

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN DUBROVNIK AND VENICE 1751-1754

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ABSTRACT: The conflict between Dubrovnik and Venice 1751-1754 reflected the conflict between their interests and principles which were also in collision with those of the Tripolitan corsairs. The Ottomans, from whom all three sides expected help, found themselves in a very unpleasant position. It was simply impossible to meet the expectations of all sides, i.e. their subjects the Tripolitans, their protégé and tax-payer - Dubrovnik - and their newly fledged friends - the Venetians, all had different conflicting interests. In the end, it was Dubrovnik's turn to celebrate. The third solution found in Travnik, later known as the "Travnik Agreement", was completely in its favor.

The old policy of imposing predominance on the Adriatic was carried out with particular consistency by the Venetians towards the Republic of Dubrovnik. In the 1620s they started collecting full duty even from those ships from Dubrovnik that navigated along the Adriatic without entering the Venetian harbours. At the Dubrovnik envoy's request for free navigation, the Venetian authorities responded that collecting duty was necessary, for the, among other things, maintenance of the harbour of Split, which was promoted primarily as

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This article has been published in Croatian under the following title: »Spor između Dubrovnika i Venecije 1751-1754.« *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 29 (1991): 99-116.

a rival of Dubrovnik. Some time later, in 1635, solving the conflict of Molunat, Lokrum, and Sušac - "the islands that had sprung up from the Venetian Sea", as the Venetians liked to point out - the Dubrovnik envoy tried once again to secure free navigation. The Venetian authorities again rejected the request under the pretext that the collected duty was used for maintaining Venice's fleet of warships, which provided secure navigation along the Adriatic. Nevertheless, they gave in to some extent. On 11 August 1635, after the negotiations had been finished, the Venetian authorities issued a statement according to which, among other things, seamen from Dubrovnik were to pay full duty only in Venetian harbours. On the Adriatic, they were to pay ten ducats for large ships and five for small ones. This toll was called the "transit". The conflict with the Venetians from the mid-eighteenth century, by which time all European countries except Dubrovnik had succeeded in obtaining the right to free navigation along the Adriatic, was used by the inhabitants of Dubrovnik to withhold the "transit". Making use of the fact that the negotiations in 1635 were not completed by the signing of a contract, the representatives of the Republic of Dubrovnik claimed that they had actually never agreed to pay the "transit". After 1635, the pressures from the Venetian side stopped for a while, so they gave up claiming protection from the Ottomans. After that, the Candian War broke out, and the matter of the "transit" had to be postponed again.¹

The above-mentioned Venetian naval fleet - which was commanded by the captain of the Bay and protected merchants from corsairs, considering this their exclusive right - was not very efficient. During the 18th century the Republic of Dubrovnik filed complaints about the withholding of their right to self-defence at sea. They cited how the Berber corsairs entered the Adriatic without concern, used natural shelters on deserted stretches of coastline, and plundered at will, while the Venetian protection fleet was nowhere to be seen or showed up too late. They wondered if it would be more effective to stand at the Bay's entrance and oppose the armed Berber ships. Once they had been forced to arm two fustas (small galleys), but the Venetians very soon seized them and the crew was put in stocks. Then, in the middle of the 18th century, the Porta came to the aid of the Republic, helping it to establish good relations with the Ottoman provinces in North Africa.²

¹ Vinko Foretić, *Povijest Dubrovnika do 1808*, vol. II, Zagreb: NZMH, 1980, pp. 96, 97, 100, 101, 102.

² *Lettere di Ponente*, vol. 63, f. 119'-120'. Povijesni arhiv Dubrovnik (Historical Archive of Dubrovnik), abbr. PAD.

After a short time two Tripolitan corsair ships entered Dubrovnik's harbour. The Venetians, who themselves were at war both with Tripoli, and with Algeria and Tunisia, did everything in their power to disturb the good relations between Dubrovnik and Tripoli, and to imperil Dubrovnik's seafaring, which was experiencing a sudden boom just at that time.

Namely, in November 1751 reis (captain of a corsair ship) Nuh from Tripoli seized a trabacul in Albanian waters that was loaded with maize and wheat and owned by a Venetian subject from Novi (today's Herceg-Novi). Because of bad weather, with two Venetian galleys in pursuit, the reis entered the Dubrovnik city harbour on 30 November. The Venetian galleys anchored in Gruž's harbour, and their commander, Corner, demanded that the Dubrovnik authorities hand over the trabacul to him and arrest the corsair. Receiving no answer, he repeated his request, at which the reply from Dubrovnik was that they did not want to use force in their own harbour. Corner then moved to the harbour at Cavtat. In the meantime, Liho Meta, a corsair from Ulcinj, joined the reis from Tripoli in the city harbour and bought the trabacul from him. According to his own statement, reis Nuh had been ready to negotiate first with the owner of the seized ship who had been called by the Dubrovnik government. Prevented from doing so by the Venetian authorities, who claimed that they would regain possession of the ship without parleying, the ship was bought by Liho and resold on the spot to merchants from Trebinje for 450 cekins.³

In the mid-December of the same year, another Tripolitan corsair ship appeared in Dubrovnik waters commanded by reis Jusuf. Having caught sight of it, the Venetian galleys sailed out and headed towards it. A battle ensued. Although Jusuf was helped by Tripolitans from the harbour and Turkish merchants who happened to be in the Lazaret (quarantine), who shot at the Venetians from land, it was clear that the corsair was going to be defeated. However, the Venetians did not take advantage of their superior might, but - according to witnesses - seemed only to want to frighten the corsair. In this way, at nightfall, reis Jusuf managed to sail undamaged into the Dubrovnik city harbour. Informed about all these events, General Providur Girolamo Balbi joined Corner with his galleys. They moved into the Gruž harbour from where

³ *Lettere di Levante*, vol. 77b, f. 19, 19^v; *Isprave i akti*, ser. 76 (PAD), 18, 142.3181c/1 (reis Nuh's letter to the kapudan-pasha).

they requested the Dubrovnik authorities to deliver the seized trabacul. Otherwise, they would enter the harbour, as the sea washing it was Venetian, too. Providur Balbi referred to the firman issued at the request of the bailiff to the Durres emin (a Turkish customs officer) in September 1751. According to this firman, Berber corsairs could not be offered shelter in harbours or help in manpower, food, and water. He also mentioned the firman issued in 1742, according to which, beside the above mentioned, no contact with corsairs was allowed, and any corsair reis who did not act in accordance with this order should be arrested. The Dubrovnik authorities replied that, according to the Porta's order, they were obliged to maintain good relations with Tripoli, and that the only thing they could do was to forbid the purchase of the seized trabacul by their subjects. At the same time they also expressed their thanks for the copy of the firman "which concerns the Skadar sanjak and the Durres district", thus making it known that they were not subject to the sultan's order in question. Three days later they took precautionary measures. The garrison of the Molo fortress was given instructions. If they saw the Venetians approaching the city harbour, they were to send the usual warning smoke signal, and then, if necessary, they were to fire first without, and then with, ammunition. The Revelin fortress garrison was to begin firing when the firing with ammunition began from Molo, and they were to continue until the Venetians gave up their attempts to enter the harbour.⁴

