man unaccomplished in politics."¹⁵¹

Another incident took place at the beginning of 1738, when Ali-pasha prohibited the export of food from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dubrovnik included. In order to obtain the special permit for the free export of at least some basic foodstuffs, they sent Zarini on 29 March 1738.¹⁵² He was granted the permit, provided that the imported food was not exported further. This, however, prompted Venice to accuse Dubrovnik of hindering their hinterland trade.¹⁵³

The Austro-Turkish War left deep scars on the state of Ragusan commerce. In order to improve its financial position, on 6 February 1738 the Ragusans contacted King Charles, king of the Two Sicilies, requesting him to authorize an increase of interest on the capital owned by the Ragusan merchants in his kingdom.¹⁵⁴ On 4 March the Ragusans also wrote to Cardinal Barberini on the same matter, asking him to issue a ten year-certificate according to which half of the interest earned on their capital, intended for the Church,

¹⁴⁸ The complete correspondence between the Dubrovnik authorities and Ali-pasha on the issue of food transport has been preserved. Due to the lack of horses, food could not be transported immediately and could thus spoil. Pasha finally ordered its sale. *Acta Turcarum*, B 14/35, 37, 40, 41, 43, 44; *Cop. litt.*, vol. 2, ff. 105, 106, 130v.

¹⁴⁹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, ff. 143rv, 195; vol. 56, ff. 105-106.

¹⁵⁰ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 49 of 12 April 1738.

¹⁵¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 92. An almost identical phrase was used by the Ragusans back in 1530 in their letter to the city of Messina, when they were accused before Charles V of having friendly relations with the Turks and recognizing their protectorate. See J. Tadić, *Španija i Dubrovnik u 16. veku*: p. 37.

¹⁵² *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 77.

¹⁵³ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 56, f. 26.

¹⁵⁴ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 121.

could be used for public needs.¹⁵⁵

The Ragusans had some additional problems during the upheavals in Montenegro in mid-1738, but there were no serious consequences. They did not fail to inform Vienna of these events on 10 May.¹⁵⁶ The grouping of Montenegrins forced Ali-pasha to keep his men posted along the border of Montenegro. He informed the Ragusans about it and warned them to be on the alert.¹⁵⁷ The measures taken by the Senate consisted in sending a nobleman, Mato Natali, to Mrcine, on the Ragusan border with Montenegro, with the task to organize the Republic's defense.¹⁵⁸

The Ragusans continued their simultaneous activity of informing Vienna and the Ottoman Turks, although the odds seemed to be against the Austrians. Tormented with the plague in Hungary and Transylvania¹⁵⁹ and commanded by incompetent generals,¹⁶⁰ the Austrian Army was far from victory.

¹⁵⁵ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 136v.

¹⁵⁶ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 177v.

¹⁵⁷ *Cop. litt.*, vol. 2, f. 144.

¹⁵⁸ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 184.

¹⁵⁹ *DA XVIII*, vol. 934 and 939, no. 61, 67, 68, 70.

¹⁶⁰ Rumors in Vienna had it that the emperor passed a scornful remark to Marshal Palfi: "Displeased indeed we are with you, as well as with other generals who understand nothing." (*DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 84). Ministers and generals were held up as objects of ridicule in Vienna. Bianchi quotes them in letter no. 42:

Starenberg: L'on dit que je suis bien politique et flateur on dira ce qu'on voudra, je aime l'argent contant.

Zinzendorf: Je pense et mange bien et l'on ne m'écoute en rien.

Harrah: Je me mèle de tout, je contredis en rien mon unique but est d'amaser du bien.

Königseg: Je pense et représente ce qui est nécessaire et je ne fais, que ce qu'on me fait faire.

Bartenstein: Pour avoir cru à deux fanfarons je passe dans le monde pour un gran cuion.

Palfi: La longue expérience ne sert de rien quand on n'a point les grâces de Bartenstein.

Sackendorf: Je ne prend pour mon maître que ce qu'on me donne et préfère mon profit à celui de la couronne.

Filippi: Je consent à tout, m'oppose à rien. Je suis maréchal sans argent et sans bien.

Kewenüller: Je suis fourbe et intrigant de profession pour parvenir à mon but, je fais tout confusion.

