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Russia marches South: army reform and battlefield performance in Russia's Southern campaigns, 1695-1739

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CHAPTER 5
THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR OF 1736-1739

Following the death of Peter I, Russia went through a rough decade, filled with internal political strife and cautious foreign policy, dominated by the frequent shift of monarchs and their surrounding clique. With the advent of Anna Romanova in 1730, Russia's internal political climate stabilized and the new monarch was able to indulge into more active foreign policy. It was closely related to the fate of Poland-Lithuania, whose ruler Augustus II was eager to secure the throne for his son Friedrich Augustus (the future Augustus III). Russia could count on the support from its ally Austria, as well as from Prussia while the main political opposition, headed by Stanisław Leszczyński and some of the Polish and Lithuanian magnates was supported by France. The struggle for Augustus II's succession remains in history as the War of the Polish Succession (1733-1738) and resulted in a win-win situation for both France and Russia while Austria and Poland-Lithuania were most affected. In short, France was able to break the Habsburg grip on Italy, while Russia, following a swift and successful invasion of Poland, was fast to acquire the Duchy of Courland and to impose its claimant – Augustus III (r. 1734-1763) on the throne in Warsaw. The unprecedented speed with which the military struggle was resolved gave the Russians an opportunity to intensify their eastern policy.[1]

During the war in Poland-Lithuania, the Ottoman Empire had demonstrated great reluctance to interfere in the conflict. The Porte was preoccupied with the struggle against the rising Nadir Shah in Persia, and most of its military resources were dedicated to the defense of Iraq and the Caucasus. This, combined with the information, received by the Russian agents, about the crumbling economic situation of the Ottoman Empire in its European provinces, made Empress Anna believe that the realm of the sultans was ready to be taken. Already Russia had significantly reduced its presence in the Caspian, following the Treaty of Resht (1732), and the new pact with Nadir Shah, signed in March 1735, which sealed the anti-Ottoman alliance between Anna and Nadir Shah.[2]
In 1735, Anna felt that the time was right, although some of her chief advisers, notably Count Osterman, were adamant in their position that at this point a war

[1] The active campaigns ended in 1734 in the east and 1735 in the west. The war formally continued until the Treaty of Vienna was signed in 1738, but neither France nor Russia considered fighting each other. An excellent narrative of the conflict is given by J L. Sutton, *The King's honor and the King's Cardinal: The War of the Polish Succession* (University Press of Kentucky, 2014).

[2] According to the Treaty of Resht, Russia returned Resht, Mazandaran and Astrabad to Persia, and the second treaty, signed in Ganja brought Derbent and Baku back to Nadir Shah's realm, while the shah agreed to proclaim the exiled Vakhtang VI as the rightful king of Kartli. The two treaties ended the ten year-long Russian presence in the Southern Caspian, which cost the Northern Empire great number of troops and a substantial portion of its annual revenue. For an exhaustive and up-to-date evaluation of the Russian occupation of the Caspian shores; see I.V. Kurukin, *Persidkiy Pokhod Petra Velikogo. Nizovoy korpus na beregakh Kaspiya, 1722-1735* (Moscow: Kvadriga, 2010).

with the Ottoman Empire could bring no fortunes for the Russians. Nevertheless, the Empress decided to recall her agent from Istanbul – Neplyuev. His report only strengthened her resolve to strike at the Turks and to reclaim what her uncle had lost following the disaster at Pruth.

5.1. Historiography

The War of 1736-1739 has been studied through two major viewpoints – the Austrian failure against the Ottomans (1737-1739) and Russia's series of campaigns against the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman holdings on the Dnieper and Don. The first perspective has been the primary concern of Western literature, and only recently did the focus move eastward with Brian Davies' work on the Russo-Ottoman Wars in the eighteenth century.[3] His narrative is largely a summary and retelling of the exhaustive work of staff Colonel A. Bayov, who in 1906 published a two-volume "A History of the Russian army during the reign of Empress Anna Ioanovna – Russia's War with Turkey in 1736-1739".[4] This work remains the leading Russian-language study of the conflict for over a century and due to its tremendous source base and the detailed research of the topic, it is likely to maintain its status. Another valuable source of information is General Bobrovskiy's History of the Leibguard Yerevan Regiment, regarding its participation in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1736-1739.[5] It contains additional valuable data and provides further details on particular engagements in the course of the war. A recent article by Yuriy and Anna Manoylenko studies the performance of Minikh's artillery during the last significant engagement of the war – the Battle of Stavuchani (1739).[6] Without a doubt, the most valuable primary source of the war is the Memoirs of Christof von Manstein, a Prussian nobleman, born in St. Petersburg, who served in the Russian army during the War of 1736-1739.[7] Manstein participated actively in the entire war and provides first-hand information on Peter von Lacy's campaigns in Crimea. Another invaluable set of primary sources can be found in Maslovskiy's corps original documents, published in 1889.[8] It includes dispatches and reports from leading Russian officers and also the most important notes of B. von Minikh's personal journal.

[3] B.L. Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution in Eastern Europe: Russia's Turkish Wars in the Eighteenth Century* (New York & London: Continuum, 2011).
[4] A. Bayov, *Russkaya armiya v tsarstvovanie imperatritsy Anna Ioannovny – Voina Rossii s Turtsiey v 1736-39, vol. 1-2* (St. Petersburg, 1906).
[5] P.O. Bobrovskiy, *Istoriya 13 Leyb-grenaderskagoYerevanskogo Ego Velichestva polka za 250 let, vol. 2* (St. Petersburg, 1892-8).
[6] Yu.Ye. Manoylenko, A.S. Manoylenko, "A bomb after a bomb were lodged into the midst of the hostile army…' The artillery of B.Kh. Minikh in the Stavuchan battle", *Voenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal* 8 (2014), 61-3.
[7] C.H. von Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs of Russia from the year 1727 to 1744* (London, 1856).
[8] D.F. Maslovskiy, *Materialy k istorii voennogo iskusstva v Rossii* (Moscow, 1889).

5.2. Preparations for the Initial Stages of the War

Unlike Peter's march against the Ottomans in 1711 and the campaign in Persia in 1722, Anna's war was fought only after a meticulous preparation, which used the basis, set by Peter in 1722. The emperor had envisioned a possible war with the Porte during his campaign in the Caucasus and thus decided to resupply his supply depots along Ukraine and also to prepare substantial amounts of materials for the construction of a new fleet in Voronezh which had to attack and take Azov in coordination with a land force, as was done in 1696. These preparations were not realized during Peter's lifetime but were used by Anna and her general during the early stages of the war.[9] As early as 1732, Anna had ordered the military administration of Ukraine to revisit the depots and to resupply and repair them, in order they are up-to-date, in case the Ottomans decided to support France's policy toward Poland-Lithuania.[10] These measures were followed by a new Decree of Inventorisation, issued in September 1733, following a report, made by Minikh, regarding the condition of the supply bases, garrisons and fortresses along the southern borders.[11] All preparations had to be carried out and completed by 1734.

The firm Osterman, however, keen on pursuing an active policy in Poland-Lithuania and doubtful of the benefits of any southern aggression, re-directed the Ukrainian supplies in support for the armies in Poland, which were successful in taking Danzig and affirmed Russia's dominance in the Commonwealth. Thus, when in 1735 Minikh was placed in charge of the southern theater with the plan of conducting a surprise raid over the Crimeans and the Ottomans, the field-marshal was deprived of most of the supplies, he had relied to use. Nevertheless, due to Anna's personal resolve, a substantial part of Russia's western forces was allocated to Lvov, from where, it had to march east and besiege Azov, according to the plan, drawn by Osterman in the spring of 1735. The command of a 40,000 strong army was invested upon Ukraine's military governor Weissbach. His death, however, significantly changed the situation and Anna summoned Minikh from Poland and gave him the overall command of the Ukrainian forces with the chance to choose whether he would strike Azov in the autumn of 1735 or he would wait for the spring of 1736, gathering additional troops and supplies. Minikh was well aware that his logistics and the lack of heavy artillery would prevent him from taking Azov in 1735.[12] By the time the Russians were able to muster their forces, it was already August and instead of risking a troublesome march from Ukraine to the Don, Minikh decided to launch a surprise attack on the Crimean Tatars, by sending

[9] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 90; Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 181; see also the previous chapter on the Persian campaign for the possibility of a Russo-Ottoman war in 1722-1724.
[10] During the War of the Polish Succession, on several occasions the French diplomacy would,try to persuade the Porte to engage itself in a war against Austria and Russia, but to no avail.
[11] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 181-2.
[12] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 190.

Lieutenant general Leontyev against Perekop – the narrow isthmus which links Crimea to Europe's mainland. Minikh was convinced that while Qalpan II Girei (r. 1769-1770) was away with the bulk of his forces, the Russians would be able to capture Perekop and invade Tatar heartlands.[13] However, the preparations for this invasion took a month and a half, and it was not until 1st October that Leontyev could march his men south.[14] The army numbered some 28,000 of whom 8,000 were Cossacks irregulars.[15]

5.3. Leontyev's Campaign of 1735

The march of Leontyev's troops began on the first day of October and it took five days for the army to reach the steppe south of the Orel River. According to Manstein, Leontyev was ordered to ravage the Crimean lands, put them to the sword and release any Russian captives he could find, as well as to "exterminate the Nogai-Tatars, who inhabit the deserts and steps, between Ukraine and Crimea".[16]

On 6th October, the Russians began crossing the dry, waterless grasslands, which were burnt by the Tatars during the summer. Lack of water and fodder for the horses began to take its toll on the army. Although Leontyev's men were able to capture several Nogai ulusy in the vicinity of Crimea, the progress south was impossible due to the pouring October rains, which began on 13th and brought the rasputitsa to the Pontic region. Three days later, Leontyev called a meeting of the staff on which was decided to cancel the campaign and return to the Ukrainian line, although the army had almost reached Perekop.[17]

The results of the campaign were far from satisfying – the Russians had lost over 9,000 men due to starvation, thirst, and diseases, as well as 4,000 horses - for the same reasons. In return, over 3,900 Nogai-Tatars have been massacred and their cattle – taken by Leontyev's army.[18] When the Russians

[13] Most of the Tatar hosts had been stuck in the Caucasus, foraging in Circassia and Kabarda after an unsuccessful attempt to reach Armenia and to join the Ottomans in their fight against Persia. Local Russian garrisons were instructed to hamper Tatar progress in any possible situation, and prevent the khan from joining the Turks in Iraq.

[14] This was due to the fact, that Leontyev was he third consecutive commander, bestowed with the position. It took six weeks until the government was able to finally issue Leontyev's credentials following the death of Weissbach and the grave illness, which denied General Douglass the ability to take command of the field army; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 91.

[15] B. Davies states that the Russian army numbered 39,795 men and 46 guns; see Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 190. However, he does not cite the source of these figures. According to Manstein, Leontyev's army numbered 28,000 of which 8,000 were Cossacks, but he does not mention of any artillery; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 92. Manstein's figures are taken into account in the current dissertation, given the fact that he is the main primary source on the topic.

[16] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 92.

[17] According to Davies, the Russians were ten days away from the isthmus; see Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 191. Manstein notes that the Russians were ten marches away from Perekop; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 92.

[18] Davies (Ibid., 191) quotes Manstein's numbers, but estimates Nogai casualties at 1,000, instead of almost 4,000, of whom only few were spared, noted by Manstein (Ibid., 92). On the other hand, Davies gives note of

finally returned to their winter quarters in November, the army was severely mauled by diseases and by the demoralization after the unsuccessful march. Leontyev was court-martialed for the failure but was able to justify himself entirely and to receive a pardon. The blame was thrown on the dead Weissbach for not planning the campaign better.

5.4. The Campaign of 1736

Preparations

Following Leontyev's disastrous campaign in the fall of 1735 Minikh set forth to prepare meticulously for the next year's season. He was going to receive support from the forces of Hessen-Homburg, situated in Poland, as well as from the regiments, which were pulled out of Dagestan in the wake of the Treaty of Ganja.[19] Although the regiments from Poland moved quite slowly and reached their quarters in Ukraine in the first days of March, Minikh used their slow march to cover the southern border against any Tatar retribution raids in the first months of 1736. As Bayov notes, the purchase of horses was among Minikh's primary concerns.[20] In November and December 1735 over 16,000 mounts were needed the Field-marshal complained that the process of their purchase was too slow. Furthermore, the prices of the animals, both regimental and pack had risen and a single war horse cost approximately 18 rubles, while pack animals worth eight rubles. This task was specifically assigned to the officers. In the dragoon regiments each officer had to purchase 80 war horses and 60 draft animals.[21] The staggering numbers could not be met by local merchants. Thus, the sale of horses outside the borders of the empire, including the animals, bred by the Cossacks and the Kalmyks, was put under ban.

Regarding weaponry, Minikh issued a new model of cavalry swords, which had new design and replaced the old rapiers. According to the Field-marshal the new swords were going to be more useful against the enemies the Russians were about to face. The army was also armed with 15,000 new muskets, some of which were produced in Tula while others were bought from Saxony. This resulted in weapons with different calibers, even among members

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4,000 horses, which died by 17th October, while Manstein only mentions that 1,000 died from the snow and frost on the morning of 17th.

[19] The regiments were as follows: From Poland-Lithuania – Dragoon regiments – Olonetskiy, Novotroitsky, Kievskiy, Lutskiy, Troitskiy, Ingermanlandskiy, Permskiy, Narvskiy; Infantry regiments – Pervyy Moskovskiy, Yaroslavskiy, Vladimirskiy, Schlisselyburgskiy, Vologodskiy, Keksgolymskiy, Sibirskiy, Nevskiy, Permskiy, Sankty-Peterburgskiy, Vyatskiy. Additional regiments from Poland – Dragoon - Kargopolyskiy, Tverskoy, Vladimirskiy, Sankty-Peterburgskiy, Tobolskiy; Infantry – Tobolskiy, Narvskiy, Byalozerskiy, Velikolutskiy, Smolenskiy, Butyrskiy, Uglitskiy, Astrakhanskiy, Ladozhkiy; Regiments from Persia – Dragoon – Nizhegorodskiy, Kazanskiy, Pskovskiy; Infantry – Dagestanskiy, Kabardinskiy, Tenginskiy, Derbentskiy, Apsheronskiy, Nasheburgskiy; In total 16 Dragoon regiments and 26 Infantry regiments; see Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, Note 4 for part I of Chapter III, 77 of the Appendix.

[20] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 188-9.

[21] Ibid.

of one and the same regiment.[22] All older weapons – both guns and swords, were donated to the Land Militia of Ukraine. To avoid the troubles of the Pruth Campaign, related to the numerical superiority of enemy cavalry, Minikh issued an order, according to which each regiment had to carry 288 pikes, and over 1,000 other spears and wooden stakes, which were going to be used by the infantry in case of cavalry attacks.[23] The Russians were also going to use the old tactic of gulyay gorod-s, often applied by Peter in the course of the Great Northern War. Further, specific orders were issued concerning the baggage train, which was to be supplemented by special carriages, transporting water supplies, as well as additional carts for the pikes and steaks of the infantry. Officers were to limit the volume of belongings and supplies they could carry.

