

**Modern History Sourcebook:
Paul, Archdeacon of Aleppo:
Wallachia in 1657**

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Other causes for anxiety alarmed the travellers; for a report reached Tergovist that the Turks, in alliance with the Tatars, were marching against Hungary; and that they might make a punitive expedition through Wallachia and Moldavia on account of the Cral of Hungary having forced the Beys of those countries to furnish him with troops. The seething condition of the country make Kyr Macarius and his son desire to put themselves within reach of the Hungarian mountains where the Wallachians were accustomed to take refuge in time of need. The proposed visitations of the convents gave an ostensible reason for their movements towards this goal.

On June 18 they set out, taking all their luggage with them. Their route followed the bank of the great river Aluta and led them to the famous Monastery of Kozia, by a narrow pass overhanging the river, through a deep ravine full of rocks and roaring waters. On the farther side were vast, impassable, wooded mountains. As we ascended the ravine we passed under a perpendicular rock, the side of a high mountain. A wooden bridge, resting on the frightfully steep bank, stretched over the river. It was nailed on one side to two tall trees and rested on the other on the mountain precipice. When any danger threatens the convent the monks remove the bridge, leaving an impassable gulf. We were afraid to cross it on horseback, so we alighted and crossed on foot. The road was very narrow and close to the edge of the precipice. It led to a large open plain of fields, gardens and vineyards, in the midst of which stood the convent, a handsome strong edifice, guarded by the river and high mountain summits and pathless woods. It is situated at the extremity of Wallachia, and Hungary lies north and south of it. Its name Kozia means natural fortress.

The travellers reached the convent on June 28 and there deposited their luggage by command of the Bey. A visit to this convent had been specially planned, because they had heard that there was deposited a most valuable book from the imperial collection of S. Sophia at Constantinople, viz. an exposition of the Psalms of David, compiled by S. Nicetas in the eleventh century from all the holy doctors of the Church and others, 300 folio pages. This book was believed to be unique, as no copy of it existed in the Pope's library nor in that of any European city library. The Archdeacon wrote: "Having heard the praises of this book, I exerted myself to the utmost; and by the aid of my father, I got it home to our lodgings, and having found a priest, Papa Yani from Scio, a fine writer of Greek, we engaged him to make a copy. As the love of wine is an innate propensity of every Greek I did not cease to steal away his senses >till we had carried him up to this convent of Kozia, where we forced him to stay and write. Each day we sent him an allowance of two okas of wine for his dinner and supper; his senses were sobered and his powers of mind shone forth in all their brightness, and he completed his copy of the book... Our design was, if it pleased God, sooner or later to send the book to be printed in the country of the Franks, as well for our own benefit as for that of the whole Church of Christ. We obtained from the aforesaid Metropolitan of Gaza leave to copy another book, the contents of which he had gathered in every country and from many authors perfectly unique, as no other copy of it existed. He had named it the Book of Propesies. He consented with difficulty to its being copied. But afterwards, in the war, he was robbed of it and of everything that he possessed, and he wrote to Kyr Macarius, entreating us to get a copy written out for him, from ours."

With visits to several more convents in ravines and on lakes, the tour of eighty-two days ended by the travellers' return to Tergovist on September 10. There the Bey Constantine still detained them. On November 8 the Patriarch married him to a Circassian slave, whom they named at her baptism Nadala. The ceremony was performed within the palace, in the harem. Two months later Constantine received the news from Constantinople that he was deposed from his governorship, with the result that Wallachia was reduced to utter desolation and ravaged by the invasions of its enemies. The deposition of the Bey Constantine was an act of revenge of the Grand Vizir, as punishment for the successful appeal to the Sultan, made in the previous year by the Beys of Moldavia and Wallachia, against the Vizir's exorbitant demands on them for tribute. They had paid the full tribute in 1657, but the Vizir repeated his demand for additional payment of five hundred thousand sheep, three hundred horses and an increase of the money tribute. While negotiations were going on, he cut them short by deposing Constantine and appointing in his place a son of the late Radzivil Voivode. He also dispatched one of his officers to the Khan and his Tatars, enjoining them to march on Moldavia and Wallachia.