Hilburghausen: Je puis dire en conscience que rien ne me manque, qu'une longue expérience.

Wallis: J'ai de l'expérience, de l'argent et de la santé et on fait autant de cas de moi, que d'un âne bête.

Weber: Je suis petit, je glisse partout je file de l'or, et ma femme de bijoux.

According to hearsay, a certain marshal, when asked about his opinion on Hilburghausen, replied: "Prince Hilburghausen has fire in his heart and straw in his head" (*DA XVIII*, vol. 934 and 939, no. 46).

That is why the Senate's major concern was to keep its intelligence activities as secret as possible. For example, Bianchi required instructions as to how to recommend the Republic to Minister Weber, who was inclined to help the Ragusans and who played an important role in the peace negotiations.¹⁶¹ In a letter dated 10 April 1738, the Senate wrote:

It pleases us to witness how ambitiously thoughtful you are at all times when the interests of the state are in question. However, we find it necessary to warn you of the secrecy under which you are to recommend the Republic to him [Weber], just as vividly as you did earlier to Bartenstein—partly in order to avoid the tempest that could buffet us, you, or anyone else in the event that it got into the open that such information was sent from here, and partly in order for us to be able to continue sending it.¹⁶²

Concerning the recommendation, Bianchi was to speak to Weber on the general issues, for the Senate felt that no benefit and only harm would be done to their relations with the Turks if the emperor launched any of their issues under the circumstances.¹⁶³

Bianchi was perfectly aware of the Republic's position, which he commented on metaphorically in his next letter: "I am aware that the emperor's protection at this moment means to Your Excellencies the same as the early spring sunshine to the human body, mellowing the juices but not able to control them, moreover, serious consequences could lie ahead."¹⁶⁴

In the end, the large-scale Austrian preparations for an offensive in 1739 proved fruitless as anticipated.¹⁶⁵ The heavy blow the Austrian troops suffered at Grocka on 22 July 1739 enabled the Turks to advance further to Belgrade.¹⁶⁶

In the meantime, Austrian diplomats were busy with peace negotiations. Duke Gross paid several visits to the camp of the grand vizier, but with little

¹⁶¹ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 156.

¹⁶² *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 46 of 8 March 1738.

¹⁶³ *Litt. Pon.*, vol. 55, f. 156v.

¹⁶⁴ *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 52 of 4 May 1738.

¹⁶⁵ "Weapons are useless without the brains," wrote Bianchi in code. *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 84.

¹⁶⁶ Bianchi comments on this defeat as divine condemnation. *DA XVIII*, vol. 958/2, no. 123. Letter no. 122 contains the description of the battle at Grocka as seen by an eyewitness.

success, as the Turks demanded the surrender of Belgrade to be included in the preliminary. In the final stage of the peace talks Gross was accompanied by Minister Neipperg.¹⁶⁷

On 1 September 1739, Austria finally came to terms with the Turks in a treaty most unfavorable for Vienna. The treaty entrusted the whole territory of Serbia to the Turks, including Belgrade and all the territory lost by the Treaty of Passarowitz except for the city of Furjan, at the Croatian border. The fortifications of Belgrade had to be torn down at Austria's expense.¹⁶⁸ The messenger carrying these news, General d'Argenta Meray, arrived in Vienna on 7 September. At first, it was generally considered that only an outline of the peace treaty was in question. Thus on 9 September Bianchi wrote that the Austrians generally felt that the terms would not be accepted and hostilities would be resumed unless a peace agreement based on the *uti possidetis* principle was reached.

However, a further factor in inducing the emperor to conclude peace with the Turks was the military failure of General Wallis, who had already opened the way for the Ottomans to march into Belgrade.¹⁶⁹

The Ragusans received news of the treaty only a few days after it had been signed, their source being none other than Ali-pasha himself:

Well-disposed I here inform you of the German Army and their intention to fight battle with our victorious and celebrated army at Kisdžik, where, with the help of Lord the Savior, the Turkish people were the victors, with the German troops overpowered and pursued to Belgrade. Unable to resist, they marched towards the Danube, while the imperial army besieged Belgrade, and after forty difficult days the Germans begged for peace through the French envoy under the condition of surrendering Belgrade and Šabac and all the lands they have come to possess in Karawalachia and in Bosnia as far as the Una river, in the same way as in the Karlowitz Treaty. In the name of the said condi-

¹⁶⁷ DA XVIII, vol. 958/2, no. 126 and 127.