By the time the army was set in motion, the army was not yet fully equipted and the Russians lacked 5,808 guns, 2,130 pistols, 1,578 swords and sabers, 1,206 saddles and 351 tents.[24] New uniforms and clothing were also not sufficient since some of the regiments had to be supplied with uniforms, coming from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Riga and Smolensk.

Before the launching of the actual campaign, Minikh had made some sophisticated calculations and sent a report to the capital, listing the amount of troops that, according to him, would be sufficient for the campaign in 1736. For the Crimea's march, Minikh envisioned a Dnieper army, comprising of 19 dragoon regiments, each consisting of 1,035 men and officers (19,665 men), 18 infantry regiments, each comprising of 1,354 soldiers and officers (24,372 men), 8 Land Militia horse regiments and 2 Land Militia foot regiments (10,000 troops in total), a hussar regiment of 500 soldiers, as well as free companies of the regular regiments, also numbering 500. Apart from these 55,037 regular troops, Minikh also included a strong irregular corps, namely 4,000 Don Cossacks, 16,000 Malorossiyskiy Cossacks, 8,700 Slobodskie Cossacks, 150 Chyornyy Dol Kalmyks, 180 men of the Pavlovsk Companion regiment and 6,000 Zaporozhians, all in all, 35,030 men. Thus, the combined number of regular and irregular troops was 90,067 of which almost 50,000 were cavalry. Also, the army was supposed to have an artillery train of 48 regimental and 18 field guns (66 in total), serviced by 200 men.

The second army, which had to descend on Azov and take it, had to have the following composition: 5 dragoon regiments of 1,035 soldiers each (5,175 men in total), 18 infantry regiments of 1,354 men each (24,372 men), one garrison dragoon regiment (1,035 men) and 5 garrison infantry regiments of 1,354 troops each (6,770 men). These 37,352 regulars were to be supported by 8,000 Don Cossacks and 284 guns, of which only 36 belonged to the regiments

[22] Ibid., 189.

[23] Ibid. Manstein only mentions that each regiment was supposed to carry 350 pikes as well as 20 *chevaux de frises*, which were also used to protect the camp, during rests. What Manstein has in mind is probably the gulyay-gorod, which was already discussed in Chapter I. Davies quotes Manstein's figures; see Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 192.

[24] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 191.

while the rest were siege artillery. The total amount of men, who were to be sent against Azov, was supposedly 45,352 strong.[25]

As it is clearly seen, the core strength on the Crimean Theater had to be the massive horse contingent, while on the Azov front the Russians were going to count on the siege guns and the strong garrison corps, which had to protect the besieging army from enemy raids, which were constant during Peter's campaigns in 1695-1697. Although Minikh is often criticized by Soviet historiography, for trying to impose foreign military manners on the native development of combat practices, according to these figures it is evident that the Field-marshal went through a lot of trouble to correct the errors, made by his predecessors during the previous campaigns in the south.

The campaign

Minikh departed from his winter quarters in Izyum at the beginning of March 1736 and arrived at St. Anna's fort. There he was surprised to find that out of the expected 10,000 troops (seven regiments) there were only 3,000 fit for combat. The others were either sick or sent to retrieve supplies from the local areas, since the garrison had been feeding on sukhari for the past two months.[26] Minikh did not waste time and decided to gather whatever force he could muster and marched against Azov immediately while the main force under Peter von Lacy was to arrive later on. The Field-marshal had received intelligence that the Ottoman garrison of Azov was just 3,000 men strong, 1,000 of which were irregulars and Tatars.[27] Furthermore, the bad weather in the Black Sea would prevent the arrival sea of reinforcements via sea. On the other hand, with the advent of spring, the grass had begun to grow in the Don Steppe, and Minikh calculated that it would suffice for the fodder of the cavalry. Furthermore, the ground was already softening after the winter frosts and was suitable for the digging of earthworks and trenches. With these factors in mind, Minikh assembled six regiments of infantry and a cavalry contingent of some 2,200 Cossacks and set forth toward Azov.[28] A detachment of 1,000 Cossacks was sent on the left bank of the Don to counter any attempts from the Kuban Tatars to relieve the siege. By the beginning of May, these men were to be further supplemented by 3,000 Cossacks and 20,000 Kalmyks. At the same time, Minikh sent a vanguard of 600 infantry and 1,200 Cossacks under G.M. von Spereiter to observe Azov and to cease any enemy attempt for scouting.[29]

[25] Ibid., 203-5.
[26] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 207-8.
[27] This proved to be false. The Ottoman forces numbered well over 5,000, with a substantial share of yeniçeri.
[28] Minikh was able to gather 9,250 men, of whom 5,800 were regular infantry and 2,200 were Cossacks; He expected that these forces would be supplemented by another 9,250 men - 4,925 infantry and dragoons and 5,000 Don Cossacks. These were expected to arrive at Azov by the end of March, raising the total force to 18 500 men; see Bayov, *Russkaya armiya, 210*.
[29] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 99. Exact numbers are given in *Khronologicheskiy ukazately voennykh deystviy russkoy armii i flota, part I 1695-1800*, (St. Petersburg, 1908), 50. There is a mismatching of dates –

Spereiter's troops advanced to the town and after meeting no enemy resistance, stormed and on 19th March took two enemy watchtowers (*kalancha*), followed by the capture of Fort Tulip (*Lyutik*) on the 23rd, after a successful night attack. The fall of the Lyutik fort gave Minikh the opportunity to begin the full circumvallation of Azov and also added 20 more guns to the Russian siege train.[30] Spereiter proved quite successful – he was able to capture the watchtowers without the loss of a single man, and Fort Lyutik was subdued with only a lieutenant and three troops killed.[31] The Ottomans lost between 50 and 100 killed and over 50 captured, along with substantial amounts of provisions and munitions.[32]

Minikh left Azov and returned to Ukraine at the end of March, being replaced by General Vasiliy Levashov, who was to command the blockade until the arrival of Lacy with the main bulk of the siege artillery. Before he set forth, Minikh made meticulous preparations, regarding the erection of defensive positions for his camp and buttressing the protection of his lines of communication with the St. Anna fort. The Field-marshal also strengthened the Azov corps with 60 guns, brought from St. Anna and sent a detachment of 1,000 well-armed Cossacks on a flotilla of riverboats to blockade the mouth of Don and of Myortvyy Donets, preventing the shipment of any supplies from the Azov Sea. Furthermore, Minikh issued a complete set of instructions regarding: army disposition, digging of trenches and lines of circumvallation, distribution of the batteries, as well as allocation of garrisons and amount of cannons, necessary for strengthening the watchtowers and the Lyutik fort. These instructions were to serve Levashov until the arrival of Lacy, who was to take full command of the siege. Minikh was determined not to leave anything to chance. He was prepared in advance for all possible issues that could occur, including response to enemy sorties and the establishment of a regular postal service.[33]

The month of April was spent in finishing the trenches and lines, projected by Minikh and in deflecting enemy sorties, which took place on 3rd, 5th, and 25th. The first sortie was carried out by 600 Turks – half of whom were infantry and the rest – cavalry. They attacked a Russian supply train, protected by a company of footmen. The Russians were able to create a wagenburg out of the supply wagons and to repel enemy attacks, which continued for two hours and ended with the arrival of a Cossack detachment. The next sortie from 5th

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Manstein states that Minikh has crossed Don on 27th March and that Lyutik was captured on 3rd April. According to the *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel* and A. Bayov, Lyutik was captured on 23rd, while the watchtowers fell on the night of 19th and 20th of March. It is possible, that the English translation of Manstein's memoirs was corrected accordin to the Georgian Calendar.

[30] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 213.

[31] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 100.

[32] Russia's official declaration of war was issued in the middle of March, 1736 and so the paşa of Azov did not have any idea of what the Russians were planning. Military drills of the border regiments were annual near the Russo-Ottoman border and the Turks were not very suspicious of Minikh's maneuvers. (Ibid., 99).

[33] For a detailed description of Minikh's instructions, see Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 214-6.

April was carried out by a force of 1,000 yeniçeri and 600 horsemen, who attacked the Russian trenches, which the troops were still digging on the right flank of the army. The garrison units were quick to respond and despite the fearsome charges of the kapukulu ocakları, the Turks were beaten back, after sustaining over 100 casualties, with the Russians losing only 17 men.[34] The final sortie was carried out by several hundred Tatars, who were ambushed and soundly defeated by a corps of 400 Cossacks, sent by Levashov.

When General P. von Lacy reached Azov on 4th May, following a troubled ride across Ukraine, he set forth to inspect the siege and review the state of the army.[35] What Lacy concluded after the revision was that the army was lacking personnel. Of the expected 18,500 men, only 11,874 were present. Of them, 8,493 were regulars and 3,381 - Kalmyks and Cossacks, of whom only 1,044 were horsemen. Out of the overall regular troops, 700 were sick after month and a half of military action, which demonstrates the low level of medical support and sanitation among the rank and file, allocated in the trenches and camps around Azov.[36]

The sieges continued throughout May with no substantial success, the trench work proceeding slowly. The army had to struggle with the constant lack of bread, uniforms and the significant delay in payment.[37] Lacy was forced to mobilize any available source of provisions and to redistribute the weapons among the troops, due to lack of muskets and rapiers. When guns were not available, soldiers were armed with pikes. On the other hand, as Lacy was to discover, from 5th May the Ottoman garrison was in a good position, with enough supplies and stationed in fortifications, which were in a superb state. [38] It turned out that Minikh, although right in his decision to exploit the unpreparedness of the Ottomans, failed in his calculation of the available provisions and of the capacity of Russian logistics to resupply the troops once Azov was blockaded.

On 8th May the Turks renewed their struggle with a new sortie, in which 500 footmen and 300 horsemen attacked a detachment of 150 grenadiers on the Russian left flank. The grenadiers were able to repel the enemy, inflicting heavy losses, while losing only 5 killed and 64 wounded. Following this sortie, Lacy issued an order according to which even workers in the trenches must wear arms and in case of a new sortie the entire army must be ready to respond. On the next day, the river fleet from Voronezh arrived, comprised of six galleys and nine gun-rafts, along with smaller vessels, all under the command of Rear admiral Bredal. Lacy sent Bredal to blockade the Don with his fleet, armed with additional guns. These vessels were allocated at the mouth of the Don to prevent

[34] Ibid., 218.
[35] Lacy was ambushed in the steppe, south of the Ukrain Line and was almost captured by the Tatars, loosing 20 of his 40 men escort, 10,000 rubles and most of his personal belongings. Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 219.
[37] Some of the engineers had not received money since January 1736.
[38] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 220-1.

any relief coming from the Azov Sea. The decision turned out to be most fortunate for the Russians, since the main Ottoman fleet, under the Kapudan Paşa Canım Hoca Mehmed Paşa arrived a day later. His ships, however, could not enter the shallow waters of Don's mouth, and the heavy fire from the Russian fleet prevented a landfall from the Ottoman marines. Canım Hoca, unable to take further action had to sail back to Istanbul, leaving Azov to its fate.[39]

On the 16th, the Ottomans carried out another major sortie, which included 2,000 footmen and cavalry, which attacked the Russian left flank. Following a hard-fought combat, the Russians prevailed after Lacy personally led 500 grenadiers in a flanking manoeuvre. The Ottomans were beaten back with heavy losses while the Russians lost 212 men, of who 21 were killed and the rest – wounded.[40] This was followed by a new surprise attack on behalf of the Turks, which took place on 3rd June. In the course of the assault the Turks inflicted a severe blow on the Russians by killing 33 men and wounding 823. The incursion was finally driven back, with some 100 Ottoman troops killed.[41]

The siege continued until the last weeks of June. The Russians were able to progress further with their earthworks and batteries, and on 8th June, a shell from a siege gun detonated Azov's gunpowder supply depots. The Turks held for ten more days. Then during one night attack, after a breach in the outer defenses, the Russians were able to capture a position on one of Azov's bastions. Two days later the commanding officer of the Ottoman garrison surrendered the town's keys.After that his troops were allowed to leave the fortress and the Russians finally occupied Azov on 21st June 1736. During the siege, between 8th May and 20th June, the Russians lost 301 killed, died of their wounds or missing and 1,238 wounded. The strength of the army had increased from an initial force of 11,874 at the beginning of May to 28,000 at the end of June, with a total of 135 guns taking part in the sieges.[42] Compared to the preliminary numbers, calculated by Minikh, the actual strength of the Don Army never reached even 50 per cent of the estimated figures. Nevertheless, the Russians achieved their goal even with such a minimal force, against a garrison, which was bigger than the one encountered by Peter four decades ago.[43]

After the quartering of the garrison troops (four regiments), Lacy, mustering the bulk of the Don Army, set forth to join Minikh's main army on

[39] This action was probably the reason for his dismissal from office, after serving three times as Kapudan Paşa (supreme commander of the Ottoman fleet); K. M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century*. (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1991), 428.

[40] *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel*, 50; Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 222.

[41] Ibid., 50-1; Bayov, *Ruskaya armiya*, 224; The total number of casualties is the same – 856, what differs is that according to the *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel*, the killed were 41, while Bayov gives 33.

[42] Davies (*Empire and Military Revolution*, 193) incorrectly quotes Bayov, stating that the total of the Don Army numbered 25,000, in fact the number is 28,000 (Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 226). Davies also incorrectly cites Manstein's memoirs, were no mention of a total Russian force under Azov is presented (Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 126-7 as cited by Davies).

[43] The initial garrison comprised of 5,890 troops, of whom 1,528 were killed and 899 died from disease, along with 1,200 of the civilians. Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 226-8.

the Dnieper to strengthen the Field-marshal's force in its invasion of Crimea. As it turned out, this was not destined to happen and in August, P. von Lacy retreated with his limited forces, heading back to Izyum for winter quarters.

While Levashov and later Lacy were busy taking Azov, Minikh returned to Ukraine to direct and lead the main army personally against the Crimean Khanate. He reached Tsarichanka on the Dnieper River on 7th April and was unpleasantly surprised to find out that from the anticipated army, which had to descend on Crimea in full strength, only nine infantry, and nine dragoon regiments were present.[44] They were ill-equipped and their baggage trains was still being suppliedaccording to Minikh's orders. The soldiers also lacked uniforms and Prince Trubetskoy was still struggling to provide all the necessary supplies.[45] Given the circumstances, Minikh decided to rush whatever forces he could muster and replace strength with surprise as his main advantage. By the time the army set forth, in was comprised of 10 dragoon and 15 infantry regiments available, 28,238 men in total, along with 10,000 troops from the Land Militia, 300 hussars and Wallachians, 3,200 Zaporozhian Cossacks, 12,730 Malorossiyskiy (Ukrainian) Cossacks, 2,360 Slobodskiy Cossacks, 250 Chuguevskiy Cossacks and 1,000 artillerymen and pontoon company, altogether 58,078 soldiers and officers.[46] As Bayov notes, only half of this force was consisted of regular troops, since the quality of the Land Militia was far from that of the regular field regiments, although Manstein held the militia in high esteem. At least 55 per cent of the army was comprised of irregular and regular cavalry which number was more or less according to Minikh's preliminary calculations. The force, gathered for the capture of Crimea, was over one-third smaller, than the one, anticipated by the field-marshal in his initial plans.