The forebodings of Dubrovnik did not come about. Upon invitation from Novi, the Providur hastily sailed off - keeping at some distance from the walls - and Corner returned to Cavtat with two galleys. After the weather improved somewhat, the sailors from Tripoli sailed away at night on 26 December of the same year. Firing into the air, they tried to provoke the Venetians. The latter did not fire back, for they did not want to accept fighting at night; nor did they do anything the following two days, as long as the corsairs were in sight because of unfavourable wind. On the third day, reis Nuh was forced to return to the city harbour. Then the galleys sailed out and followed him, firing their cannons. The reis managed to move into the harbour. Positioning the galleys for battle near Lokrum, the crew of the galley continued firing at the harbour and the ships in it, at the fortress, the walls, and the town, and it seems that a

⁴ *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 86-89; *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 19'-20'. Miroslav Vanino, »Ljetopis dubrovačkoga kolegija«. *Vrela i prinosi* 7 (1973), pp. 116, 117; The general-providur's letters - *Isprave i akti* 18. 113, 3152, 100.

few cannon-balls fell on the outskirts of the other side of the town. After a smoke signal and firing without ammunition, the Dubrovnik crew was finally forced to use it in the end, doing their best not to hit the target. The galleys returned to Cavtat slightly damaged by the corsairs' cannons. The consuls of the French king and the Austrian empress, whose ships were anchored in the harbour, immediately complained to the Venetian commander. The same was done by the emin (a Turkish customs officer in the Dubrovnik harbour). The Dubrovnik government also complained about Corner's action to the General Providur in Novi.⁵

By their actions, the Venetians had violated the generally accepted international law of that time which stated that the pursuit of a ship had to cease after its arrival within cannon range of a neutral coast.⁶ As mentioned above, one of the reasons for forming the regular Venetian war fleet had been to provide protection from corsairs. Corner, the commander of the Venetian galleys, did not even try to engage them when the opportunity arose, namely when reis Nuh and reis Jusuf left the city harbour. According to Corner, it was useless to fight outside of the Dubrovnik walls and Dubrovnik waters. Corner and the General Providur presented completely different reports about this event to the Venetian government. One can only conclude that they had acted without authorization. It was noted in the Venetian source-material that the galleys started following the corsairs as soon as they sailed out, that they had forced reis Nuh to turn back, and that pursuing him to the entrance of the Dubrovnik harbour, they had fired several shots.⁷

At European courts, the Venetians then started accusing the Dubrovnik Republic of offering shelter to maritime bandits, while at the same time requesting help from the Porta in returning the corsair spoils. Finding itself in a very difficult position, Dubrovnik also made its move. It was only to be expected that Christian countries - excluding, of course, those which had signed peace treaties with North African Ottoman provinces such as Tunisia, Algeria, and Tripoli - would not support a state which offered shelter to Berber corsairs. So Dubrovnik initiated a comprehensive correspondence in order to

⁵ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 20, 20^v; M. Vanino. »Ljetopis dubrovačkog kolegija«, pp. 116, 117; *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 94^v-96^v.

⁶ Vladimir Koščak. *Travnički sporazum*, no.3, Zagreb, 1953, p. 38.

⁷ Šime Ljubić. *O odnošajih medju republikom Mletačkom i Dubrovačkom*. JAZU, vol. LIV, Zagreb, 1880: pp.137, 138.

gather support in the East, and to justify itself in the West. They turned to King Louis XV of France, whose consul in Istanbul, Desalleurs, was to be of great help in this conflict to Proculo, the envoy from Dubrovnik. Monsignor Veterani, Dubrovnik's consul in Rome, was sent to Pope Benedict XIV so that His Holiness could learn the real truth and could favourably judge the actions of the Dubrovnik authorities, thus returning peace to the city. Cardinal Giovanni Albani was requested to support Veterani. Monsignor Nikola Đivović was sent to Maria Theresa. Before being received, however, he had to visit the leading ministers and gain their support. The empress was also humbly asked for her elevated approval. Don Giusto Vandeneuvel, Dubrovnik's consul in Naples, explained what had happened to Fogliani, the Foreign Minister, who promised to inform the king of the details. Then, at the beginning of the conflict, the Naples court supported the Republic. Fogliani told Vandeneuvel that the incident with the corsair boats was one of great delicacy, because the countries in Italy, especially the Naples court, were worried because the right of asylum which had been given to corsairs in the harbours of the Grand Duke of Tuscany had already considerably decreased the stability of trade. Ships from Naples were very often seized by corsairs from North Africa, so it was easy to understand the concerns of the Naples. Nevertheless, Dubrovnik's conduct was looked differently because of their relation with the Ottoman Empire. It was also said that the Venetians were not protecting the Adriatic in an appropriate manner, and that French representatives in Naples were also supporting Dubrovnik.⁸

In detailed petitions sent to the aforementioned sovereigns by the Dubrovnik authorities, the incompetence of the captain of the Bay of Venice and the incident concerning two fustas from Dubrovnik - armed for self-defence and seized by the Venetians - were often mentioned. Explaining the reasons for accepting corsairs in its harbour, the Dubrovnik government mentioned the Berber custom of offering shelter in its harbours even to the ships from the countries of their enemies, adding that even Malta - then owned by the Knights of Sir John, who had always been enemies of the corsairs from North Africa - acted in the same way towards enemy ships. The government also mentioned that, ten years previously, the corsairs from Tripoli had severely threatened seafaring of

⁸ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 104-106'; *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 89'-94', 105-108', 113', 114, 115, 115', 116-119', 124'-130; Don Giusto Vandeneuvel's letters, *Isprave i akti*, 18, 44.3075, 1.

Dubrovnik. Thanks to the sultan, good relations had been established, and the consulate of Dubrovnik was opened in Tripoli in 1744.⁹

Coming to the problem of the “transit”, the government mentioned that only captains from Dubrovnik were paying it, regardless of whether their ships carried cargo or not. New taxes were also being paid by fishermen and coral divers from Dubrovnik. Furthermore, the Venetians were cutting wood on the islands near Dubrovnik and selling it in Venice.¹⁰

Regarding correspondence with the Ottomans, by the end of 1751 letters were sent to the Grand Vizier, to his kethüda, i.e. agent, to the reis-effendi, i.e. foreign minister, to the kapudan-pasha and to the deputy of the Tripoli province at the Porta, Sungur Ali-agma. At the beginning of the following year, Senator Ivan Proculo came to the Porta as the Dubrovnik envoy. His task was to visit all the ministers to whom letters had been sent earlier and to report about conditions in the Republic. He brought gifts, which were inevitable when the Ottomans were concerned. At the same time he requested the issuing of a hatisherif- a decree of the Sultan by which the Venetians would be forbidden to collect the “transit” and to cause any other damage whatsoever; and of a firman of the Bosnian pasha in order to protect the interests of the Republic, since the Bosnian pashaluk (the pasha’s territory of jurisdiction) bordered with both Dubrovnik and Venetian Dalmatia, and because the Porta was far away. Reis Nuh also wrote to the kapudan-pasha and to Sungur Ali-agma informing them about the Venetian cannon fire on Dubrovnik.¹¹ At the request of Hidža, the Dubrovnik envoy in Travnik, Abdi,¹² the former Bosnian pasha, wrote to the General Providur, warning him that the Porta had been fully informed. He also wrote to the Grand Vizier in keeping with the petition of the emin from Dubrovnik. The Dubrovnik envoy obtained a buyrundia - a high official order

⁹ In any case the Sultan had to act as intermediary in making peace with Tunisia, Tripoli, Algeria, and that European country with which he had made peace earlier, which was not an easy task. After he had helped Dubrovnik, its government started to open consular representative offices, and every third year the Dubrovnik poll-tax envoys regularly requested the issuing of firmans by which the North African corsairs were warned that they were not permitted to threaten navigators from Dubrovnik.