¹⁶⁸ The Turks, namely, offered several million for Belgrade and its fortifications, Austria settling for ten million. The transaction was pure hearsay. Belgrade was devastated in less than 10 months. DA XVIII, vol. 958/2, no. 135.

¹⁶⁹ According to the historian Mayer, that was the worst moment the emperor experienced in his entire reign (*Geschichte des Österreichs* II: p. 75).

tions on 1 September peace was signed and confirmed by both sides. This here affair motivated me to write you this friendly note, so that you, too, know the way it was done and contracted...¹⁷⁰

The letter was delivered to the Ragusans by one of Ali-pasha's aghas accompanied by an attendant. The agha received a reward of 30 Venetian sequins¹⁷¹ and a cloth valued to 11 ducats and 16 groschen, while the attendant received 2 sequins. The two were to carry the following sweet-talking reply dated 12 September 1739: "The overwhelming joy with which we have received the commendable letter of your serene and honorable lordship, carrying happy and good news about the mighty Empire having invaded Belgrade and accorded peace to the German emperor who had pleaded for it, we cannot describe, but your most profound wisdom, which knows our heart, will easily sense it. The victory and glory of the worthy Porte should be celebrated by all those fortunate to breathe in the shadow of its prosperity; as we seek our being and shelter in the mercy of the glorious Empire. We thank you in this particular way for the promptness with which you have informed us, the very manner exhibiting your affection for us. It joys us to see your victories, famed for wisdom and courage, celebrated far and wide..."¹⁷²

The Ragusans did not miss the occasion to congratulate Ali-pasha again and present him with extra gifts through the tribute envoys, who, on 21 October, were intentionally instructed to pass through Bosnia on their way to Constantinople.¹⁷³

This could be considered the closing page of the diplomatic activity of the Dubrovnik Republic in the Austro-Turkish War.

III

In this war Ragusan diplomacy acted within the framework it had created for these and similar situations. Whenever imperiled by Venice, the Repub-

¹⁷⁰ *Acta Turcarum*, B 14/50 (translated from Turkish).

¹⁷¹ *Cons. Rog.*, vol. 159, f. 50v.

¹⁷² *Cop. litt.*, vol. 2, f. 152.

¹⁷³ He was to be presented with a roll of silk and a box of scents. *Litt. Lev.*, vol. 74, f. 135v.

lic of Dubrovnik sought to secure its interests with Venetia's enemies, the Turks, the Spaniards, or the French. In this case Austria's interests directly collided with those of Venice. Guided by reason, the Republic decided to align with Austria against Venice. Like the rest of Europe, Dubrovnik wrongly estimated the outcome of the military campaign. Hoping for an Ottoman withdrawal, the Republic took all the measures in order to prevent Venice from perching on its borders and cutting it off from the vital inland routes. Ragusan diplomatic activity focused on the catholic Austria, which was to guarantee the freedom of its trade and stimulate its maritime commerce by chartering Ragusan ships. Having learned much from experience, Dubrovnik sensed that this episode required cool heads and the utmost caution. They had no intention of repeating the unpleasant experience after Kara Mustafa's defeat at Vienna when their diplomatic relations with the Turks were officially broken off and they sided with Austria. Doctor Bianchi, their correspondent in Vienna, maintained his unofficial status throughout the war. There were suggestions, however, to post an official representative there, but the Senate refused to consider such an idea. The Republic showed impressive foresightedness when the purchase of new territory was concerned, had the Austrians won.

Their estimate proven wrong, the Republic did not hesitate to coordinate its diplomatic activity with its interests. Still balancing between Turkey and Austria, once again Dubrovnik proved more inclined toward Turkey.

As for the Republic's intelligence activity in this war, its role could be viewed as two-fold: on one hand, its task was to cover accurately the political situation and war operations related to its national security and foreign policy, and on the other, it placed itself in the service of the warring parties in an attempt to indebt and humor them. Pursuing the same goal for centuries, there is no doubt about the contribution of the Ragusan intelligence to the development and efficiency of its diplomacy.