Minikh again issued extensive instructions for his subordinates, regarding the size of the officers' baggage, the way the supply train had to be prepared, the usage of water-barrels, which were to be used as pontoons, once they were emptied. At the beginning of May, the weather was as fine as a general could desire, and the army was well supplied and in an excellent mood for a campaign as Minikh concluded.[47] Manstein was more realistic in his assessment. According to the Prussian officer, the army still lacked supplies in the long term, and Minikh counted on Prince Trubetskoy to send regular caravans with munitions and food as soon as these commodities were assembled on the

[44] 18th according to the Gregorian version, used in the 1856's edition of Manstein's memoirs. I will use the Russian version of the dates, as was in the previous chapter. Manstein's dates differ exactly 11 days.
[45] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 231.
[46] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 239; According to Manstein, there were 12 dragoon regiments, 15 infantry regiments, 10 Land Militia regiments, 10 squadrons of hussars, 12,000 Cossacks (5,000 from Don, 3,000 Zaporozhians and the rest from Ukraine), or an overall of 54,000 troops and officers; see Manstein, *Contemporar Memoirs*, 100-1; Bobrovskiy (*Istoriya*, part II, 132) also gives 58,078 in total, listing them as 17 infantry and 17 dragoon regiments and noting that the Butyrskiy Regiment, although it should have had 1,537 soldiers and staff, was undermanned and had just 1429 men in its ranks. The situation was probably he same in the other regiments; The *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel* (p.52) gives the same numbers as Bayov. Davies (*Empire and Military Revolution*, 195), uses Bayov's figures as well.
[47] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 239.

Ukraine line. Since transportation was rather limited, due to Minikh's desire to bring as few carts as possible, and also due to the constant lack of vehicles, Trubetskoy had to organize transportation for the move, which he failed to do. As Manstein notes, the arrangement of the supply train was not yet completed, when the army returned from Crimea.[48] In addition, Minikh, who had never fought on the Pontic Steppe, was convinced that there would be enough fodder for the animals in the early months of summer and that the abundant harvest, gathered in 1735 by the Crimeans would suffice for the upkeep of the Russian army.[49]

The army departed Tsarichanka between 11th and 19th April and reached the edges of the steppe on 5th May. Three days later, the vanguard force, comprised mostly of Cossacks met large Tatar force (15-20,000 men), which was defeated by the arrival of cavalry reinforcements from the main army. The Tatars drew back and retreated in Perekop. The Tatar attack was launched from Qaplan II Girei's main force came after the vanguard squadrons had discovered the location of the Crimeans at Chyornyy Dol (Black Valley). The Khan decided to avoid confrontation with the advancing Russian forces and withdrew his army. Fearing another attack from the Tatar cavalry, Minikh formed his army in close order into a giant, hollow square, with the supply train in the middle and with the dragoons at the corners.[50] The Field-marshal would often use this formation during the campaign. Its composition, although limiting the dangers of enemy raids significantly hampered the movement of the troops.

The Russians finally reached Perekop on 17th May and stormed the fortification line two days later, using 30,000 men, divided into six columns.[51] The rapid success strengthened Minikh's resolve to march forward and to try to occupy all of Crimea before the Ottomans could redirect their military support from Azov toward Kaffa. He left a small garrison to occupy Perekop and dispatched General Leontyev with 10,000 troops and 3,000 Cossacks to hold Kinburn and prevent the Budjak Tatars from coming to their khan's aid. Leontyev took the fortress without a single shot, allowing its small garrison to retreat to Ochakov on the opposite bank of the Dnieper. Leontyev took possession of 49 guns, 3,000 horses, 500 cattle and 30,000 sheep.[52]

On 22nd May, Minikh summoned a war council, which had to decide the army's next moves. The generals, headed by the prince of Hessen-Homburg, demanded that the Russians should maintain their position on the Perekop line until more supplies were sent from Ukraine by Trubetskoy, given the fact that the army had provisions for less than two weeks.[53] The generals proposed some raiding parties to be sent to gather supplies and ravage Tatar territory.

[48] Manstein, *Contemporay Memoirs*, 101.
[49] Minikh drew his information from Cossack intelligence gathered in the previous months.
[50] Bobrovskiy, *Istoriya, vol. 2*, 133; Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 196.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 197.
[53] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 256.

Minikh, on the other hand, stated that the Russians had built a good momentum with their swift taking of Perekop and that no time should be wasted in order for the campaign to be brought to a successful end. Minikh believed that the army should capture the coastal settlements and occupy the capital Bakhchisaray before the Ottomans could reinforce the Tatars with a substantial number of yeniçeri and other infantry units, which would supplement the predominantly cavalry-based Crimean army. The Field-marshal was still convinced that the troops could be fed from the food storages of the local population and that the grass, still growing in mid spring, could support the horses without the constant flow of food and fodder from Ukraine. Minikh overrode his generals and marched his men forward, after leaving garrisons in Perekop, Kinburn, and Kazikerman. The Field-marshal was sure that Lacy had already taken Azov and that he would arrive soon with a substantial part of the Don Army.

The army continued its campaign and on 7th June, after repelling several harassing raids by small Tatar units, the Russians took the position in the coastal town of Evpatoriya.[54] They arrived in a "ghost town" as most of the town's residents and the entire garrison had fled days in advance. Here, Minikh captured grain and rice stores, which would suffice his army for additional twenty-four days and thus he felt vindicated by his earlier perception. Still, Hessen-Homburg and some of the generals felt substantial doubt about the future success of the expedition, noting that dysentery had begun to take its toll on the soldiers.[55] Water was also hard to find as there were just three small streams with drinkable waterand most of the wells along the route had been poisoned by the Tatars.

The last significant success on Russians' behalf came on 16th June when their main force held off a Tatar advance near Bakhchisaray while a small detachment of infantry and dragoons captured the city. Following the Tatar retreat, Bakhchisaray was partialy burnt, with the khan's palace being destroyed, along with most of the supplies, gathered in the city. Following the capture of the enemy capital, Minikh decided to continue his movement toward Kaffa, and on 21st June dispatched a 10,000-strong force of Cossacks and infantry under generals Gustav von Biron and Ismailov to capture Aqmescit (Simferopol). The town was also emptied of its population, and the Russians burned it to the ground, after which they returned to the main army.

At that point, Minikh had to acknowledge the impossibility of further advance. One-third of the army was already sick, with dysentery spreading rapidly amongst the troops.[56] Since no supplies were found in Bakhchisaray or Aqmescit, the Russians were dangerously short of food, and the provision of

[54] During this march, the army was again using a square formation, as noted above; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 111.
[55] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 198.
[56] Bobrovskiy, *Istoriya*, vol. 2, 134.

fresh water turned into a problem of monstrous proportions. Both animals and men were dying from thirst and heat, and the morale of the entire army was dwindling day by day. Given the circumstances and the fact that no decisive victory could be won against the Tatars, Minikh decided to abort the campaign and evacuate his troops before a strong Ottoman army could be formed in Kaffa. On 26th June, the Russians began their march back to Ukraine, while Lacy was just marching his regiments out of Azov to join the campaign against the Tatars. The army reached Perekop on 6th July, constantly harassed by Tatar raiding parties. Minikh's retreat was perceived as a failure in St. Petersburg, and the Field-marshal was urged to start a new offensive in August or September, but he was well aware that his troops were worn out, and no adequate actions could be carried out before 1737. During the months of July and August, Minikh decided that his forces were insufficient for the upholding of Kinburn and Perekop, and he ordered the two fortifications to be destroyed, after which the main army retreated further north into Ukraine where it took winter quarters. After reviewing his shattered units, Minikh found out that he had lost 30,000 men, most of them due to dysentery, hunger, and thirst.[57] Without receiving a single blow on the battlefield, the Russians had sustained over 50 per cent casualties of their entire force, which easily could count as a military disaster. In return, Minikh was unable to extend Russian holdings, nor defeat the Tatars or their Ottoman allies. In the end, the Russians had to rebuild their forces completely if they wanted to take on the initiative in the following campaign, as the Tatars would just follow their habit of returning and rebuilding their settlements. The fall of Azov was also not as grave on Ottoman positions in the Black Sea as before since no major program for the construction of the Black Sea Fleet was issued by St. Petersburg. Thus, the situation at the end of 1736 differed little from the one in the spring of 1735.

5.5. The Campaign of 1737

Preparations

The establishment of the army for the next year's campaign began while Minikh's troops were still on the field. Osterman, the energetic Russian Chancellor, set forth to bring Austria into the war with the Turks, stressing on the fact that according to the Treaty of 1726 between the two states the Habsburgs had to send an auxilliary contingent to Russia's war efforts in case of a conflict with the Ottomans. In 1736 the Austrians had managed to avoid participation, using the war exhaustion from the conflict with France as a pretext. Russian historiography has developed a rather critical perspective toward Austrian actions. A. Bayov accuses the Habsburgs of being sagacious

[57] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs* 133.

and having second thoughts against a possible Russian expansion in the Black Sea region. He even states that the Austrians also sought to claim an access on the Black Sea, a thesis that hardly has any real dimensions. The Austrians were, however, keen on acquiring the right to serve as the protector of all Christians in the Ottoman Empire – a position desired also by Russia. Therefore, Vienna would try to use its military card only as a possible threat and would prefer to win the war on the diplomatic front. The rapid change in the situation in Persia would bring immediate shifts in the policy of Southesastern Europe. Following a series of victories over the Ottomans and his own internal opponents, Nadir Shah decided to overthrow the last legitimate Safavid ruler – the infant Abbas III (r. 1732-1736) and to affirm himself as the new overlord of Persia. This led to a series of revolts in Persia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Afghanistan, with which the new shah had to deal. This, in turn, initiated peace talks between Nadir Shah and the Sublime Porte, which would eventually lead to the Treaty of Constantinople, which restored the borders of 1722 and allowed the Ottomans to concentrate all of their resources toward the western fronts. Given the circumstances, Osterman was able to convince the Austrians that the time for talks was over, and more direct actions were required. The Chancellor reminded Vienna that until this moment Russia had fulfilled all of the arrangements of the 1726 Treaty. Finally, the Habsburgs had to give in and agreed to join the war in 1737. A military convention was signed on 29th December 1736, stating that the two sides would mutually support one another and that neither would be left to face the enemy by itself. In addition, it stated that neither Austria, nor Russia would sign a separate peace.[58]

After diplomatic arrangements had been carried out, the military personnel began to prepare for its field tasks. In order to fill in the depleted regiments, an order was issued according to which 14,800 garrison troops from Moscow, Smolensk, Voronezh, and Archangelsk were going to be mobilized. There was a particular note that these men had to be the finest, most battle-ready and well-suited for marching among these garrisons.[59] Since this figures were insufficient to fill in the losses, sustained in Crimea, and also to bring men from the garrisons in Ukraine, in the autumn of 1736 a draft was held, and it resulted in 45,167 fresh recruits.[60] The cavalry also had to be equipped with horses, which were gathered from the population of the Sibir governorate, the "Lower cities" (along the Volga), as well as from the people of southern Russia which were attached to the upkeep of the Land Militia. According to A. Bayov, every

[58] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 300; B. Davies gives the date 9th January 1737, which is according to the New Style; see Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 201. While Bayov notes that in case of an Ottoman attack on Hungary Austria would require from Russia to invade Moldavia, Davies states that the Moldavian clause was linked to a possible Ottoman invasion of Transylvania. Given the fact that the Ottomans had never before invaded Transylvania and had always marched into Hungary when fighting the Habsburgs, Bayov's analysis of the text seems more accurate.

[59] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 313.

[60] See Table 2 in the Appendix for Chapter I.

235 people had to provide one horse for the army. Belgorod was chosen as the central gathering point, from where animals were to be assigned to the separate regiments. Since the collection of horses went slowly and not quite adequately, in 1737, it was ordered that the governors and voevodi, as well as the regimental commanders should purchase additional horses, mainly from the Kalmyk settlements in the Eastern Pontic Steppe.[61] An interesting issue came from the fact that *pomeshtik-s* in Ukraine preferred to pay the value of a horse in rubles instead of providing actual mounts. Minikh had to instruct repeatedly his men not to take the money but to recruit real animals. Moreover, he allowed the usage of military escort for the officers, sent to provide the mounts. By the beginning of May, there were 16,000 horses provided, but still both dragoon and infantry regiments lacked mounts and pack animals.[62] It was in June when the infantry was finally supplied with the requisite number of horses, but the Land Militia regiments were still in need. In order to provide the necessary mounts, special measures were applied, mobilizing horses from the clergy, as well as placing a ban on horse trade until the army numbers were amassed. Officers were also expected to send some of their own animals. Oxen for the supply train were also in dire need. In April, it was calculated that the army required 29,466 pairs, while in the first week of June, there were only 26,817 available.[63]

In 1737, weapons were redistributed again. New muskets were brought, chiefly from Tula, but also, from the armories in Moscow, and a certain amount were purchased from Saxony. Minikh decided to take the rapiers away from the infantry and hand them to the dragoons, most of who were still armed with old swords and sabers. The Field-marshal claimed that the infantry would seldom use rapiers since they were accustomed to using bayonets in hand-to-hand combat and that the swords only served as additional burden during marching. All old handguns which could be spared were given to the Land Militia units, who were, again, in need of more arms. Minikh strengthened his determination to equip the infantry with pikes with which to protect the troops from the predominantly cavalry armies of the Tatars. He doubled the issued pikes per regiment, from 144 in 1736 to 288 in 1737. Given the bad experience with dysentery, Minikh placed great emphasis on the medical support of the army and the field physicians began to supply their stores as early as September 1736. Apart from the standard medicines, each regiment had a separate supply of wine, vinegar, and pepper used to fix problems with the stomach and to treat dehydrationand high temperature during the summer.[64]

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[61] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 315-16.

[62] From 15th May, the following regiments needed horses: Dragoons – Moscow Reg. – 81, Kiev Reg. – 77, Troitskiy Reg. – 182, Narva Reg. – 86, Peterburg Reg - 135, Ingermanland Reg. – 20, Ryazan Reg. - 239, Tobolsk Reg. – 31, Kargopolsk Reg. – 25 (876 in total); Infantry – Petersburg inf. Reg. - 278, Vladimir Reg. – 50, Yaroslav Reg. - 244, Sibir Reg. – 30, Tobolsk reg. – 57, Keksgolm Reg. – 203, Narva inf. Reg. – 32 (894 in total) or an overall of 1,770 horses were further needed; see Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, Appendix, Note 96, 119.