¹⁰ *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 109-113, 119’-124, 130-134’.

¹¹ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 18-31’; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/7 (reis Nuh’s letter to the kapudan-pasha), 8 (Nuh’s letter to Sungur Ali-agma).

¹² A former Bosnian pasha, Abdi, was appointed pasha of Negropont, and the pasha of Negropont, Sherif Halil, became Bosnian pasha. Sherif Halil died before arriving at Travnik, and was replaced by Ahmed pasha Čupričić.

in the Ottoman Empire - for purchasing gunpowder in Fojnica for the defence of the city.¹³

In the middle of January 1752 the Venetians started to put ashore on Lokrum. They spread a rumour that they had put cannons ashore and that they were building a field fortification. Emin Mehmed, who wrote a report about this event, tried to get to Lokrum himself and talk with the Venetians. Since he had to give up on this intention, because Venetian soldiers chased him away by gunfire, he set off for the Venetian galleys anchored near the island. Commander Corner promised him that he would get in touch with the General Providur and withdraw his men as soon as he received the General Providur's order. After some time had elapsed, the Venetians did retreat from Lokrum, but this in no way meant an end to their provocations. According to the emin's report, the crews from three Venetian galleys and four fustas anchored near Dubrovnik were continually mistreating the subjects of Dubrovnik and keeping the harbour blockaded. The Venetians took food away from the subjects of Dubrovnik without any compensation; they beat them and insulted them, using the most abusive language; and they broke into their orchards and cut down fruit trees, using them as firewood. They also caught a courier who was carrying the Senate's letter, confiscated it, and threw the courier in chains on one of the galleys.¹⁴ The Dubrovnik government sent an envoy to Suleiman, pasha of Trebinje, asking him to issue a threat to the General Providur. Having read the emin's report, the pasha wrote to the Providur with the accusation that the latter's main goals were to keep the subjects of Dubrovnik submissive, and to harass the ships sailing in and out of Dubrovnik harbour. The Providur answered flatly that the accusations of the Dubrovnik government were mere lies.¹⁵

The main struggle took place at the Porta. The Venetian bailiff requested a firman proscribing Dubrovnik's welcoming of Berber corsairs, and that the seized trabacul and cargo should be returned to its owner. At the same time, Proculo was reporting regularly on misdeeds committed against the subjects

¹³ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 13-16'; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/9 and 11 (Hidža's letter from Travnik), 13 (the former Bosnian pasha Abdi's letter to the general providur).

¹⁴ *Acta Turcarum*, no. 4569, PAD.

¹⁵ *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/17 (former Klis pasha Suleiman's letter to the Dubrovnik government). Bosdari's letters from Zadar, *Isprave i akti*, 18, 165.3218, 114. Š. Ljubić. *O odnošajih medju republikom Mletačkom i Dubrovačkom*, p. 138.

of Dubrovnik. An agreement was reached with the bailiff in February. The Grand Vizier issued a firman according to which the trabacul was to be returned, with Dubrovnik acting as intermediary. After that, the Venetian galleys would leave, so that the corsair could pass freely. Sungur Ali-agma and the kapudan-pasha informed reis Nuh about this matter, explaining the Porta's behaviour by the fact that the Empire was then at peace with Venice. Since the Tripoli province was not ready to pay compensation for the seized ship, and the Venetians were not prepared to move until this was done, this was the only way out. In the future, Tripoli was to take care not to cause any damage either to Dubrovnik or to Venice. Dubrovnik was informed about the thankless role of intermediary, with the promise of the Grand Vizier that the Porta would never accede to the bailiff's demand that Dubrovnik be forbidden to take corsair ships into its harbour.¹⁶

In principle, the Grand Vizier was justified in requesting that the corsairs return the prize, since the Ottoman Empire was at peace with Venice, and the Ottoman provinces should have acted accordingly. On the other hand, being aware of the slow but sure collapse of the Empire, the Tripoli province had been aiming at greater independence, especially since the Karamanlis had installed their family to hereditary power in Tripoli in 1711. From their point of view, a specific country was not necessarily considered a friendly one just because the Porta regarded it as such, but only after it had signed a peace treaty directly with the Tripoli governor. This treaty implicitly included regular payment of tribute and gift-giving to the Karamanli pashas and their ministers. Therefore, it is quite logical that reis Nuh was uncertain of what to do. Regardless of the peace with the Empire, in his eyes the Venetians were infidels and enemies. He acted according to his pasha's orders and did his duty. He had sold the seized ship - which was his right according to the corsair custom - and in a friendly harbour at that, so, as far as he was concerned, it was a straightforward situation. He wrote to the Grand Vizier justifying himself. He also wrote to the reis-effendi, the kapudan-pasha, Sungur Ali-agma, the odabasha - his former superior - and to the bostanji-basha, asking them to use their influence with the Grand Vizier, and expressing his surprise at the issue of the firman. Furthermore, Nuh claimed that he suffered a loss, because he

¹⁶ *Acta Turcarum*, no. 4452; *Carte Turche*, VII, 93; *Isprave i akti*, 18 142.3181c/18 the (the kapudan-pasha's letter to reis Nuh), 19 (the Grand Vizier's letter to Nuh), 20 (Sungur's letter to Nuh), 21 (the Grand Vizier's letter to Dubrovnik).

had spent the money for the sold ship on food for himself and his travel companions, and he had also to incur debts with the beys of Dubrovnik. Therefore, he demanded that the Venetians make up the loss to them.¹⁷

The new owners of the trabacul, the merchants from Trebinje, were not prepared even to consider returning the ship, not even after the Sultan's firman had been presented. A copy of the firman was also sent by the Senate to Suleiman, the pasha of Trebinje, so he tried to influence the merchants' relatives. The relatives said that when the ship was being purchased, the people of Dubrovnik had even congratulated the buyers, and they asked themselves who could compensate the loss to their family, even if they did agree to sell the ship. The Trebinje authorities concluded that the whole matter of the trabacul, which was floating completely bare in Dubrovnik harbour, had become too complicated. It was soon heard in Dubrovnik that they were looking for a buyer so they could get rid of it.¹⁸

As this all left no possibility of handing over the ship to the Venetians, with Dubrovnik acting as intermediary, and its value was discussed at the Porta in February 1752. The amount agreed upon was to be paid by Dubrovnik to the Venetians. The trabacul was assessed at 7000 cekins by the Venetians, and the Dubrovnik gentry replied that they would not be able to collect their tribute to the Sultan, they had to pay so much in compensation. The Porta ministers, led by the reis-effendi, started putting pressure on the bailiff, stating that the Venetians had violated international maritime law and should agree to lower compensation. The bailiff consulted his Senate, which agreed to reduce the price drastically because of the Porta's attitude. Through the influence of the Porta, an agreement was reached between the bailiff and Proculo, the Dubrovnik envoy, at the end of March, 1752. The trabacul was assessed at 500 cekins. Dubrovnik would pay half the price, and the Venetians would grant exemption

¹⁷ *Isprave i akti*, 18 142.3181c/23 (Nuh's letter to the odabasha), 25 (Nuh's letter to Sungur), 26 (Nuh's letter to the bostanjibasha), 26 (Nuh's letter to the kapudan-pasha), 28 (Nuh's letter to the reis-effendi), 30 (Nuh's letter to the Grand Vizier). The pedantic Dubrovnik government kept accurate lists of expenses incurred by Nuh and Jusuf. The total amount was 787 cekins and 25 groschens-Detta, VI, 59, f. 2-4. Besides all the problems caused to Dubrovnik, Nuh came by chance in February 1752. Being informed that reis Jusuf had caught a ship from Genoa in Albanian waters, on which there was one Dubrovnik subject, he wrote to Jusuf to release him, convincing the Dubrovnik government that Jusuf would listen to him as he was his elder. The subject was released and handed over to the Dubrovnik vice-consul Domenico Cabasso in Durres; *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 51-52.