[63] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 317.

[64] Ibid., 320-21.

In the second half of May, the armies of Russia were more or less ready to depart. Following a successful Kalmyk raid on the Kuban Steppe in the spring of 1736, the local Tatars pledged their allegiance to the Russians and thus the Azov front was significantly relieved from pressure. Then it was then decided that the Russians would attack in two directions – the main army under Minikh would strike the Ottoman fortress of Ochakov, while a smaller force under Lacy would depart from the Don region and, supported by a fleet of 500 small vessels, would invade Crimea through the demolished fortification of Perekop. It was expected that the enemy resistence would not be very significant, and Minikh believed that the Ottomans, preoccupied with the war against Russia and Austria, would not support the Tatars with any units. In the winter of 1736/7 the military intelligence stated that the Turks possessed a force of 20,000 men in Babadag in the Danube Delta and some 14-20,000 troops in garrisons in Jedisan, which were to be supplemented by 35,000 soldiers from Egypt in the summer of 1737, as well as 6,000 Bosnians and a large number of Balkan and Anatolian troops, which could bring the overall strength of the Ottoman army in Bessarabiato 80,000-90,000 men .[65] At the same time, the Crimean Tatars were expected to mobilize around 85,000 men, which had to support the Ottoman struggle with Russia, to protect Crimea and also to attack the Kuban Steppe, reclaiming it from the Kalmyks.

When on 21st May the army finally departed, Minikh was supposed to command a force of 30 infantry regiments, comprised of 1,686 men each (50,580 troops), along with 3 guard battalions (2,757 soldiers) for the infantry. In addition he was going to have also 21 dragoon regiments of 1,231 each (25,851 men), 401 guard cavalrymen and 9 regiments of mounted Land Militia with 1,077 men per regiment (9,693 men in total) or a total of 35,945 for the cavalry. Apart from these regular units, there were also over 13,000 Cossacks, as well as hussars and Wallachians, Kalmyks.The artillery corps comprised of 2,842 men, who serviced 389 field and siege guns as well as grenade mortars. Thus, the total amount of troops under the Field-marshal was supposed to be 92,124 regulars and over 13,000 irregulars, not counting the Kalmyks.[66] In fact, it did not exceed 70,000, since some of the regiments were still not in full strength, many of the Cossacks had not arrived and a substantial part of the army was sick, so the ill troops had to be left behind.[67] Once again Minikh was going to fight with an incomplete army.

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[65] Ibid., 345.

[66] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 357-85; His numbers, however, do not sum up since the actual number of regulars and artillery men calculated is 92,124 instead of the 89,282 as he notes. He also calculates 6-7,000 Don Cossacks, who were to join Lacy's army.

[67] 20 dragoon regiments, 29 infantry regiments, 2 guards and 1 cuirassier squadrons, 9 Land Militia regiments, 1,600 hussars and 13,000 Cossacks; see A. Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 371. Manstein proposes different figures - 63 battalions of foot, two squadrons of horse-guards, 1 squadron of Minikh's cuirassiers, 29 regiments of dragoons (145 squadrons), 3,000 artillery men, 1,500 hussars and over 13,000 Cossacks, or an overall of 60-70,000 men (which matches Bayov's estimate) and 646 guns and mortars of different sizes; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*,149). The *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel* lists 3 battalions of the guard's regiments and 2

At the same time, Lacy's smaller army was supposed to have the following numbers – 20 infantry regiments of 1,686 men each (33,720 men), 13 regiments of dragoons and mounted Land Militia, 1,231 men each (16,003 troops), as well as 15-16,000 Cossacks, not counting the Kalmyks and the footmen Cossacks in the fleet. Of the total 49,723 regulars, 9,000 were to be left at Azov as a garrison, and Lacy would only use the other 40,723 as a field force. The artillery train of Lacy's army consisted of over 32 guns and mortars with a different caliber.[68] As in the case of Minikh, Lacy was also going to rely on quite fewer men. Out of the planed 55,000, he set off with just 25,000 regulars and irregulars, and another 10,630 were boarded on the ships, which were to sail through the Azov Sea. In total, 449 vessels were provided, 320 of which would carry the naval contingent across the Azov Sea.[69]

The campaign

Minikh's forces departed on the 22nd of May, following the merger of all columns, which set off from Ukraine earlier the same month. The forces had to march to the Bug River and cross it in order to descend on the Ochakov fortress. Following twenty-three days of marching, the Russians finally arrived at the Bug River, which they began crossing on 14th June. Due to the large baggage train and the abundance of guns, the army lost a week in transferring on the other side of the Bug. Since the guns could hardly cross the river, Minikh decided to ship them down the Bug in a prepared flotilla of boats and rafts. Unlike Peter in 1711, the Field-marshal decided to put an extra effort and constructedc a river fleet, which was to supplement the movement of the army.[70] Even at this rate of river and wagon supply, Minikh's army was proceeding slowly, and he decided to leave the heavy guns and part of the baggage train behind, guarded by a quarter of his army under Leontyev. The rest of the army was able to proceed at a greater speed and reached the outskirts of Ochakov on 29th June.

Minikh, having neither actual intelligence about the size of the Ottoman garrison nor knowledge about the actual disposition of its fortifications, decided to opt for immediate assault and not to wait until the heavy siege artillery is shipped to the site. His decision was influenced by the fact that the Ottomans had burned the vicinities of their fortress and the Russians were denied forage

guard squadrons of cavalry, 20 dragoon regiments, 9 Land Militia regiments and 28 infantry regiments, accompanied by 1,600 hussars, 3,000 engineers and artillery men, 13,000 Cossacks, all in all – 60-70,000 troops; see *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel* 55-6. Bobrovskiy mixes the planned number of infantry regiments and the number of dragoon units (30 infantry regiments, 29 cavalry regiments, and three guard battalions) with the actual total of the army, estimating that it did not exceed 70,000; see Bobrovskiy *Istoriya, vol 2*, 135.

[68] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 358-9.

[69] Ibid., 424-5. Manstein notes that Lacy had 13 dragoon regiments, 20 infantry regiments, and 10-12,000 Cossacks and Kalmyks, or up to 40,000 in total; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 173.

[70] In total, there were 500 vessels built, which required the labour of over 26,000 workers. Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 205.

and wood for the construction of field works. With a substantial part of his supply train still on the road, the Field-marshal considered that a protracted siege would have a devastating effect on his army. What he could not perceive, was that the Ochakov garrison had been reinforced by 20,000 troops and supplied with provisions for months ahead.[71] On the next day, 30th June, the Ottoman garrison committed a sortie, consisted of 15,000 troops, split into two columns, which attacked both Russian's flanks. After two hours of hard fighting, both sides lost around 200 men, and the Turks retreated back to the fortress.[72] On the next day, the Russians found two deserted Ottoman redoubts near the front of Ochakov and used them to install field batteries and began bombarding the town. On the following morning, a fire broke out in the center of Ochakov and Minikh decided that this was his chance to strike at the enemy, while they were struggling to put out the flames. Minikh sent a vanguard of infantry under James Keith to draw enemy fire from the ramparts and to prevent the garrison from fighting the fires in the settlement. Keith's troops advanced, following the field-marshal's command. They climbed the glacis but encountered a ditch, which was a surprise for both Keith and Minikh. The blame goes entirely to the commander-in-chief, who never actually ordered a reconnaissance of the enemy positions. Keith's forces stood exposed to enemy fire but were nevertheless able to inflict severe damage to the Ottoman troops, stationed on the ramparts. After two hours of fighting the Russians began losing heart and some of the troops ran back to the redoubts. At that point the Ottomans started organizing a sortie to finish off Keith's retreating men, but by a stroke of luck, the fires detonated the fortress' powder supply depot, which resulted in up to 6,000 killed and wounded among the Ottomans.[73] The commander of the Turks, *serasker* Muhsinzade Abdullah Paşa waved the white flag and requested for negotiations for the surrender of Ochakov to be opened.

The Russian troops demonstrated great resilience and courage, as well as strict subordination to the orders they had received. Although Minikh's decision to storm the fortress at the wake of the fire was correct, his conduct was nevertheless far from flawless, since the lack of proper reconnaissance of the enemy defenses cost the Russian the lives of many able and valuable troops. Furthermore, if the fire had not destroyed a substantial part of the Ottoman manpower, the sortie, already in the making, could have had devastating results on the Russian army. Minikh, himself, threw his sword to the ground, crying out: "All is lost".[74] The Ottomans lost between 10,000 and 17,000 people due to the fires, the fighting and the explosion of the powder magazines. The Russian

[71] Ibid., 208.
[72] *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel*, 56; Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 208.
[73] Bobrovskiy, *Istoriya*, *vol. 2*, 136.
[74] Ibid; Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 209.

casualties were nearly 3,900 men killed and wounded, of whom 200 were officers of medium and high rank as well as generals. [75]

After the gamble of Minikh paid off to some extent and Ochakov was captured, the Field-marshal decided to continue against Bender, but upon receiving the statistics, the government sent urgent orders that no further march should be undertaken. Then Minikh decided to pulll back to Ukraine, living a garrison unit of some 8,000 men in Ochakov under General Stoffeln. He was to receive further reinforcements in August along with materials and workers for the rebuilding of the devastated town. The living conditions for these unfortunate souls were wretched and at the end of August, Stoffeln commanded less than 5,000 men, of who one-fifth were sick.[76] When Minikh returned to Poltava in September, a revision of the army was carried out, the losses were again staggering – 11,000 regulars and 5,000 Cossacks had died, along with at least 10,000 serfs, taken as caravan workers and laborers. Over 60 per cent of the casualties were again due to diseases.[77]

However, the struggle for Ochakov was not yet done. In October, the Ottomans began their own counteroffensive to retake the stronghold. The Ottomans had brought an army of 20,000 troops, along with 30,000 Tatars to assist them. The expedition was headed by Genç Ali Paşa while the Crimean contingent was commanded by Begli Girei. The first main assault of the fortress was between 16th and 20th October when the Ottomans organized a series of attacks, which were deflected by the garrison. Stoffeln did not stand idle and sent several successful sorties, which caused substantial damage to the besieging army. A second grand assault was carried out on 25th October but was again beaten back by the Russians, who were even able to launch a small counterattack with a unit of 1,000 men under Brigadier Brake.[78] Although Brake lost 150 men, he was able to inflict 2-3,000 casualties on the enemy before falling back to his position. During the next several days the Turks tried to breach the defenses with concentrated bombardment, but to no avail. Thus, on

[75] The casualties (killed, wounded and missing) were actually 3,859 or 3,863. Here is how they are listed by regiments: The guard's battalions: Preobrazhenskiy – 69, Semyonovskiy – 60, Izmailovskiy – 72, Cavalry squadrons – 5; The Dragoon regiments: Moskovskiy – 77; St. Peterburgskiy – 48, Vladimirskiy – 42, Sibirskiy – 24, Kievskiy – 69, Ingermanlandskiy – 28, Kargopolskiy – 66, Tverskiy – 106, Narvskiy – 85, Tobolskiy – 113, Vyatskiy – 44, Ryazanskiy – 67, Ravelskiy – 49, Rizhskiy – 58, Permskiy – 44, Novgorodskiy – 36, Troitskiy – 43, Arkhangelogorodskiy – 39, Lutskiy – 77; The Infantry regiments: Astrakhanskiy – 62, Butyrskiy – 80, Narvskiy – 77, Ladozhskiy – 51, Sibirskiy – 26, Byalozerskiy – 103, St.Peterburgskiy – 23, Vladimirskiy – 22, Ryazanskiy – 59, Keksgolmskiy -36, Vyatskiy -73, Schlisselyburgskiy – 123, Rostovskiy – 107, 1st Moskovskiy - 84, Yaroslavskiy – 135, Voronezhskiy – 143, Kievskiy – 130, Smolenskiy -70, Velikolutskiy -80, Troitskiy – 141, Novgorodskiy – 125, Chernigovskiy -108, 2nd Moskovskiy -34, Koporskiy – 80, Tobolskiy – 85, Arkhangelogorodskiy – 44, Vyborgskiy - 172, Pskovskiy – 67, Suzdalskiy – 86; Land Millitia regiments : Belevskiy – 5, Orlovskiy – 1, Novooskolyskiy – 3, Borisoglebskiy – 2, Putivlyskiy - 4, Kurskiy – 14, Bryanskiy – 10, Sevskiy – 15; Hussars – 5 regiments; see *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel*, 56.

[76] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 210.

[77] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 406; Bobrovskiy, *Istoriya, vol.2*, 137; Manstein, *Contemporary, Memoirs*, 170; Manstein, quoted by Bobrovskiy, estimates that the loss of serf and laborers might account for twice the number of killed troops and Cossacks – that is over 30,000 people.

[78] The "e" in the end of the name should be pronounced as the "e" in "pen".

the 30th, in the wake of an advancing winter, Genç Ali Paşa decided to abort the siege and to disengage his army. His army had suffered substantial losses, and the Ottomans also needed troops in the Balkans in order to face the advancing Austrians.[79]

While the Dniester Army was struggling to sustain its positions in Jedisan, Marshal P. von Lacy's forces were making good progress against Crimea. Given the fact that his army was smaller, hampered by fewer guns and supply carts, Lacy was able to march his army with good speed and reach the coastline north of Crimea on 23rd May, while Minikh was still departing to the steppe. The Tatars, under their Khan Fatih Girei were awaiting Lacy just after Perekop, with 60,000 men, ready to engage in an open battle with the Russians. Lacy surprised everyone by choosing an out-of-the-box approach toward the peninsula. Instead of using the usual Perekop road, Lacy marched his army across the narrow Strait of Genichesk, which separates the Azov Sea from the so-called Rotten Sea. After just a dozen meters of water, the Strait ends at the so-called Arabat Spit – a "tongue" of sand and shells that stretches for tens of kilometers out of the Crimean peninsula, separating the Azov Sea from the series of lagoons and salty lakes to the east. Lacy was probably the first one to use this land bridge into Crimea and his gambit paid off entirely. In the words of Davies, Lacy shamed his generals, who had urged him to fall back on Azov, offering each of them passports and a dragoon escort.[80]

His further march made a shift to the right, crossing the Rotten Sea to deliver a new surprise on the Tatars, who, caught unprepared decided to retreat further south. Lacy's forces continued their advance in Crimea until 13th July when they arrived at the town of Qarasuvbazar. Here the Russians again found a deserted settlement as had happened with Minikh's troops the previous year. On 14th, after observing the area, the Russians discovered a military camp, with up to 15,000 Ottoman troops stationed there. Lacy sent Douglas with 6,000 men and two dragoon regiments to attack them, drive them off and take the town. After an hour of hard-fought offensive, the Russians were able to defeat the Ottomans, expel them and capture Qarasuvbazar. Then Lacy after looting "one of best towns of Crimea" put it on fire.[81]

The following day, Lacy began to move his forces out of Qarasuvbazar, when suddenly a great Tatar force appeared on the opposite bank of the Karas River. Lacy quickly evaluated the situation and decided to strike at the enemy before the Tatars could cross the river and use the plains around Qarasuvbazar as their force was predominantly cavalry. A vanguard of Cossacks and dragoons was sent under Douglas, who attacked the Crimeans, trying to capture their artillery. Although the Cossack attack was repelled, they occupied the enemy

[79] According to B. Davies, the Ottomans lost up to 20,000 killed, wounded and sick; see Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 210.
[80] Ibid., 212.
[81] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 176-8.

long enough for Lacy to advance with the main force and drive the Tatars away by sending the Kalmyks into a flanking manoeuvre. The Crimeans broke their lines and began to retreat, closely pursued by the Kalmyks, who followed them for two days right to the outskirts of Bakhchisaray. Finally, the Kalmyks returned to the main army, bringing over 1,000 captives with them.[82]

While the Kalmyks were chasing the retreating Tatars, on 16th Lacy held a military council. He and his generals were unanimous that the army had to be pulled out of Crimea before the peak of the summer heat in August. Diseases were already spreading among the troops, and water supplies were running low. It was decided that the army should follow the same route it used for advancing into Crimea. As for the main objectives of the campaign – the capture of Kaffa and Yenikale, both fortresses were outside the current reach of the army, and Lacy decided not to risk his.