¹⁸ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 66; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/24 (pasha Suleiman's letter to Dubrovnik), 22 (Dubrovnik government's letter to pasha Suleiman).

to the Porta for the other half. The Tripolitan corsair would also be able to sail peacefully out of the harbour. The reis-effendi informed the Dubrovnik government about the agreement reached. Reis Nuh immediately sailed away, and the Dubrovnik government expected the old owner from Novi to appear, so they could hand him his 250 cekins. Although the amount in question was of almost symbolic value, they were fully aware of the fact that the Venetians had won. In their letters to Proculo in Istanbul they expressed their surprise at the Porta's action, since the Venetians had openly attacked their town because of the protection they gave to a Turkish subject.¹⁹

Let us mention here that Nikola Gozze was sent to Travnik (the Bosnian centre of the pasha's jurisdiction) by the Senate in order to congratulate the new Bosnian pasha, Sherif Halil, in March 1752 i.e. while negotiations about the trabacul's worth were still going on at the Porta. Gozze was to explain to the pasha that the Venetians were pretending not to have received the letter of warning from the former Bosnian pasha, and that they were continuing with their misdeeds; when they had started fortifying themselves on Lokrum, the Dubrovnik government was forced to ask the pasha from Trebinje for help as there was no Bosnian pasha; the crews of the Venetian galleys anchored in the Cavtat harbour at that time were constantly looking for trouble, ignoring the captain of the town; armed soldiers were walking about Cavtat, making onslaughts on the honour of young girls, and they had even tried to enable the escape of a captain from Dubrovnik who had hidden from the law in a Cavtat church.

However, while Gozze was away, it was learned that Sherif Halil had died before arriving in Travnik, and that his place was going to be taken by Ahmed-pasha Ćuprilić. Wasting no time, the government forwarded Gozze the Grand Vizier's letter of recommendation for the merchants of Dubrovnik, which had been sent to Ćuprilić while he was the Belgrade pasha. Just in case...²⁰

It should also be mentioned that the Venetians violated international law on diplomatic immunity, as far as the Dubrovnik Republic was concerned. Namely, at the beginning of November, 1751 Ivo Bosdari, a nobleman from Dubrovnik,

¹⁹ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 56', 65; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/31 (the reis-efendi's letter to the Dubrovnik government), 32 (the reis-efendi's letter to reis Nuh), 33 (Sungur's letter to reis Nuh).

²⁰ Instructions to Gozze, *Isprave i akti*, 18, 176.3305, 242-246.

was sent to Zadar in order to congratulate the new General Providur, Girolamo Balbi, on his appointment. Bosdari first landed in Split, since he had heard that the Providur was there, and asked to be received. The response was that he should continue his voyage to Zadar, where Balbi would be joining him in 3 or 4 days. After a few weeks of waiting, Bosdari was visited by a Venetian general, Demetrio Stratico, who told him that he had received an order from the General Providur personally to ensure that Bosdari was kept in Zadar.

Bosdari regularly reported to the Republic. From his letters it was obvious that general Stratico disapproved of the Providur's actions, all the more so as he had no instructions on them from Venice. On one occasion, he told Bosdari that he had made a mistake in not returning to Dubrovnik after waiting fifteen days as things had then become complicated. Shocked by this treatment, Bosdari drew up a protest to be delivered to the General Providur, and then forwarded on to Venice. Some inhabitants of Zadar, with whom he was in good standing, advised him to launch his felucca which was on land, so it would look as though he was intending to set sail. The sentry immediately reacted. On the same day, Bosdari's secretary was invited to call on the Providur's secretary. An audience was arranged for 20 March 1752, and he was informed that neither the nobleman from Dubrovnik nor himself were in custody, as there had been no such instructions from Venice. In all of its letters to him, the Dubrovnik government repeated that Bosdari was to avoid talking about the current conflict, and that he should go on reiterating that his task was to congratulate the new General Providur. After the decision was made by which Dubrovnik was to pay 250 cekins to the Republic of Venice, Bosdari informed Balbi of this fact, hoping that he would now be able to leave Zadar. But, to the contrary, the Providur, who nursed a deep hatred for Dubrovnik - now even more so because of the small amount obtained by the Venetians as compensation - now became furious and cancelled the planned audience. Furthermore, he wrote to Venice that Dubrovnik had bought the trabacul under the name of a Turk, in this way violating the interests of Venice, and should therefore pay full compensation. Bosdari was followed everywhere by guards. The house in which he was staying was guarded night and day. He managed to buy information from one of the guards who had been threatened with severe penalties if Bosdari's fusta managed to set sail. In the middle of April, according to instructions received from the Republic, Bosdari vigorously demanded an appointment with the Providur. He informed him that the 250 cekins were waiting for the owner of the trabacul. The Providur replied that the bailiff had accepted this shameful amount because of the Porta's intercession, and that

the Ottomans helped the Republic because they felt pity for it. In the meantime, a legal suit was being prepared in Venice against the Captain of the Bay, Querini, for endangering Dubrovnik property, while the Venetian Senate was dissatisfied with the activities of the General Providur and the bailiff.²¹

Instead of the trabacul's former owner, Frano Kravić, a Venetian standard-bearer, came to Dubrovnik in the middle of April, 1752 by order of the General Providur, to pick up the money. After this act, the Dubrovnik authorities hoped in vain that the dispute had finally ended. However, the Venetians thought otherwise. Their pressures did not weaken. As rulers of the Adriatic, they now called the "transit" a "sea poll-tax", claiming that what Dubrovnik was paying to the Ottomans was a "land poll-tax". An armed Venetian fusta kept watch in Dubrovnik harbour and collected tribute for anchorage. The Venetian commander, Pavuta, charged "transit" to one-masted fishing boats which transported food and wood within Dubrovnik waters. The Venetians captains, Balbi, a captain with the same family name as the Providur, and Segredo of the Captain of the Bay's fleet, set ashore on the Dubrovnik island of Mljet, with their four galleys and a fusta. They cut a large quantity of wood, enough to load five large ships. The value of one such ship was estimated by the Dubrovnik Republic at 500 cekins. Thus, the entire damages amounted to 2,500 cekins. It was reported from Korčula that ten Venetian ships were approaching Mljet, soon to be on their way to cut wood on Lastovo. A protest was lodged with the Captain of the Bay by the Dubrovnik Senate. The emin also protested, threatening that he would be informing in detail both the Porta and the Bosnian pasha. The Captain of the Bay tried to bribe him, but the emin refused it and then wrote a petition which was to be forwarded to Istanbul by the Bosnian pasha, and according to which the General Providur would write a letter of warning. It was also mentioned in the petition that Muslim merchants were suffering considerable losses too. Accordingly, while negotiating in Travnik in 1753, the envoy from Dubrovnik added that one third of the cargo on the ships from Dubrovnik was the property of Turkish merchants, while Dubrovnik's share was less than one third, and sometimes only one tenth. In May 1752, coral divers applied to the Minor Council, stating that 300 of them were going to die of hunger unless the government did something. The Venetians had made their livelihood impossible for two years already, even when they