With the return of the Kalmyks on 17th, Lacy began his march back. To supply his forces, he sent raiding parties, comprised of light units and irregulars, who scorched the area for dozens of kilometers around the main force. In the end, they were able to gather 630,000 oxen and over 100,000 sheep, which provided enough meat for the army until the end of the campaign.[83] The only significant enemy reaction to the movement of the Russian army came on 23rd. While Lacy's men were crossing the Salgur River, the vanguard, comprised of light troops and irregulars, came under attack from a massive Tatar force, supplemented by a strong Ottoman contingent, sent from Kaffa. The irregulars were able to hold their ground until the artillery was placed along the river shores and began bombarding the enemy, inflicting considerable damage, which made the Turks and the Tatars fall back. The Russians went back across the Genichesk Strait and established a camp on the Molochnaya River, where Lacy maintained favorable position, keeping under observation all roads, leading in and out of Crimea. In the beginning of September, one of his scout units was able to capture several Tatars, who claimed that Fatih Girei was unable to march his forces in support of Ochakov due to the presence of Lacy's army. Thus, the Tatars spent August and most of September awaiting for possible new Russian incursion south. Lacy's strategic goals were, therefore, accomplished, for he had provided the main operations along the Dnieper with a secured flank. Lacy finally left his position at the end of September, marching toward Ukraine. In the meantime, he had dispatched half of his Don Cossacks back to the River Don valley, due to a series of Kuban Tatar raids, whose allegiance to Russia turned out to be short-lived. To punish them, a combined Cossack-Kalmyk force, under hetman Frolov and Donduk-Ombo, the leader of the Kalmyks, once again defeated the Kuban Tatars and ravaged their lands.

[82] Ibid., 178; There were several high-ranking Tatar nobles (mizras) among the captives.
[83] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 433.

5.6. The Campaign of 1738

Preparations

Following the return of the two armies from their military endeavours, Minikh rearranged his regiments along the Ukrainian line to strenghten the defenses of the southern frontier and to prevent Crimean winter raids, which had devastated part of Ukraine in the previous two years. Generals were given greater autonomy of decision, and the Ukrainian Line was divided into several sections to increase the speed of response during enemy attacks. In addition, light cavalry patrols were sent deeper into the steppe to bring early warnings for the approach of enemy forces. The system turned out to work fine and in February the Russians were able to repulse a significant Tatar force, some 40,000 men. Land Militia units were used to defend the fortifications, while after field units served as a strike force.[84] This was the first winter of the war, in which the Tatars could not replenish their losses of cattle and provisions by ravaging the Russian lands. Given the winter operations and the movement of Austrian troops, a new plan was designed for 1738. Again it included actions on two fronts –Lacy was to march in Crimea, while Minikh would lead the main army into Jedisan. The aim of the Field-marshal was to opena corridor for a further march against Moldavia in case of anAustrian spring offensive.

The Russians used the winter to resupply their fleets on the Dnieper and on the Don which had to blockade possible Ottoman incursions, and also to support the lines of communication for the advancing armies during the new campaigning season. Vice-admiral Peter Bredal's fleet was refurnished to support Lacy's new endeavour in Crimea while a Dnieper fleet was arranged by Minikh to protect Ochakov and Kazikerman from a possible Ottoman incursion.

Similar to the previous year, the massive losses during the campaigns, as well as the calculations of the necessary army strength required a new draft to be carried out. In total, for 1738, 51,960 men were taken into service, which was the largest number of recruits taken in a single year ever since Peter began his reforms.[85] According to Davies, a recruit was taken for every 98 households (while this ratio had been 1 per 125 in the previous year).[86] The practice of taking too many people in consecutive years took its toll on the quality of the gathered men, as well as on the speed, with which the draft was carried out. A month after the proclamation of recruitment, Minikh still complained about the lack of eligible troops. Many of the men, taken from the draft were shorter than required and were only fit for garrison duty. In addition, a significant part of all new troops were underage, mostly seventeen-year-old.[87] These recruits had to be

[84] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 198.
[85] The recruitment for 1738 was carried out in 1737; see Table 2 in the Appendix for Chapter I.
[86] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 221.
[87] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 476.

mustered and reassigned to their new regiments or garrison units which in most cases took months. Even when Minikh's army was preparing to march into Jedisan in mid-May, recruits were still arriving on the spot. As in the previous campaign, horses and oxen were hard to find and by May, the army had a shortage of 4,000 horses.[88] For this expedition, weapons were handed in time, with a distribution of 20,000 new muskets. They were given to the regular units, but the Land Militia scarcely received any and, in the end, many of the regiments lacked equipment.

To increase army speed, Minikh would try once more to limit his baggage train and established two medical stations for the sick. People, who were ill before the campaign, were left at Perevolochnya where the sick from the first part of the march were also to be sent. Those, who got ill during the second half of the expedition, were to be shipped via the Bug River to Ochakov. In addition, medical stores were abundantly stocked, and more physicians were mustered. Regarding food, the army had to carry its rations of flour, cereals, and salt which had to suffice for four months and a half. Additional stores had to be set in prepared supply depots which had to provide food for eight months and a half. The army was to be accompanied by nine markets and over 2,000 traders, who would provide meat and drinks. Minikh also hoped that, if needed, meat and other supplies could be provided from the Zaporozhian Cossacks or brought from Poland. In the meantime, the Don army was provided with food supplies for five months in advance, as well as with 17,440 carts and the same number of oxen pairs for the supply train, which was to be navigated by 8,720 wagoners. [89]

Minikh's Dnieper Army was supposed to have the following composition – 3 guard battalions (3,158 men), a cuirassier squadron (600 men), 21 dragoon regiments (25,850 troops), 9 regiments of Land Militia (9,693 men), 2 hussar regiments (900 men), 30 infantry regiments (50,580 soldiers), 3,000 artillerymen and engineers, 1,000 Regular Cossack horsemen – 94,781 regulars in total. Also, there had to be 13,500 Cossacks, including a Wallachian and Moldavian contingent under Constantine Cantemir, the son of the exiled Moldavian prince. The artillery train was to consist of 262 guns of different caliber, 11 mortars, 16 howitzers, as well as 444 smaller mortars. The total paper strength of this army – 108,281 men meant that this was the largest army Minikh was to command in the war.[90] In reality, the regiments were mostly undermanned, and the army's actual strength was less than 80,000, though it was still larger than the armies, used in the previous two years.[91]

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[88] Ibid., 479.

[89] Ibid., 482-3.

[90] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 486-488; Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 221; Davies, however, mistakenly calculates the entire force to be 135,000 men.

[91] Bobrovskiy, *Istoriya, vol.2*, 138-9; Bayov does not give a precise number, but states that there were only 18 Dragoon and 22 infantry regiments available on 4th May, as well as cuirassiers, hussars and 3 regiments of Ukrainian Cossacks, 200 Chuguevskiy Cossacks.; see Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 495. On the other hand, according to Manstein, the force under Minikh never exceeded 50,000, including the Cossacks; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 200.

The situation with Lacy's forces was not better. According to the preliminary plan, the Don Army had to comprise of – 6 dragoon regiments (7,386 men), 1 garrison dragoon regiment (1,183 soldiers), 6 Land Militia regiments (6,462 troops), 15 regiments of foot (25,290 men), as well as 15,000 Cossacks and 10,000 Kalmyks. In total, P. von Lacy's army should have numbered 65,321 soldiers and officers, supported by 86 regimental guns, 16 siege guns, four mortars, four howitzers and 60 smaller mortars.[92] In reality, when he adavanced into the Crimea, Lacy commanded an army of 6 field dragoon regiments, one garrison dragoon regiment, and 7 foot regiments. His field artillery consisted of six 18-funt guns, six 12-funt ones, three 8-funt cannons, and three 3-funt pieces, as well as four 5-pud mortars, two 1-pud howitzers and two of half a pud. Instead of the 10,000 Kalmyks he had hoped for, only 1,385 were able to arrive, since Donduk-Ombo needed the rest to fight the Kuban Tatars. Nevertheless, following several days of marching, the army was joined by another 8 dragoon regiments and the 6 regiments of Land Militia. The army was further joined by approximately 12,000 Cossacks, which came into several columns during Lacy's march forward.[93] So instead of marching with a bit over 65,000 (as calculated on paper), Lacy invaded Crimea with around 53,000 troops over 2/3 of which were regulars. According to Manstein, Lacy actually commanded between 30 and 35,000 troops, including the Cossacks.[94] Taking Christof von Manstein's estimates into consideration, it turns out that most of Lacy's regiments also had insufficient manpower as they were unable to receive additional men from the recruits that were so sluggishly transferred. Whether his estimates are too low remains uncertain, but the truth lies somewhere in the middle, and Lacy's actual army probably did not exceed 45,000 men.

The campaign

The Don army began its progress on 19th May 1738 by following the same route it had traversed the previous year up to the vicinities of Crimea. Upon reaching the Berdiya River, P. von Lacy sent a scouting party of 2,000 Cossacks under Colonel Mashlykin, who were to go forth and observe the positions of the Tatars and also to search for a suitable place, through which the army could invade Crimea. Lacy, satisfied with his decision last year, decided to repeat his unorthodox approach towards the peninsula. He was, however, unable to use last year's route, since a strong Ottoman fleet penetrated the Azov Sea and attacked Vice-admiral Bredal's fleet, which prevented him from using his vessels in support of Lacy's march. Bredal was able to dismount some of the naval guns and set batteries along the shore and beat back several Ottoman attacks,

[92] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 489-90.
[93] Ibid., 543-4.
[94] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 215.

preventing the Turks from landing their force in support of the Tatars. In the meantime, Mashlykin's force intercepted a strong Tatar unit and defeated it soundly on 25th May, after which he returned to Lacy with reports. The Field-marshal, upon learning about the presence of the Ottoman fleet, decided to cross the Rotten Sea, by using a shallow part of the Sivash, near Odipy tract.[95]

Using a low tide and wind, blowing with such strength that the flows were further diverted, Lacy marched his men into a thin column and crossed the small portion of sea bottom before setting foot in Crimea. The Russians lost a handful of carts due to the return of the tide, but the army itself remained intact.[96] At the same time, the main Tatar Force under the new Khan – Mengli II Girei (r. 1724-1730; 1737-1740), was stationed near the Perekop Line, waiting for the Russians to appear from this direction. The Tatars had rebuilt the line and planned on using it to hold off the Russian incursion. Lacy again surprised his enemies. On the 26th June, the same day they crossed the Rotten Sea, the Russians were able to capture Chivaskul – a small fortification at the end of the Perekop line. Two days later, following a severe bombardment and a coordinated attack from both sides of the Perekop Line, the strong fortress of Or-kapı surrendered to the Russians, who left ten companies of grenadiers to protect it and continued their march southward. Soon after that Lacy discovered the condition of the Crimean countryside. It was devastated by the last two campaigns and no fodder, food or animals could be taken to supplement the resources of the invading army. Troubled by the possibility of logistical disaster, Lacy called up a council of war on 6th July, on which was decided that the army had to retreat to Perekop and from there – to march towards Azov. As in the previous years, the main Tatar force was still nowhere to be seen. But after only three days on the march, a 20,000 strong Tatar force attacked the rear of the Russian army. The Cossacks and the Azov dragoons were almost driven into retreat and scattered, but a counterattack conducted by General Shpigely, who commanded four dragoon regiments, managed to repel the Tatar attacks and to repel them. According to Manstein, Russian losses were between 600 and 700, while the Tatars lost 2,000 men.[97] According to Bayov, the Russians lost 1,045 killed and wounded, while the Tatars left over 1,000 dead on the battlefield.[98] With no further confrontations, Lacy returned to the Perekop line and held it throughout August. In September he marched back to Azov, blowing up the fortifications on the Perekop.

Lacy's forces were performing remarkably well, not taking any great risks and obtaining most of their strategic goals. In the meantime, Minikh's army once again marched to the southwest with the intention of entering Wallachia, and defeating all Ottoman forces on its way. The Field-marshal marched with an

[95] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 213.
[96] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 215.
[97] Ibid., 216.
[98] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 551.

army which was at least a quarter smaller than planned, and also, once again, not sufficiently supplied with ammunitions, weapons, food and carts for the baggage train. Horses were also insufficient, as were oxen, but this did not prevent Russian progress in previous years, so Minikh once again hoped to compensate logistics issues with speed, decisiveness, and resilience.

The Dnieper army began its movement on 18th May after the Land Militia regiments and the guard units finally managed to arrive at the rendezvous point on the Omelynik River. Omelynik was reached on 23rd, and Minikh constantly halted different sections of his army to wait for fresh recruits, still coming from Ukraine to catch up with the army. Minikh used the time in waiting to perform military drills in order to raise the overall level of military training among his men. The cost for this training manoeuvre was the low speed with which the Dnieper Army proceeded.[99] The Bug River was finally crossed on 25th June after the army had progressed with an average speed of 17-20 kilometers per day, and after every second day was ordered as a rest in order to built bridgesor to carry out exercises.