²¹ *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 150'-152', 159', 161'-162, 173-174; Bosdari's letters, *Isprave i akti*, 18, 165.3218, 105-113.

paid the toll which had recently been introduced. Apart from on Mljet, the forests on Jakljan and Koločep were also being cut down. On one occasion the Captain of the Bay was asked why the Venetians were cutting wood on Lastovo. He replied that they were acting on orders from Venice and that they even intended to cut down trees on the nearby islands, and on Sušac as well. At that time, all Venetian captains from the Venetian war fleet were authorized by the Captain of the Bay to collect the "transit" They even collected it from cargoless ships from Dubrovnik, from anchored ships and those pulled ashore, as well as those which they came across outside of the Adriatic. The Dubrovnik captains were taken by force from their houses, brought to Venetian galleys and forced to pay the "transit" for future voyages.²²

Don Giusto Vandenheuvel, the Dubrovnik consul in Naples, consulted State Secretary Fogliani, asking him to make public at the Venetian court that Venetian pressures were not abating even though the corsair had sailed. Fogliani was not as friendly as he had been the previous time. He accused the Republic of keeping secret the fact that it had made peace treaties with the provinces in North Africa, immediately adding that small states such as Dubrovnik tended to lack sincerity even when asking for help and support. Vandenheuvel, who suspected that the consul from Naples was involved in this turn of affairs, replied that Dubrovnik was at peace with the Ottoman provinces in North Africa because it was paying poll-tax to the Ottoman Empire, and not on the basis of any treaty. Asked by Fogliani how it had happened then that the Porta passed verdict against Dubrovnik, forcing it to pay compensation, Vandenheuvel replied that a bribe had obviously prevailed over justice. Alluding further to the alleged peace treaty, the Foreign Minister concluded also that, in the future, Dubrovnik would have to continue to show such concern for Berber corsairs - and he then dismissed the shocked Vandenheuvel. The Dubrovnik authorities tried to improve the situation by again sending its consul to Fogliani with a message that they had been pleased to pay 250 cekins so that the blockade of the harbour could be lifted, but that the real value of the seized boat amounted to 2.000 cekins. In so doing, they wanted to say that they had nevertheless been protected by the Porta to a certain degree. The attitude of the Naples court was that provision of asylum in Dubrovnik harbours only meant

²² *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/34 (receipt for 250 cekins signed by Frano Kravić); *Acta Turcarum*, no. 4439; *Carte Turche*, VIII, 124; *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 181'-182, 210', 211'; *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 124'-130, 145, 145', 148, 148', 156', 157.

giving more opportunity to the corsairs to plunder throughout the Adriatic. On its part, Dubrovnik claimed that there had been no attacks by Tripolitan corsairs in the Adriatic during the stay of the two reises in their harbour. Nevertheless, boasts by the Venetians in Rome and Naples that the Porta had arbitrated in their favour, against their poll-tax collectors, obviously yielded fruit. In the eyes of the western world, the Dubrovnik Republic had to pay compensation to the damaged party - the Venetians - because it was guilty of providing sanctuary to corsairs.²³

Despite the foregoing, Dubrovnik was not discouraged. Released from the embarrassing and accusing presence of the corsairs in their harbour, having paid indemnity despite their blamelessness, and provoked by the Venetians' recent misdoings for which there could be no justification, founded to a considerable extent on the General Providur's rage, the Dubrovnik government took the offensive. It decided to take advantage of the tribulations caused by the Venetians to request withdrawal of the "transit" and payment of indemnity for the damages suffered. Proculo received the emin's petitions and the report of the qadi of Ljubinjje regarding recent events which he would present to the Porta. Referring to the "transit", the Dubrovnik authorities invoked two firmans issued in the 17th century by which the sultan had requested the Venetians to exempt Dubrovnik captains from paying any kind of toll at sea. At that very moment, when only Dubrovnik's seafarers were paying tolls to the Venetians, they said the "transit" should be abolished by a sultan's edict, which was of permanent duration, as distinguished from a firman that had to be renewed every fifty years. The sultan's edict should, without fail, contain the approval of Dubrovnik's conduct towards the corsairs and entitle them to continue to act in the same way in the future. It should be added that the two firmans from the 17th century did not explicitly prohibit the Venetians from collecting tribute on the open seas from Dubrovnik seafarers, as proteges of the Ottoman Empire. The first firman, issued in June 1634, was addressed to the kaymakam of Istanbul and the bostanjibasha, who were asked by the sultan to call the bailiff and order him to send a letter to Venice, because the Sultan's wish was that Dubrovnik ships seized by the Venetians be returned, the Turkish merchants arrested at that time be released, and such things should never occur again. The other firman was issued in January 1635 and was addressed to the

²³ *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 198'-203; Vandenheuvel's letters, *Isprave i akti*, 18, 44.3075, 5, 6, 8.

Bosnian and Herzegovian pasha, and to the qadi of Novi, Cernica, Ljubinje, and Gabela. The Venetian soldiers had attacked the Dubrovnik area at that time, plundering the subjects of Dubrovnik. They seized the goods of Dubrovnik merchants at sea, confiscating salt being transported by Dubrovnik sailors, and sometimes throwing it into the sea. The Venetians charged “transit” to the Dubrovnik captains at the very entrance of Dubrovnik harbour, and sometimes even forced them back so that they could collect it. Five captains from Dubrovnik were left without the goods they were transporting. Because of all this the Sultan requested compensation worth 40,000 reals in favour of Dubrovnik and that such things should never be repeated. It is obvious that the two firmans in fact requested sanctions for the committed misdeeds. Dubrovnik tried to proclaim the phrase “...and let such things be history” as an order for general withdrawal of the “transit”, which is completely unacceptable if one takes into consideration that the Sultan’s orders were all very clear and concise. If the Sultan intended to prohibit charging of the “transit”, the part of the document containing the ruler’s decision or command would have included clear orders to their effect.²⁴

Dubrovnik’s envoy in Travnik, Nikola Gozze, reported to the pasha that recent events made quite clear that Venetian subjects and the Montenegrins were acting in unison. It became public that the Providur had invited both groups and motivated them with presents and promises to be united in causing damage in the Dubrovnik region. Therefore, in the name of the Dubrovnik Republic, Gozze requested the pasha to advise the Herzegovian captains not to let the Montenegrins pass across the Venetian region, which had been requested earlier by a firman, a copy of which had been sent to Travnik. Gozze also reported to the pasha about the case of the abduction of two girls who were consequently sold in Nikšić (Montenegro of today). The pasha would have to issue a *bujruldia*, his written order, to the captain from Nikšić so that the captured girls could be released. Gozze also requested a *bujruldia* from the pasha to the emin in Dubrovnik harbour, which was to authorize him to chase out the Venetian fusta. The Bosnian pasha, Ćuprilić, wrote a letter to the General Providur, “his old neighbour and friend”, warning him of what the Captain of the Bay was doing, i.e. of the cooperation between the Montenegrin

²⁴ *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/130 (Murat IV’s firman to the pashas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the qadis of Novi, Cernica, Ljubinje, and Gabela), 131 (Murat IV’s firman to the bostanjibasha).

rebels and Venetian subjects, and asking him to allow the Dubrovnik nobleman, Bosdari, to go home. He also informed the Providur in this letter that he had now been appointed Bosnian pasha. The Providur replied that he was going to send his interpreter to Travnik with presents, and he promised that the Venetians would not cause any more trouble. After the pasha's letter, Bosdari was immediately received and released, the Venetian Providur saying it was on orders from Venice, while the Dubrovnik authorities thought this had come about at Ćuprilić's request. The authorities were concerned because of the arrival of the Providur's interpreter in Travnik. So Gozze was ordered to stay in Bosnia until he was convinced that the pasha had forwarded to the Porta the emin's reports about what was happening in Dubrovnik, fearing that interpreter Navoni could sway the pasha and distract him from that purpose. Nevertheless, Navoni had certain success in one matter. Shortly after his arrival, the pasha's envoy, on orders of his master, brought over from Trebinje the merchants who had bought the seized trabacul. They were asked to pay indemnity to the Venetians for the value of the seized boat's cargo, which they had sold when they had bought the boat. In June 1752 Gozze returned to Dubrovnik with the pasha's written order to the emin to drive out the Venetian fusta from Dubrovnik harbour, and to keep the pasha regularly informed about what was going on. In August of the same year, the emin informed the pasha that the fusta had been moved, but that the pressures from the Venetian side had not abated. The Venetian captains, Balbi and Sagredo, returned to Mljet, continued to cut down wood, as well as fruit trees and grape vines. Finally, they set the woods on fire at several spots and threatened to come again. The inhabitants of Mljet were lucky this time, as the fires did not spread.²⁵

Instead of the requested edict, a firman was issued to the Dubrovnik Republic in August of the same year, by which the Sultan informed it that he knew the Venetians were causing them a lot of trouble, as he had been informed of this by the emin's reports, by the Ljubinje qadi, and by Proculo, the Dubrovnik envoy at the Porta. For that reason, he had contacted the bailiff and asked him to inform the Venetian government about the outrages being committed. Venice's reply was that, in the future, all the guilty parties would be

²⁵ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 59-171; Instructions to Gozze, *Isprave i akti*, 18, 176.3305, 248, 250, 258, 260; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/39 (the Bosnian pasha's written order to the qadi of Ljubinje and the emin in Dubrovnik), 40 (the general providur's letter to the Bosnian pasha), 41 (the emin's report).

punished and that all the Venetian captains had been warned that they must not disturb and mistreat the subjects of Dubrovnik. The Sultan sent a firman to the Bosnian pasha too, asking him to monitor further developments in the relations between Dubrovnik and Venice. The bailiff was ordered to make the contents of the two firmans known to his government. Taking over the affair at the command of the Sultan, the Bosnian pasha suggested that Dubrovnik leave the contentious trabacul to the Venetians, and thus rid itself of this trouble. The Dubrovnik government believed that the Providur's interpreter Navoni was behind the pasha's suggestion. It could not be put into effect, as the merchants of Trebinje would not to yield, although they themselves did not know what to do with the trabacul. After so much obstinance and spite, the boat was finally sold to Turks from Albania in 1752. However, as they towed it away, the boat finally sank in Dubrovnik harbour. From the end of September, Antun Hidža, the envoy from Dubrovnik, was in Travnik again. He brought a new report from the emin about new Venetian crimes. In a conversation with Hidža, the Providur's interpreter Navoni, who was still in Travnik, asked if it would be possible to send the report to Venice instead of sending it to the Porta. Hidža refused the idea and the conversation ended in an argument. The climate in the Bosnian Council was more favourable to the Venetians. Finally, Hidža managed to obtain a copy of the firman sent to the Bosnian pasha, although the old custom was that Dubrovnik receive copies of all the firmans issued to Bosnian pashas which concerned the Dubrovnik Republic. At the same time, people working for the pasha were trying hard to find out from the Dubrovnik envoy what compensation his government would be asking for the cut wood.²⁶

It is clear that, by use of a written firman which was addressed to the Dubrovnik Republic, the Sultan was trying in fact to convince it that, according to the response from the Venetian government, the subjects of Dubrovnik would not be troubled in the future. Although the term "transit" was mentioned as only one of a series of Venetian procedures to which the Dubrovnik subjects objected, the government proclaimed this firman as the Sultan's order on withdrawal of the toll. Accordingly, the government immediately issued an edict by which the Dubrovnik captains were prohibited from paying

²⁶ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 14'; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/43 (firman for Dubrovnik), 48 (the Dubrovnik subject, Andro Fjorović's statement), 51 (the letter of the Bosnian pasha in Dubrovnik), 57 (Hidža's report after his return from Travnik), 58 (firman for the Bosnian pasha).

the “transit” on pain of death and property confiscation. In October 1752, Pavuta, a Venetian commander, charged “transit” to captain Mato Bizzaro at the island of Hvar. Bizzaro was sailing back from Trieste on his ship “Trinita”. Appropriate measures were immediately taken. Bizzaro was sent to Duodo, the investigating officer on Korčula, from whom he requested a refund of his money, as he had not been aware of the withdrawal of the “transit”, having been at sea at that time. The investigator replied curtly that he would not want to meddle in the affairs of his superiors. Therefore, the Dubrovnik nobleman Frano Sorgo was sent to Travnik to complain to the pasha that the “transit” was still being collected by the Venetians. The receipt for the collected “transit” issued to captain Bizzaro was sent to Proculo in Istanbul, and the government ordered him to request once again issuing of the sultan’s decree. The fact is that the Venetians were still collecting “transit”, but they were no longer insisting on it.²⁷

In November 1752, Marco Flangini was appointed the Captain of the Bay. The Dubrovnik consul in Venice talked with him, and Flangini promised that he would act in accordance with the law and that there would be no further misunderstandings between Venice and Dubrovnik. The former Captain of the Bay, Querini, was under pre-trial investigation, and this had been mentioned in Bosdari’s letters as far back as in February of the same year. It was clear that, by initiating an investigation at that moment after the firman had been issued, the Venetians wanted to show their good will to establish order. In addition, subsequent to the issue of the firman, the bailiff too advised that care should be exercised in relations with Dubrovnik. Namely, in his opinion, with good reason, the fact that the firman did not include concrete provisions and bans was favourable for Venice, so that it should be careful not to give cause to the Dubrovnik government to run again to the Porta. Mentioning the Querini trial, the government hoped that the investigation would also look into General Providur Balbi’s actions. In Venice he was also considered to have exceeded his authority, and to have acted contrary to Venetian interests, causing a situation in which the Porta appointed itself as judge, while other European countries looked on the Venetians with disapproval. While Bosdari was staying in Zadar, General Stratico mentioned to him that he had warned the Providur

²⁷ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f.244-245; *Lettere di Levante*, 78, f. 1-4; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/59 (receipt for the paid transit issued to captain Bizzaro), 61 (captain Bizzaro’s statement about being forced to pay the transit).