The first notices of enemy concentration came at the beginning of June when Minikh received intelligence that the Budjak Tatars had gathered a force of 20,000 men, concentrated on the Dniester. This force was led by the Belgorod sultan, and was later supplemented by 30,000 Ottomans troops, stationed at Bender.[100] A scouting force of 1,500 Tatars was sent forward to monitor Minikh's movement. The Russian army was set into three divisions. They were to march in a column of consecutive squares, in the middle of which stood the supply train of each division. The divisions were headed by generals Rumyantsev, Magnus von Biron and Loewendahl and the guard battalions were set under the command of Gustav von Biron. This manner of movement, although offering substantial protection against enemy incursions, brought the army speed even lower of the level sustained before the crossing of the Bug River and raisedthe level of attrition among the soldiers.[101] Following the transition of the Bug, Minikh decided to set his army on a route, which surpassed as many sources of water and fodder as possible. The army was supposed to travel 190 kilometers between the Bug and the Dniester, having only two major streams to cross – rivers Molokish and Savranka.[102]

The first actual encounter with the enemy happened on 29th June, during the army's crossing of the small river Kodyma. The Tatars tried to launch a surprise attack on the Russian rear, while the artillery and the baggage were still moving through the river. The Cossacks under Frolov, supported by dragoon

[99] Bobrovskiy, *Istoriya*, *vol. 2*, 138.
[100] Ibid.; Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 501-2. The garrison of Bender had been 15,000 strong (8,000 yeniçeri and 7,000 sipahi and *arnaut*-s (Albanians) in the end of May but in mid June was supplemented by another 15,000 men, led by the serasker of Bender. The entire Tatar force under the Belgorod sultan was 30,000, and it crossed the Dniester at the same time Minikh traversed the Bug River.
[101] Bobrovskiy, *Istoriya*, *vol. 2*, 139.
[102] Baiov, *Russkaya armiya*, 506.

regiments under Rumyantsev, were fast to respond, and the enemy chose to retreat. On the morning of 30th June, the Tatars reappeared, 10,000-strong and launched three consecutive assaults on the Russian forces, which were still stationed in their encampments. The first two charges of the Tatars were repulsed with ease by the Ukrainian Cossacks and the vanguard division under Rumyantsev, supported by dragoons from Gustav von Biron's division. The third charge came upon a small vanguard under Colonel Shipov, who decided to attack the Tatars following their second failed attempt. Shipov's men were surrounded but were able to hold their ground until reinforcements arrived, repulsing the enemy. Minikh, who received intelligence that the Tatars were receiving reinforcements, including Ottoman units, decided to develop his momentum and ordered the entire army to break camp and form for battle. The Tatar-Ottoman force, however, fled the battlefield as soon as the Russian army began to advance, supported by heavy artillery fire. By 2:30 p.m., the Russians reached the previous enemy positions and stood firm until the last Tatars were out of sight.[103]

The same situation repeated a week later, when on 8th July, while camping on the Savranka River, the Russian encampments came under attack from a combined Ottoman-Tatar force. Consecutive enemy charges were repelled and by 5 p.m. the Russians had beaten back Tatar and Ottoman advances, killing over 1,000 enemies in the process.[104] Few days later, Minikh received an intelligence report from Russia's agent in Istanbul – Neplyuev. It stated that the Ottomans had concentrated 138,000 men at the Dnieper, of which 60,000 were Ottoman units, 48,000 were Belgorod and Budjak Tatars and 30,000 were Nogais. The army was commanded by Sherif Efendi and several high-ranking officers (nine three-tail paşas, twelve two-tail paşas, five Tatar sultans). The army's task was to intercept the Russians and enter into a decisive engagement with them, regardless of the location. A military council held by the paşas decided to monitor enemy movement and try to inflict defeat on Minikh's troops while crossing the Savranka. This left Minikh with the impression that he had managed to defeat the entire enemy force, driving them into a retreat. He believed that if another victory against the Ottoman-Tatar force could be achieved, he would fulfill the Empress' desire to capture Wallachia.[105]

Continuing their further advance, the Russians finally reached the Molokish River on 21st July and again came under enemy attack. Gustav von Biron's division, which came under assault, was able to form and beat the advancing enemy forces, driving them into full retreat by the afternoon. Minikh's further advance was delayed due to notices of enemy forces concentrating in front of the Russians. The Ottoman army of 60,000 men and 76 guns took a position on the opposite bank of the Dniester while the Tatar and

[103] Ibid., 509.
[104] *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel*, 61.
[105] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 517-8.

Nogai forces locked Minikh's left flank on the Biloch River.[106] On 23rd, Minikh sent a vanguard under William Fermor, consisting of seven infantry regiments, the predominantly Bulgarian hussar regiment under Colonel Stoyanov and 2,000 Cossacks. Minikh also joined the vanguard commanding a squadron of cuirassiers, and a Leib Guard mounted squadron. Near the Gura Bilotsk tract, the vanguard engaged an enemy force of 12,000 men. Minikh quickly sent dispatches, urging Gustav von Biron to move his division in support of Fermor's vanguard and also to dispatch as quickly as possible the Prince of Brunswick with a force of three regiments. Soon after Brunswick arrived the enemy launched their attack concentrating on the Russian's right flank, while simultaneously carrying out a diversion, by sending several units to engage with the rest of Minikh's troops. The Tatar-Ottoman advance was halted and repeled by the Russian artillery, followed by an advance of Fermor's troops, who chased the retreating enemy until nightfall.

On 25th Minikh held a military council. Due to the forthcoming summer heats as well as to the problems with fresh water supplies, it was decided that on 26th a decisive advance would take place, its purpose being the destruction of the enemy fortified position and the winning of a bridgehead for the crossing of the Dniester. On 26th, the army formed in three columns of infantry and dragoons, each with a body of cavalry in its vanguard, comprising of the cuirassier squadron on the left flank, the Bulgarian hussars under Stoyanov in the center and the second hussar regiment under Kumingov covering the right flank.

The battle began with an attack of the Budjak sultan and the Ottoman units on the Russian left, at that moment occupied by the Cossacks. The initial Tatar advance pushed back the Cossacks, who were able to reform and to use their pikes to charge and break the enemy momentum, even though they were lesser number than the Tatar-Ottoman force.[107] Following their failure, the enemy redirected their momentum at part of the baggage train, protected by the troops of General Mikhail Filosofov, who was advancing slower than the rest of the army. Filosofov's men were able to hold their ground until reinforcements arrived under Rumyantsev. The enemy charges continued until 4 p.m. when the last of their units left the battlefield. Minikh lost 200 men while Tatar casualties were quite higher.[108] The Russians camped at a cannon-shot distance from the Dniester. After a month of marching from the Bug to the Dniester, the army of Minikh moved at the staggering speed of 5.8 kilometers per day, more or less repeating Sheremetev's slow progress before the conquest of Iași in 1711.

During the following two days, Minikh made several unsuccessful attempts to establish a bridgehead over the Dniester. His efforts were prevented by concentrated fire from the Ottoman batteries on the opposite bank. On 29th the Russians, unable to continue further, were ordered to begin a return march

[106] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 223.
[107] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 208.
[108] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 523.

north. Minikh was worried about the possibility of a new encirclement, similar to that suffered by Peter, the deteriorating situation with the water and food supplies, and the advent of blistering summer temperatures in August. The first major engagement during the retreat north came on the 30th of July when the Russian rearguard came under attack by enemy units of yeniçeri and Tatar horsemen. The infantry regiment guarding the last elements of the baggage train was able to repel initial Ottoman attacks. A counterattack of the Bulgarian hussars, the Chuguevskiy Cossacks and several dragoon companies, were able to scatter the enemy forces and drive them into full retreat. This day the Russians lost 300 men while the Ottoman-Tatars units had 1,000 of them killed.[109] The next big enemy raid came two days later, when a Russian foraging party rode 9 kilometers away from left the main force. They were ambushed by the Tatars and the Ottomans and over 700 men were lost, along with 2,000 heads of cattle.[110] The next 11 days passed without any general engagements. When on 20th August the Russians were crossing the Bug River, their rearguard was once again attacked by a force of 17,000 Tatars, whose assault was repelled by the Astrakhan infantry regiment and the lead guard squadrons.[111]

Simultaneously to Minikh's retreat into Ukraine, General Stoffeln decided to abandon the fortress of Ochakov, raze its defenses and fall back, with whatever troops he still commanded toward the Ukrainian line. The spread of dysentery, scurvy, as well as plague (which also appeared in Poland, Moldavia, and Wallachia at the time), strengthened Stoffeln's resolve. He had not received adequate supplies since 1737, most of his men were sick and the garrison was undermanned. At the same time, news came that an army 40,000 Ottomans and siege guns was assembling in Moldavia and planned to take Ochakov and the smaller fortress of Kinburn in October.[112] Given the circumstances, Minikh approved Stoffeln's decision and allowed him to move back north and to destroy all fortifications left behind. By mid-September, the Russians had evacuated Jedisan, losing whatever gains they had made in the previous months. In the words of Manstein, for the Russians the campaign was as costly as the previous one. Although they did not lose so many men on the field, a great number of them were sick upon returning to Ukraine and most of them died. This was also the costliest expedition so far, in relation to oxen and horses lost. Minikh had to abandon a substantial part of his carts and artillery in Poland because there were no pack animals available.[113] Tactically speaking, the Russians were, in general, able to outperform their enemies on the battlefield. Strategically speaking, the Ottomans were able to outperform the Russians and to bring back the front lines where they stood in December 1736, rendering in vain year and a half of preparations, marches and thousands of human lives lost.

[109] *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel*, 61.
[110] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, 532.
[111] *Khronologicheskiy ukazatel*, 61.
[112] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 225.
[113] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 211.

5.7. The Campaign of 1739

In 1739, the Russo-Austro-Ottoman War came into its final stage. There were many factors, which predetermined the abrupt end of the conflict, but the most important one was Austria's ultimate failure on the Balkan Front. The Austrians entered the war in 1737 and sustained a series of humiliating defeats, resulting in the loss of Serbia (except Belgrade) as well as Western Wallachia (Oltenia), occupied by the Austrians since the treaty of Passarowitz (1718). Several Austrian armies had been beaten back in Bosnia. Habsburg logistics and manpower mobilization also failed. The ongoing economic crisis, combined with the damage sustained by the military establishment during the War of the Polish Succession hampered the Austrians from displaying their full potential. The military leadership was rather mediocre as most of the generals were too inexperienced or incompetent. Court-martial among the high ranking officers of Vienna's forces was an often repeated event during the war.

Nevertheless, by the early months of 1739, Emperor Karl VI has still resolved in his commitment to his Russian allies and Empress Anna was willing to satisfy all Austrian strategic demands to keep the Habsburgs in the war. In the pursue of this goal, the Cabinet in St. Petersburg approved a strategic plan for the upcoming campaign season, which focused on sending the main force from Dnieper toward Transylvania, while a smaller force had to attack Crimea once again, aiming to prevent the Tatars from joining the Turks. Additional intelligence suggested that a dispute between the Belgorod and Budjak Hordes would eliminate them as possible allies of the Sublime Porte during 1739. In general, the situation was in no way dire, and if the allies were finally to achieve a decisive advance against the Ottoman Empire or its Wallachian and Moldavian vassals, the war effort could be reinvigorated, leading to further actions in the upcoming years.

Preparations

Following the plan, approved by the Cabinet and the Empress, the main force had to be under the command of Minikh. According to initial estimates, the army should number 76,311 regular troops and 14,800 irregulars, bringing the total strength to 91,111 men, supported by 606 pieces of artillery.[114] The baggage and artillery trains required over 15,000 carts as well as 22,000 pairs of

[114] Regular units: Three Guard battalions and 3 squadrons (3,124 men), two cuirassier regiments under Minikh and Brunswick (965 men), 16 dragoon regiments of 1,235 troops each (19,760), 22 infantry regiments of 1,583 soldiers each (34,826 men), 5,430 artillerymen and engineers, a Cossack regular regiment of 1,000 men, two hussar regiments of 500 men each and Land Militia regiments of 1,134 men each (10,206) The irregulars comprised of 6,000 Ukrainian Cossacks, 3 companion Cossack regiments (700 men), 4,000 Don Cossacks, 800 Wallachians, 3,000 Zaporozhian Cossacks and 300 Chuguevskiy Cossacks and Kalmyks; see Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, vol. 2, 130-2. In Bayov the total is misleadingly calculated as 90,358.

oxen and horses to pull them. Food provisions would suffice for three months ahead while supply depots would have to provide the additional supplies.

Lacy would again lead the second army, the task of which was seen as supportive and its numbers were lesser in comparison to the Dnieper army. Lacy was supposed to command 39,147 regular troops, accompanied by 15,000 irregulars and 146 artillery pieces for regimental, field and siege purposes.[115] Not counting regimental horses, the Don army would require 18,000 pairs of horses and oxen. The food supplies issued for Lacy's Crimean march were calculated to suffice for five months. Lacy would also receive support from the Azov fleet, which would transport additional 5,000 Cossack footmen. To divert the enemy attention of the main strike against Crimea, part of the Ukrainian garrison troops, along with the river fleet on the Dnieper would strike at Ochakov and Kinburn while Donduk-Ombo would lead 10,000 Kalmyks against the Kuban Horde.[116]

In reality, numbers again differed. Not counting the irregulars, Minikh's army actually numbered 58,000 men, instead of the 76,311 planned. This was due to granting leaves, as well as to the inadequate allocation of new recruits, taken from the levy for the 1739 campaign. Thus, the situation of the previous years repeated itself. Regarding the Cossacks, there were only 5,300 Ukrainian available, as well as another 500 Zaporozhians. The total troops under Minikh were up to 65,000 men instead of the 91,111 anticipated in the preliminary calculations, which meant that 28.5 per cent of the planned army personnel were unavailable for the campaign.[117] The situation in Lacy's force was no better and in mid-May he only had six dragoon regiments, eight infantry regiments, three Land Militia regiments and four Slobodskiy regiments, all of which were incomplete regarding personnel. Also there was a tremendous shortage of pack animals, and the provisions, which Lacy could take with him, could only suffice for two months instead of the previously planned five. In addition, the supporting troops from Azov and Ukraine never made it to the field.[118] Stoffeln would even fail to step in the vicinity of Ochakov, marching only 1,200 instead of the planned 7,800 troops along the Dnieper, while an epidemic on the Lower Don would prevent Levashov from sending five infantry regiments in Lacy's

[115] The Regulars comprised of 6 dragoon regiments of 1,235 troops each (7,410 men), 1 garrison dragoon regiment (1,183 men), 15 infantry regiments of 1,583 soldiers each (23,745 men) and 6 regiments of Land Militia of 1,134 troops each (6,804 men). The irregulars were 6,000 Don Cossacks, 5,300 Ukrainian Cossacks and 3,700 Slobodskiy Cossacks; see Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, *vol. 2* 134-135. There is again a miscalculation, since the irregulars are listed as 15,800 in total, while the numbers account only for 15,000.

[116] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, *vol. 2*, 136.

[117] Ibid., 158; In detail, the regular forces comprised of 7,500 infantry and 14,500 cavalry Manstein states that Minikh's army did not exceed 65,000 and was probably between 60 and 65,000, comprising of 49 infantry battalions, 3 of which were guard units, 3 squadrons of horse guards, 100 dragoon squadrons, 6 hussar squadrons, 6 Wallachian squadrons, 4 Georgian squadrons and 13,000 Cossacks. The artillery comprised of 262 pieces, operated by 3,000 artillery men; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 219.

[118] Bayov, *Russkaya armiya*, *vol. 2*, 270-271.

aid. Due to a shortage of vessels and the above-mentioned disease, Bredal's naval contingent also stayed put.[119]

Lacy's army moved first, departing on 10th May 1739 from Izyum. The Field-marshal was well aware that if he waited for the Dnieper flotilla to act or hope that the Don forces would rid themselves of the plague, his force would miss the strategic initiative and allow the Crimeans to move out of their base and intercept Minikh's forces. Therefore, Lacy decided to march whatever troops he had available and try to deter any Tatar movement. After receiving intelligence that the Ottomans had buttressed Crimea's defenses, by sending garrisons to Perekop, Kaffa, and Evpatoria and dispatched a strong fleet in the Azov Sea to block the Genichesk Straight and the Rotten Sea, the Field-marshal correctly decided to avoid risking an incursion into the peninsula. Instead, he placed his regiments along the Crimean border to blockade and intercept enemy movement out of Perekop toward the Dnieper and the Dniester. On 15th August, P. von Lacy approached Perekop with a small force of 12,000 regulars and 5,850 Cossacks, but learning that there was no fodder for his horses, and already losing animals, due to heat and starvation, he decided to fall back on the St. Andrey fort of the Ukrainian line, ending his last campaign into Crimea.[120] Although the Russians were unable to penetrate the peninsula, Lacy achieved his strategic goal of holding Tatar forces at bay and also distracting the attention of a substantial Ottoman force, which could have been sent towards Moldavia.

The campaign

The main army under Minikh began marching on 23rd April, but it took over a month before the Russians were able to move from Kiev, through Dnieper and reach the Russo-Polish border at the Stubla River, near Vasilykov. It was not until 22nd May during a military council that Minikh finally revealed the campaign plan to his subordinate generals. During his initial movement, Minikh had experimented with several formations and finally in mid-May the Field-marshal established the permanent setting of his troops during the marches – four divisions under Rumyantsev, Biron, Loewendahl and Fermor, each comprised of different portions of infantry, cavalry and Militia units. When the Russians enter Polish territory on 28th May, Minikh would disperse the divisions into separate columns, with substantial space for foraging. The idea was to move through Poland-Lithuania as fast as possible and to avoid any confrontation with the forces of hetman Potocki, who had vigorously opposed any transgression of the southern Polish border.

[119] The disease was probably the plague, which scourged Wallachia and Moldavia in 1738. Manstein gives note of its spreading into Ukraine, although Minikh had taken all possible measures to limit its progress in the Russian lands; see Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 217-8.
[120] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 233.

The Russians continued their march, covering stages of up to 25 kilometers each and resting for a day after each phase. Keeping that movement speed intact, the army was able to reach the Bug River a month later and cross it on 22-24th June.[121] After the Bug had been traversed, Minikh continued toward Moldavia, always vigilant of possible Tatar incursions. Upon reaching the Dniester, he split his troops in two major divisions. The first under Rumyantsev was sent ahead to Khotyn, while Minikh with 20,000 handpicked soldiers and most of the heavy artillery, went to Nichlava, crossing the Dniester upstream from Khotyn and using his engineers to hasten the transition of the guns. The Russian position at Senkovitsy was entrenched and fortified with redoubts and batteries. On 20th July, Minikh had finally reached his first objective, standing less than 60 kilometers from the Moldavian border fortress. Minikh's gamble proved successful. Carrying only rations, sufficient for six days and a small volume of baggage, his troops had outmaneuvered the Ottomans and their vassals, denying the enemy the chance to block Minikh's crossing, as had happened the previous year. In the meantime, Rumyantsev's army was delayed due to heavy rains and Minikh had to wait for his arrival before hoping to lure the Turks into a decisive battle or begin a siege of Khotyn.

On 22nd July, while a dragoon regiment under Colonel Rode was foraging in the vicinity of the Senkovitsy camp, it came under attack from a combined Ottoman-Tatar force, numbering 18 to 21,000 troops under Islam Girei and Iliaş Colceag Paşa.[122] Rode was able to form a wagenburg and to hold off enemy attacks until reinforcements came.[123] Minikh, still remembering the loss of over 700 troops in a similar ambush last year, sent forth the hussar regiments, followed by dragoons and mounted grenadiers. One by one, the Russian units added their fire to the effort, and the enemy troops fell back leaving over 600 killed while the Russians lost only 198 killed, wounded or missing.[124] The following week passed with no further incident and by 26th July, all of Rumyantsev's units finally reached Senkovitsy and the army under Minikh was once again in full strength. In the meantime, Minikh had sent raiding parties into Moldavia, which returned on 28th, bringing a great number of cattle for the army.

The Russians resumed their march on 29th of July and on 1st August defeated another enemy raid, carried out by a predominantly Tatar force. Russian losses were insignificant, and Minikh continued his march forward. The army was now formed in a new battle order of four divisions. Rumyantsev

[121] Ibid. ,234.

[122] 18,000 according to Manstein; see *Contemporary Memoirs*, 223. 20-21,000 according to Minikh's report ; see D.F. Maslovskiy, *Materialy k istorii voennogo iskusstva v Rossii* (Moscow, 1889), 64.

[123] Davies gives the date as 21st (*Empire and Military Revolution*, 235), Bobrovskiy notes that the engagement took place on 23rd of July (*Istoriya*, part II, 142), while *Khronologicheskiy ukazately* states that it was 22nd of July (p. 63). The dissertation relies on *Khronologicheskiy ukazately,* since the date 22nd is also confirmed in Minikh's campaign journal, published in Maslovskiy, *Materialy k istorii*, 64.

[124] *Khronologicheskiy ukazately*, 63; Most of the casualties were hussars (34) and Don Cossacks (58) who were the first to arrive.

commanded the center, Biron – the right flank, Loewendahl – the left and Fermor – the rearguard. The army reached the fortified Ottoman position of Okop on 7th August. Instead of assaulting it, Minikh left a force of 20,000 men to guard the largest part of the baggage train at the camp near the Gukov River, while he led the rest of the army (some 48,000) into a flanking manoeuvre south, which could allow the Russians to descend directly on Khotyn. The Field-marshal decided to take limited food supplies and an adequate number of heavy guns. The army suceeded in making a rapid progress and by 14th the Russians surpassed the entrenched Ottomans at Okop and continued their advance towards Khotyn. In the meantime, the Ottomans were assembling a large force, divided into several units. According to Davies, the total Ottoman-Tatar force, concentrating in Khotyn, was between 80 and 90,000, most of whom were horsemen.[125] Minikh knew that he could easily be encircled in the same fashion as Peter had been at Stănileşi in 1711. The only possible solution was to strike first. Furthermore, the enemy forces were not gathered in a single location, and the Field-marshal had a good chance in defeating them one at a time. Having such a tactical arrangement in his mind, Minikh marched his men against Veli Paşa's position at Stavuchany, which the Russians reached at dusk on 16th August.

The Ottoman forces were only 20,000 strong, stretched on a series of hills in front of the Stavuchany settlement and supported only by 66 guns.[126] On the morning of 17th August, Minikh decided to use the gaps in Veli Paşa's position and sent General G.Biron with a division to strike at the enemy's right, so the the Turks would weaken their center and left flank by sending reinforcements. Biron commanded a force of arround 9,000 troops (dragoons, infantry and guards' squadrons), as well as 34 guns and mortars. The thirty 30-funt guns were placed in front of the big square, arranged by Biron, while the mortars were allocated in the formation's core.[127] Biron's guns began a bombardment on enemy lines, forcing Veli Paşa to concentrate his troops in the center and on the right flank to respond to the artillery fire. Ottoman batteries were not so accurate and effective, and new guns allocated against Biron were soon silenced by the Russian cannonade. With the forces of Veli Paşa advancing, Biron began to retreat slowly, while the rest of the army under Minikh began to cross the Shulanets stream which separated the battlefield in two sections. Minikh's main target was the weakened Ottoman left flank. A battery of 14 field guns and eight howitzers was covering the crossing and was able to repulse several attacks, carried out by Ottoman and Tatar horsemen.[128] It was not until 5 p.m. that the Russians were finally able to traverse Shulanets and to form a huge square with

[125] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 238. *Khronologicheskiy ukazately* states that there were a total of 70,000 Tatar and Ottoman troops; see *Khronologicheskiy ukazately*, 63.
[126] Yu.Ye. Manoylenko, A.S. Manoylenko, "'A bomb after a bomb", 61-3.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

the siege artillery placed in the center. In such a formation, Minikh marched his men uphill against the main enemy positions. Veli Paşa tried one last desperate attack to break Minikh's formation, but the superb Russian artillery once again forged victory. The Ottomans burned their encampments and fleed toward Bender while the Tatars returned to Budjak. Khotyn, guarded by several hundred men, was left on Minikh's mercy. The Russians had lost less than 67 dead and wounded.[129]

Khotyn was reached on the next day (18th August), and capitulated on 19th, without the firing of a single shot. Five days later, Minikh resumed his march. Instead of striking at Bender as previously planned, the Field-marshal decided to follow the Pruth and to capture Iași, while using raiding parties to wreak havoc and to intimidate the Ottomans to "sit on the conference table" at Nemirov. Constantine Cantemir was sent ahead with a flying corps of 3,000 Wallachians, hussars and mounted grenadiers along with twelve light guns to pillage and reconnoiter.[130] Cantemir was able to advance south and entered Iași with no opposition on 1st September, followed two days later by Minikh. On 12th September Minikh held a military parade to celebrate his conquest of Moldavia. A day later he received official dispatch that the Austrians had capitulated to Ottoman demands and had left the war, signing a peace treaty at Belgrade on 7th September, after a secret one was negotiated on 21st August. Russia was left alone with diminishing resources and had only one choice – to end the war as well. Iași and Khotyn were returned to Moldavia and Azov was kept, but the Russians were forbidden to build and maintain a fleet in the Azov Sea, and all fortifications in Azov had to be demolished. The war had ended in a strategic stalemate, which predominantly favored the Ottomans, who continued to hold the Black Sea in a tight grip. The Russians acquired nothing with regard to land or strategic points, but gained valuable experience, as they took very important notes on the disposition and vulnerabilities of Istanbul's northern defenses. Although Minikh has usually been labeled a failure in the eyes of Russian historiography, it is a fact that Catherine the Great's successful wars against the Turks were possible due to the immense volume of data and knowledge, accumulated by Minikh's forces on their four-year venture.

5.8. The performance of the Russian army

Unlike previous sub-chapters, where each campaign was evaluated separately, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1736-1739 will be analized in its entirety. The patterns, demonstrated by the Russians regarding mobilization, logistics, choice of routes and targeted objectives demonstrate a trend which can be clearly followed throughout the five years of campaigning. Separate elements of

[129] Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution*, 239.
[130] Ibid.

performance will be outlined in subsections, but the overall evaluation will be given for the entire period.

The troops

The backbone of each military effort was, is and probably would always be - the troops. Russia's army of the 1736-1739 War comprised essentially of two general elements – the regular regiments of footmen and dragoons and the irregular cavalry units of Cossacks and Kalmyks. They were supplemented by a small number of other regular and irregular units, among which the Land Militia regiments, the guards' squadrons, and the hussar regiments could be noted, who had continued their existence after the Petrine era. What can be clearly seen by studying the army numbers is the pursuit of balance among the main components of the army. Field-marshal Minikh, who was the mastermind of the War of 1736-1739, picked specific numbers for cavalry, infantry and artillery according to each army's primary objective – a raid, a siege or a prolonged campaign with multiple tasks. Thus, armies, marching against the Ottoman fortress chain in Jedisan and Budjak, would have a greater proportion of infantry compared to cavalry, as well as a substantial amount of guns while an expedition in Crimea would require a force in which the cavalry comprised an essential part of the total strength.[131] This was a fundamental step forward from the early Petrine campaigns, in which the tsar would muster as many men as possible, without specifically arranging the proportion of the army branches. Another important element of soldier disposition was the level of mobilization, achieved among the Cossacks. While in 1695 Gordon noted that only the tsar's presence could assemble a substantial number of steppe hosts, during Minikh's campaigns, Cossacks contributed up to 20,000 or sometimes even more men in a single season. The level of mobilization among the several hosts remained considerably high throughout the war. This meant that the state had achieved a greater degree of control over its frontiersmen and had developed the necessary administrative measures required to use Cossack manpower efficiently.

Regarding men's performance on the battlefield, the army could be divided into three main sections. The most efficient body of troops in the Minikhian army was the cavalry. The combination of effective regular mounted troops (the dragoons) and the irregular, experienced and adaptive Cossacks proved essential for the successful progress of the Russian armies in the steppe. Their effort was supplemented by the Kalmyk units, who proved to be formidable force and their raiders usually gained the upper hand against superior Tatar forces. The Kalmyks were also excellent scouts and pursued enemy units with vigor since captives provided a substantial part of their war booty. In the campaigns of 1738 and 1739, the two hussar regiments also proved their bravery

[131] See Table 1 in the Appendix for the current chapter for a comparison of unit numbers and per centage distribution in the course of the war.

and value by intercepting enemy raids and by delivering decisive blows on the flanks of the Tatar units, acting in the Russian rear. The cavalry demonstrated an overall level that surpassed the performance of the Tatar cavalry, as well as the Ottoman semi-regular units of sipahi and the irregular cavalry units, assembled in the Balkans and Anatolia.

The second most decisive element of the armies of Minikh was the artillery. While the cavalry deflected enemy raids and scouted the areas ahead of the army, the artillery was the branch which usually won the battles and was crucial for breaking both enemy fortifications and field formations. Taking Azov, Ochakov and Perekop, holding enemies at bay during the raids (such as that near the Savranka River), and destroying Ottoman units at Stavuchany were all artillery's achievements. The artillery, both diverse and numerous, provided an adamant predominance of firepower which could not be outmatched by the enemies of St. Petersburg. Although lacking standardization in caliber and even in material, the sheer number and size of the cannons were sufficient to surpass the enemy artillers.