not to be harsh towards Dubrovnik; otherwise, he would only force them to complain either to the Ottomans or to Austria, which would not be to the liking of the Venetian government. In the end, as was expected, Querini was found innocent, and the General Providur, Balbi, retained his position until March 1754, when he was replaced by Francisco Grimani. Wanting to improve the impression at the Naples court and prove that the Porta was nevertheless protecting them, which then justified their providing shelter to the corsairs, the Dubrovnik authorities informed the king of Naples about the issue of the favourable firman which would ensure them peace.²⁸

At the beginning of December in 1752, the new Captain of the Bay arrived at Gruž. The Dubrovnik government sent two noblemen, Frano Ranjina and Mato Pozza, to greet him. His behaviour, however, was not in accordance with their expectations. The Dubrovnik noblemen were received by Flangini at the last moment. In a two-hours conversation, standing all the time, the noblemen were told that the firman was not interpreted by Venice in the same way as by Dubrovnik, and that the “transit” would continue to be collected. The 1635 act by which the toll was introduced was irrevocable, and its copy had already been sent to the bailiff in Istanbul. In fact, in February 1753, Captain Jero Pušić was detained on Hvar because he refused to pay the “transit”. The captain protested because the commodities of the merchants who had hired him were deteriorating, while he and his crew were losing their income. He was released after 20 days. In another instance, Venetians attacked a ship within Dubrovnik waters and seized the cargo it was carrying.²⁹

In March 1753 a new Dubrovnik envoy, Nikola Bona, was sent to the new Bosnian pasha, Mehmed Kukavica. Bona told the pasha the whole history of the conflict referring to the firmans of 1634 and 1635, and even the one from 1540 by which the Sultan had ordered the Venetian Doge to make his subjects stop impeding sailors from Dubrovnik on their voyages, and to reimburse them for all their recent losses. Bona presented to the pasha all the copies of the emin’s reports as well as those of the qadi of Ljubinje, and the pasha’s written order and the firmans which would illustrate the complaints of the Dubrovnik

²⁸ *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 261, 261^r; Š. Ljubić. *O odnošajih medju republikom Mletačkom i Dubrovačkom*, pp. 141, 142, 146, 147; Bosdari’s letters, *Isprave i akti*, 18, 165.3218, 114; Vandenheuvel’s letters, *Isprave i akti*, 18, 44.3075, 242-244.

²⁹ *Lettere di Ponente*, 63, f. 256-260; *Lettere di Levante*, 78, f.27^r, 29, 36^r; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/74 (captain Jero Pušić’s statement).

Republic. The poll-tax plenipotentiaries, Stijepo Proculo and Rafo Gozze, were active at the Porta at that time. Soon, a decision was made by which the new Bosnian pasha would act as intermediary in solving this conflict.³⁰

Trying to avoid the mediation of the Turks at any cost, the Venetians sent their man, Antonio Dimitri, whose task was to convince the Dubrovnik landed gentry that the Venetian government was constant in its good will towards them. The best way to convince themselves of this would be to send their envoy to Venice or to acknowledge to the Venetian government, at least in writing, that Dubrovnik believed it was impartial and determined to put an end to the conflicts. What had been going on recently had hardly reached the Venetian authorities, whose wish had not been to do damage and injustice to innocent people. One person had already been punished. Regarding the “transit”, a solution in everybody’s favour could always be found. The problems between Christian countries could be solved without the interference of those who did not confess the holy Catholic faith. If the conflict was to be solved in Travnik, the Venetian government decided they would send Lieutenant-Colonel Zanoni, and keep the General Providur out of the way so as not to make the situation worse. The Venetian idea that the Ottomans should not be involved in solving the dispute did not appeal at all to the Dubrovnik government. Fearing that the Porta could agree with this proposal, the envoy in Travnik, Bona, was immediately sent to see the pasha and was received in secret. Only the interpreter from Dubrovnik was also present at the audience. As the Ottomans had already been involved, the whole matter had to be finished with their participation. Dubrovnik was ready to pay 1,000 cekins for the certainty that the pasha’s wisdom and prudence would bring about a happy solution.³¹

The focus of the conflict was thus transferred to Travnik. The poll-tax plenipotentiaries in Istanbul were given the assignment of checking whether the pasha was perhaps being given any secret instructions by the Porta. The Venetian envoy was invited to the negotiations in Travnik, but was late in arriving, with the excuse that he had first to become acquainted with the problem. In the meantime, Bona was in constant contact with the Dubrovnik government, which was determined to urge their protectors the Ottomans to prohibit col-

³⁰ *Lettere di Levante*, 78, f.40-71’, 81-119.

³¹ *Lettere di Ponente*, 64, f. 50’-57; *Lettere di Levante*, 78, f. 132-136’, 170’; *Isprave i akti*, 18, 142.3181c/75 (Antonio Dimitri’s letter).

lection of the “transit”, the cutting of wood, plunder and robbery, and to stop the harassment of fishermen and coral divers from Dubrovnik. The Venetian envoy, Lieutenant-Colonel Zaroni, arrived only in June 1753, but was obviously not very well prepared for the negotiations. Bona requested that the “transit” be replaced by a salutation to the Captain of the Bay when he arrive in Dubrovnik waters, which would confirm Venetian predominance in the Adriatic. Zaroni replied that he had received neither instructions nor authorizations from the Venetians regarding the “transit”, which was the main topic of the negotiations. The pasha gave him a time-limit of twelve days to obtain instructions from his government. But there was no answer from Venice. It was clear that the Venetians were playing for time. Bona was approved an outlay of 300 cekins to ensure the good humour of the members of the Bosnian Council. However, the Bosnian defterdar (accountant general) was on the side of the Venetians. Persuaded by Zaroni, he tried to convince Bona to give up his request, as it was certain that he was going to lose the case. In the end, the news from Venice finally arrived. The Venetians suggested that, instead of paying the “transit”, Dubrovnik should pay 50 cekins annually to the Captain of the Bay. Bona refused. Neither did he agree with the pasha’s proposal to reduce the amount to 40 cekins. The pasha became more and more impatient. The month of Ramadan was close and he wanted to celebrate it in peace. After consulting with his ministers, he suggested that, in return for revocation of the “transit”, Dubrovnik should withdraw its claim for compensation from the Venetians for the damage incurred and the murders comitted. They would then send an emissary to Venice who would thank the Venetian authorities on behalf of the Dubrovnik government for withdrawing “transit”. The Venetian envoy replied that he could not accept this proposal without his government’s approval, while the Dubrovnik envoy agreed, pointing out, however, that the Dubrovnik government did not want to send anyone to Venice. Months passed before a reply was received from Venice. In November 1753 Bona came back to Dubrovnik without getting anything done.³²

During the negotiations that failed in Bosnia, in a completely insincere atmosphere in which the Venetian envoy showed a great desire to bring the whole matter to an end, and the Dubrovnik envoy showed an exaggerated respect towards Serenissima, transgressions on land and at sea continued.

³² *Lettere di Levante*, 78, f. 132-136’, 182’, 216, 218, 228’, 229’, 230, 231.

Albrizzi, a Venetian commander, stopped two naves from Dubrovnik on the Levant and tried to charge “transit”. Since the captains refused to pay, the Venetian soldiers seized two casks of raisins on the first ship, and one cask on the second ship in place of the »transit«. A Venetian captain, Benedetto Travesini, also tried to collect “transit” from quite a few captains. When he failed to do so, he confiscated various items from their ships such as anchors, rowboats, and weapons. At the end of 1753, Venetian subjects from the surrounding regions, along with some Montenegrins, killed four Dubrovnik subjects, wounded two, took a further two prisoners, and stole 500 head of cattle.