Finally, the most enduring element of the Russian army was, by all means, the infantry. Marching for hundreds of kilometers, usually in shortage of supplies, munitions, and even uniforms, the rank and file was a stalwart military machine, capable of facing numerous challenges, coming from enemies, nature, or their commanders' miscalculations. The Russians maintained an exceptionally high level of field performance when facing enemy forces. The Russian infantry units almost never retreated when they were under attack by Tatar or Ottoman cavalry. They were usually able to reposition and meet enemy charges, reversing their momentum and eventually breaking them. As they seldomly met enemy footmen, their hand to hand abilities against other infantry were not sufficiently tested. Nevertheless, on some occasions, the Minikh's infantry met the Ottoman yeniçeri in open combat and gained the upper hand - unlike during the first sieges of Azov, when the soldaty and streltsy regiments were badly mauled by yeniçeri charges. Unlike the resistance to enemy attacks, the Russian footmen turned out to be quite more vulnerable to the shortages of food, water and rest, as well as to diseases and worsening weather conditions. In fact, probably over 60 per cent of the Russian casualties during a campaign were due to non-combat circumstances. This, however, had nothing to do with the soldiers themselves, but was rather a problem of the next major point of evaluation.

To conclude, the quality, which the Russian rank and file of all military branches demonstrated, was superb and essential for all of Minikh's achievements in the course of the 1736-1739 War. The Russians showed an upward trend of evolution with regard to training, discipline and battlefield resilience. The rather insignificant number of field casualties is an evidence for the good battle order, the capable leadership of the regimental staff and the level

of the soldiers' personal combat skills, as demonstrated during the storming of Perekop in 1736.

Logistics

Unlike the superb performance of the men in the ranks, the achievements of those, standing in the rear were not so impressive.[132] Year after year, campaign after campaign, the logistics proved to be the main issue of Russia's military organization. Armies would fight well and march well, as long as there were enough food and munitions. These, however, proved to be scarce once the Russians left their lands and marched into the open steppe. The magazine system used by Minikh proved to be somewhat successful, but after a month or so in the field, the army started to show signs of shortages of food, water and also of diseases. This was due to the low hygiene level, lack of uniforms, tents and other factors, such as the marshy countryside and the different climate.

Minikh would divert a substantial part of his preparations for the systematic organization of logistics, supply trains, and chains of magazines and stores. On paper, it all looked good with rations usually calculated to last for four to six months in advance and sometimes even longer. New weapons were issued yearly, and the purchase of horses, pack animals and medical supplies started in the autumn of the previous year. Uniforms were ordered in advance from several locations, in order to avoid overburdening of local cloth production. Carts, oxen and horses were bought from a vast territory, spreading from Poltava to the Ural and from Kazan to Astrakhan, sometimes even acquiring animals from outside these limits. Minikh also ordered a type of water barrels which could be used in the construction of pontoon bridges once the water was over in order to limit the cargo and spare wagons for other essential provisions such as food and munitions.

So what went wrong? First and foremost, the logistics and the supply system were significantly hampered by the road infrastructure, which was barely existent outside the major settlement regions around Moscow. The situation had improved since Gordon made his way through the steppe in 1695, but still, only a handful of actual roads existed, and most of them were just a bunch of wagon tracks and dirt, left by passing caravans, traders or military units. Water transportation remained essential and Minikh used rivers as often as he could to supply and resupply his armies. This, however, was problematic once the Ukraine line was traversed. The steppe of Jedisan and Budjak had no river ports and often no settlements at all which could be used as havens for the fleet. The mouths of major rivers were dominated by Ottoman forts, which had to be captured before any naval contingents could be used to resupply and strengthen field armies. When the spring and autumn rasputitsa is added to the picture, it

[132] In Russian language, the term for all logistics units and structures is *til* ("rear").

turns into a logistical nightmare which would haunt Russian supply system up until World War II.

The second problem was the coordination of different authorities, responsible for the furnishing of provisions and supplies, and sending them to the army. Apart from the military quartermasters, who were sent to collect animals, men, and resources for the military establishments, local governors and voevodi had their own, autonomous power, which either assisted or hampered the work of the logistics officers. Also, local pomeshchiki had to be tamed or persuaded to fulfill their obligations regarding laborers and animals, as well as food supplies. Organizing a system of interdependent administrative units, which would transfer supplies on distances, usually on the verge of 1,000 kilometers, was not an easy task and it is a small miracle that it actually worked. It is no wonder that in 1737 Minikh doubled the number of logistics officers in his army, after noticing the slow pace with which the provisioning of his troops was carried out.

Corruption and personal incompetence are also factors, which should be taken into consideration. The divertion of funds, which had to cover military expenses, was no novelty, as was the drastic icrease in the cost of supplies and animals whenever a war began. Often price spaculations wereused as a trick by local merchants, and several occasions in which Minikh had to provide additional funding for the purchase of horses and oxen were already mentioned in the current chapter. Regarding personal mismanagement, Russian bureaucracy was far from perfect, and this was demonstrated in the inability of Knyaz Turbetskoy (who oversaw the logistics preparation for each campaign) to handle the organization of army supply, as well as the inadequate distribution of new recruits for the field regiments. Surprisingly, he would maintain his position, even though it was evident that the Knyaz was far from achieving his objectives. His close connections with the Empress kept him intact.

Another problem for the logistics was the population density in Ukraine and the Pontic Steppe. Unlike the rest of Europe, these lands were scarcely populated, and resources were very limited. Large amount of horses and oxen were mobilized and most of them died during the first two years of the war. This depleted the countryside of draft animals and made further levies of mounts impossible, or in any case - hard to achieve. By 1739 shortages of animal power were staggering as was the inability of military services to redistribute recruits among regiments, which had a lot to do with the condition of roads.

The lack of long-term supplies, the unfavorable conditions in the steppe as well as the inability to resupply from enemy lands were all factors which contributed to the limited time throughout which the Russian armies could carry out their field endeavors. Logistical problems were both internal and external, and no other contemporary army could have performed better given the circumstances. On the other hand, the organization of supplies could have been better, which would have resulted in more prolonged and successful campaigns.

Marching and speed

The third major element of army performance is the speed with which the military units progressed into enemy territory. Speed is one of the essential factors of success in any war effort since Ancient times and is directly related to the ability of an army to deliver decisive blows or to outmanoeuvre enemy contingents.

Statistically it is impossible to determine a medium marching speed for the Russian army with respect to the entire war or even to a single campaign. The main reason is that the movement of the army depended on the terrain and whether the troops traveled through their own territory or through enemy lands. Minikh's campaigns reveal that while in Ukraine the Russians were able to maintain a good average speed of movement, but once the army entered the steppes, the Field-marshal prefered to protection instead of haste. Tatar raids were constant and a moment of inattention could result in the death of hundreds as well as in the destruction of the invaluable food and water supplies. Minikh marched his men in a different fashion, adapting to the hostile territory, and paying less attention to the terrain. While in the Russian lands, the army marched in columns, stretched into a long line. Once in Tatar lands, the Russians repositioned into giant squares, placing the baggage train in the center and supporting the flanks with cavalry. This formation, although critically reducing the speed of the army, proved successful in preventing enemy incursions. A measure of average speed could be calculated. It seems that the Russians marched between 5 to 25 kilometers per day on the average but usually their speed did not exceed 20 kilometers per day. Another option for rapid movement were the marches performed in stages, used by Minikh in 1738 and 1739, when the army covered 15-20 versti per day (16-21.5 kilometers), and then took the next day as a rest. Although it kept soldier constitution considerably high, this decreased movement speed. In this case actual daily marching did not exceed 11 kilometers per day, which, compared to the 21 kilometers, usually covered by Peter's Army in Dagestan, looks unimpressive and even sluggish. The slow pace protected the army from enemy raids, but it also limited the time in which the army could campaign before the advent of summer heats, which was the real bane of Russian troops. The question remains whetherMinikh's decision to save hundred lives on the march did not cost him thousands more in the later stages of the expeditions.

Another element, which had a considerable impact on the movement, was the size of the baggage train. Even if the army did not proceed with over 40,000 carts, as mentioned in Manstein, it most certainly advanced with around 20-30,000 as demonstrated by the number of pack animals, recruited for the

campaigns.[133] Minikh has received a substantial amount of criticism from both modern and nineteenth-century historians regarding the enormous supply train, which he used during the expeditions. The Field-marshal's desire to calculate and bring every possible necessity with him resulted in the overall overburdening of the army, which Manstein underlines on several occasions. In 1739 Minikh finally decided to act more aggressively and to leave his main supplies behind. Thenthe army was able to reveal its actual potential for rapid progress. The marches prior to Stavuchany were executed superbly and demonstrated the maneuverability of the Russian army in comparison to its enemies, who were not expecting Minikh to change suddenly his manner of conduct.

The situation with speed was rather different on the Crimean/Don front, where Lacy operated. He was a practical man, who made the best he could with whatever he had at hand. His armies were always smaller than Minikh's, and his operations were perceived as supporting and secondary. This allowed Lacy to bring a limited number of men and supplies with him and thus to conduct faster marches and to be able to manoeuvre more freely. His ingenious incursions into Crimea in 1737 and 1738 demonstrate the advantages of smaller baggage trains and limited troop numbers. On the Dnieper and the Dniester front, Minikh left the initiative to the raiding Tatars while slowly proceeding toward his objective. In the meantime, in Crimea Lacy was able to outmanoeuvre the enemy and dictate the pace of conflict.

Command and control

The final significant aspect of military performance is the conduct of the commanding generals and the officers. In an age, when the ratio of NCO-s and higher ranking men was kept high in comparison to the overall regimental personnel, the role of officers was decisive for the discipline, effectiveness and morale of the troops. Like their western contemporaries, Russian officers were trying to live up to the standards of being a role model for their troops, demonstrating bravery and courage, as well as resilience and composure.

NCO-s and middle-rank officers (from lieutenant to colonel), were an essential part of the military efforts. They personally led their units into combat and inspired the esprit de corps of the rank and file. It was a common feature of military life that sergeants, captains, and even colonels received wounds or even die in the front line during a battle. In general, the lower officer ranks of the Russian army performed well, fulfilling their tasks and demonstrating good commanding abilities. This was most evident during ambushes, when the conduct of a captain or a colonel could save his unit from the enemy. In fact, the occassions, when Tatar raids were able to break the defenses of surrounded

[133] Manstein, *Contemporary Memoirs*, 137-8.

units, were scarce. Usually, under their commander's directions, Russian troops were able to hold out for several hours, until the cavalry and infantry reinforcements arrived. The additional demonstration, of both native and foreign officer abilities, was revealed during assaults on enemy positions, such as the capture of Perekop, where Christof von Manstein personally led a detachment of 60 men and captured several fortified towers, full of yeniçeri. Another example is the conduct of the Bulgarian hussar regiment, when Colonel Stoyanov and his son *poruchik* (first lieutenant) Stoyanov were commemorated for their bravery during the deflection of the massive Ottoman-Tatar raid during the battle which took place on 30th July 1738.[134]

The bravery and leadership of generals also must not be underestimated. Minikh often led the vanguard with his cuirassiers, as did Lacy, while division generals usually rushed forward along with their men when enemy units had to be engaged. Biron, Rumyantsev and other commanders of field units were among the names that demonstrated their combat skills in the front ranks. During the siege of Ochakov, in which several high-ranking officers were killed or wounded, the generals stood firm in the ranks, leading their men against enemy fire. Later in the same year, during the Ottoman siege of Ochakov, Brigadier Brake demonstrated bravery by charging yeniçeri units in hand to hand combat and drove them off the field.

While combat skills were essential for winning the hearts of the soldiers, tactical and strategic skills were essential for winning battles. During the age of Anna Romanova, Russia did not have great strategists who would appear later on. There were no commander like de Saxe, Eugene or Marlborough, but still, the generals demonstrated if not military genius, at least capability in terms of main tactical and strategic knowledge. Minikh was a meticulous planner, who, if possible, would have written instructions regarding any possible element of army life – from marching, through everyday life to conducting combat. If it was possible, he would have tried to plan the entire campaign day by day. On the one hand, this was good, as he seldomly left anything on the chance. On the other hand, his pedantic manner sometimes hampered his ability to respond accordingly to the emerging problems. Paradoxically, he was also a gambler type, who would risk a lot when convinced of his superiority over the enemy, no matter if it actually existed. The siege of Ochakov demonstrates his hazardous manner of rushing forward against all odds, even though preparations were not yet carried out and reconnaissance was not made. While this could prove troublesome in some cases, it turned out to be helpful in others. If he had not been willing to rush forward with half-prepared units, his army would have never made it out of Ukraine on any of the campaigns between 1736 and 1739. In general, the "planner" in Minikh's character disappeared when the "action man" appeared. The fact that Minikh was a foreigner must not be

[134] Maslovskiy, *Materialy*, 86.

underestimade. Each failure could provoke the reaction of Russian nobility, jealous and mistrustful towards the nemts.

The second leading figure of the 1736-1739 War was Count Peter von Lacy. An experienced, stalwart soldier, who knew his way around military tasks and strategic decisions, Lacy was probably one of the best military leaders of Russia before Rumyantsev and Suvorov. Unlike Minikh, Lacy was more inclined to react to the changes of the campaign instead of planning the entire endeavour in advance. He was brave and provident, but he was no gambler and would rather halt an offensive rather than risk the lives of his men on the possibility of victory. Lacy was certainly an innovative soldier, contributing to the development of Russian strategic thought and serving as a tutor of a future generation of commanders, who would lead Russia throughout the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and during Catherine's wars against the Ottomans.

A common feature of both Minikh and Lacy was their determination to comprehend situations according to their perception, rather than relying on their subordinates' advice. Furthermore, they were good field tacticians and were able to find the right formula to conduct the war against the irregular and predominantly mounted armies of the Tatars and Ottomans.

5.9. Conclusion

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1736-1739 brought no actual political or strategic gains for Russia. It only strengthened further the Ottoman grip on Wallachia and Moldavia and enabled the Turks, after their victories over Austria, to regenerate part of their lost positions in the Balkans. What the Russians gained from the conflict was invaluable experience. The Pontic Steppe would no longer be *terra incognita* for the Russian generals. All major fortresses in this region had either been studied or taken, the routes were well documented and observed, and tactics were adequately adjusted to outmatch the Turks and Tatars during any following conflict. The Russian army demonstrated an upward trend in its development regarding discipline, battle preparedness, and maneuverability. The logistics remained the main issue of the eighteenth century, but due to the imperfect condition of roads and the slow development of transportation, this was to be the case up to the World War II, when rasputitsa dominated the planning of both Stavka and OKW, even though tanks, trucks, and planes were already available.

In general, the Russians performed well, outmatching their enemies in every element of combat except for logistics. Russian troops were better in terms of firepower and precision, as well as in hand-to-hand combat. Colonels and captains were brave and motivated, as well as tactically efficient, winning small-scale confrontations and defending positions with substantial ease and skill. Generals, although no military prodigies were capable and after several of them were replaced in the initial stages of the war, Minikh was able to build a

good team of subordinates with which he could achieve most of his objectives. In the meantime, Lacy's ability to work with the Cossack atamans and the Kalmyk war chief Donduk-Ombo allowed him to use the soldiers of the steppe with high effectiveness and to coordinate easily his progress with their leaders. In short, the War of 1736-1739 was not lost on the battlefield but rather - on the diplomatic stage.