The emin of Dubrovnik and the qadi of Ljubinje wrote reports about these events. The Dubrovnik government requested the General Providur in Zadar and an associate Providur in Kotor to act according to the law.³³

Writing to the Grand Vizier, the Dubrovnik government complained that its subjects were having to endure more and more from the Venetians, and if this was to continue the Republic would not be able to pay the three-year tribute. A firman had to be requested again from the Sultan, who was expected this time to impose an outright ban on the charging of “transit”, felling of trees, hampering of fishing and coral diving, as well as plunder and robbery.³⁴

The firman was issued, but not as requested. The Bosnian pasha was once again appointed the presiding judge who had to eliminate all misunderstandings after a detailed investigation, and resolve the conflict that had placed the Porta in an unpleasant position and had already been so unreasonably prolonged. Although the Dubrovnik government was displeased that it would again be incurring costs for emissaries in Bosnia, there was no other way out. The Venetians again tried to persuade it to solve the conflict without the participation of the Ottomans. This time they exerted pressure through a Jesuit in Dubrovnik. The government would not hear of it. Mato Sorgo was appointed envoy to Bosnia, and he was to start out in the second half of April 1754, taking all the reports, written orders from the pasha and firmans. All statements made by the Dubrovnik envoies at the Porta and at the Bosnian Council over the last three years were going to be repeated. All the damages incurred would be set forth in detail, with compensation for loss of life set at 1,100

³³ *Lettere di Levante*, 77b, f. 236; *Lettere di Levante*, 78, f. 30^o-31^o, 32^o-34^o, 131, 131^o, 194^o, 195, 240^o, 243^o.

³⁴ *Lettere di Levante*, 78, f. 239, 239^o, 241-243, 245.

cekins per person, for imprisonment at 500 per person, and 6000 cekins for the 500 stolen head of cattle. However, if the Venetians would agreed to withdrawal of the “transit” the Dubrovnik government would renounce its claim to compensation. The Dubrovnik Republic was not willing to go on paying anything which could be termed “tribute”, as it was clear to whom Dubrovnik was due tribute. Sorgo offered coffee, chocolate or some other type of foodstuffs in the value of 20 cekins to the envoy from Venice, Zanoni, in exchange for the “transit”. These goods would be given on behalf of Dubrovnik seafarers to the new Captain of the Bay every three years, at the time when he first entered Dubrovnik waters. This was their last offer. As had already been said, everything else similar to tribute, for example gold or silver, was out of the question, among other reasons because these metals were not processed in Dubrovnik, and their quality would always be in question. Zanoni did not agree with such a solution. The pasha proposed an ermine-lined coat, and Zanoni proposed silver. In the end, after a lot of hair-splitting about whether the gift should be presented by Dubrovnik noblemen or Dubrovnik captains, or whether the gift should be given only in the name of the Dubrovnik sailors or also on behalf of the Dubrovnik merchants, an agreement was achieved in July 1754. Every three years, two noblemen from Dubrovnik were to present a silver tray worth 20 golden Venetian cekins to the Captain of the Bay, by which the Venetian predominance on the Adriatic would be acknowledged. The “transit” was withdrawn. The Venetians would no longer lay claim to Sušac, fell trees around Dubrovnik, hamper fishing and coral diving, or molest the subjects of Dubrovnik in any other way. Now the Dubrovnik government made its final move. Sorgo was to stay in Bosnia until the agreement had been drawn up in writing. If the pasha should want to dismiss him, he was to say that he could not leave without being recalled from Dubrovnik, as he was risking his head, because he agreed to this solution on his own initiative. It is hardly necessary to mention that the Dubrovnik government was more than satisfied. Couriers had already set off with the 1000 cekins promised to the pasha. Sorgo was to present the money only after receiving instructions from the Republic. Before handing over the money, Sorgo had to influence the pasha to omit mention in the agreement, which had a form of a verdict, that collection of “transit” was an old Venetian right. The government was also insistent in its request that the gift to the Captain of the Bay should be presented by Dubrovnik captains, rather than Dubrovnik noblemen.³⁵ In the end, the “Travnik Agreement” as this act was finally called, did include “transit” as an old right of the Venetians, and it was also mentioned that the gift was to be handed over by two noblemen from

Dubrovnik. In addition, Dubrovnik was not mentioned anywhere in the agreement as a republic, and it is obvious that much more attention was given to Venice and its envoy, than to Dubrovnik and its envoy. Nevertheless, regardless of the above, Dubrovnik had succeeded in satisfying Venice with a symbolic gift, while they themselves got so much more.³⁶

Conclusion

The conflict between Dubrovnik and Venice 1751-1754 reflected the conflict between their interests and principles which were also in collision with those of the Tripolitan corsairs. The Ottomans, from whom all three sides expected help, found themselves in a very unpleasant position. It was simply impossible to meet the expectations of all sides, i.e. their subjects the Tripolitans, their protegé and tax-payer - Dubrovnik - and their newly fledged friends - the Venetians, all had different conflicting interests. After the first solution was found by the Porta, a Tripolitan corsair was offended; according to his principles he was right to seize an enemy ship and sell it afterwards in a friendly harbour. As the seized ship was no longer in corsair hands, the Ottomans had to find another solution in favour of Venice, which at the same time was against the interests of Dubrovnik. The fact that Dubrovnik had to pay compensation, although an almost symbolic amount of money was concerned, gave the initial impression that even the Porta, which was its protector, had found it guilty of providing shelter to corsairs.

During the 18th century, the slow decline of the Ottoman Empire and of the Dubrovnik Republic continued, although Dubrovnik seafaring at that very period underwent temporary prosperity. The power of the Venetian Republic was also in decline. This situation gave the General Providur, the Captain of the Bay, and the captains of the Venetian war fleet an opportunity to act in an unauthorized arbitrary fashion. After Dubrovnik had paid the compensation, and the corsairs had left their harbour, every new crime of the Venetians was

³⁵ *Lettere di Levante*, 79, f. 71-73, the draft verdict which was sent as a proposal to the Bosnian pasha by the Dubrovnik government.

³⁶ *Lettere di Levante*, 78, f. 253-255', 260'-262; *Lettere di Levante*, 79, f. 1-22, 31,35', 36', 38'-40, 42', 44, 66', 68', 69, 69', 70.

like a boomerang that would come back to them in the end. Dubrovnik endured further pressures from the Venetians, for which there was no longer any justification, because they provided a chance to eliminate payment of the “transit” once and for all, and to bring an end to unjust Venetian claims upon Sušac, and the problems caused by their felling woods around Dubrovnik and hampering fishing and coral diving in Dubrovnik waters. At each new violation, Dubrovnik kept addressing itself to the Sultan and the Bosnian pasha, sending them the emin’s detailed evidence. The Porta, tired of disputes between the bailiff and the Dubrovnik envoy, passed responsibility for the entire matter to the Bosnian pasha, whose province bordered with the Dubrovnik Republic and Venetian properties.

In the end, it was Dubrovnik’s turn to celebrate. The third solution found in Travnik, later known as the “Travnik Agreement”, was completely in its favor.