Constantine, hearing this, sent warning to all his subjects, "The whole country, in consequence, was thrown into confusion, the wretched inhabitants fleeing from their farms and villages in the severe frost and deep snow." This was followed by an order from the dreaded Turks to Constantine to depart immediately from the principality. The Bey and his grandees determined to offer resistance to their tyrants. Troops were enrolled. The Metropolitan, standing from morning to night in the church, swore them on the holy gospel and the cross. These additional troops brought the number of soldiers available up to a hundred and ten thousand. Constantine proved a despicable leader of his army. His vacillating policy led him to retreat from Tergovist, leaving the town to be defended by twelve thousand of his troops to whom he gave permission to seize all provisions and liquors left in the town. These miserable defenders, in an intoxicated condition, were seized with panic at the approach of three hundred Tatars and fled, leaving the city at the mercy of this handful of invaders. After plundering, they set fire to it, carrying away a vast number of its inhabitants into captivity. They slew one hundred and sixty of the monks at Stalia Convent, and burned its church, that was packed with possessions of the people, among which was the property of Kyr Macarius. They broke open the tombs of the late Bey and his family and of Constantine's domina, stripped the bodies and flung them naked to the winds. Other tombs were also desecrated. The fire did not cease its ravages till the greater part of the city was destroyed.

The new Bey, accompanied by the Pasha, entered Tergovist on February 23. After setting its walls on fire (in retribution for Constantine's having ordered Bucharest to be burned before the Turks could advance upon it), they marched to that stricken city. As for Constantine, he fled to Hungary to a castle in the city of Brashob, where he remained with all his adherents. May God deny him eternal salvation for the deeds he perpetrated. His situation was very ignominious because of his running away without fighting. As soon as we were assured of Constantine's flight, we departed in haste from Kimpolung on February 21, and fled to a small ancient convent called Gharadas and there deposited all we had brought away with us. The carriages, too, we gave up to be buried in the thickets. Our horses we kept saddled day and night. A hiding place was found for us in the heart of the woods. Notwithstanding the depth of the fallen snow and the intense frost no one dared to light a fire for fear of the smoke betraying our presence. Then we heard that Michael Voivode, the new Bey, had taken up his residence in Bucharest, and that the people and military were tendering him their allegiance, and he was readily pardoning them. He sent letters throughout the province, proclaiming peace and pardon and calling on the fugitives to return to their homes. We, like the rest of the people, took courage and returned to Kimpolung, though we still left most of our goods with the peasants of Gharadas. It cost all the money we had to pay the expenses on them.

I rode with a number of others to Tergovist, where we saw bodies of the slain lying strewn about the streets.... We heard that the Tatars had gone off with their captives, reported as being from seventy thousand to a hundred and fifty thousand. Many were redeemed by the new Bey, who did not allow the Turks to make a single captive.... Our Lord the Patriarch sent a letter of congratulation to the new Bey, which he received most graciously. We were told that he had resided twenty-five years within the Sultan's seraglio among the Turks; yet no one had seduced him to deviate from his Christian creed. He was a student of ecclesiastical writings, and a linguist in the Polish, Hungarian, Greek, Turkish, Persian and his native Wallachian tongues. Encouraged by these tidings we went to Bucharest. After the burning of it, nothing remained but the churches; and in them the people of rank were lodged. On Pentecost Sunday, May 30, 1658, the Patriarch crowned the Bey, according to the form in the great Prayer Book. On the altar was laid a braided girdle and a gilt mace; also a crown made for the Bey at Constantinople, resembling the headdress of the Seleucians. It was decorated with a plume of feathers, in crystals and jewels.

When the Bey entered the church the great Ban and the logothete took him by the arms, the clergy preceding him, and advanced to the royal doors, whence came forth two bishops who, taking the Bey by the arms, conducted him to the Sanctuary. There he knelt, with his head uncovered, while I said the liturgical formula, "Let us Attend." Our master then laid a part of his pallium on the Bey's head, saying: "The grace of God, which ever heals what is weak and supplies what is deficient, promotes the Christian Prince Michael, son of Radzivil Voivode, to the rank of a Sovereign. Let us, therefore, pray for him, that the grace of the all-holy spirit may come upon him."

The Patriarch then raised him up and invested him with the girdle, hanger and sword. He clothed him with the robe of sovereignty, a brocaded mantle trimmed with sable fur, and crowned him with the Constantinople crown. Then he blessed and kissed him, and the two bishops delivered him to the two archons at the door of the Sanctuary, who led him up to his throne. Our master first, then the bishops, the twelve great archons, priests, monks, deacons and the rest of the State archons all congratulated, blessed and prayed for him. The concourse of the people was very great. The Bey was immediately plunged into preparation for war, having received orders from Constantinople to march with the Sultan's army against the Majars. Despite these activities he spent his mornings and evenings in the company of Kyr Macarius, discussing all manner of religious and other matters with him.

Meanwhile ex-Bey Constantine, with a fresh army, was threatening to re-enter Wallachia; while the Pasha of Silistria and his Tatar troops invaded the country. This renewal of war brought fresh anguish upon the unfortunate people, who again quitted their homes and fled for refuge to the mountains. Despairing of our personal safety, we could see nothing for it but to quit Wallachia; even if we had to leave our property behind. On July 9, 1658, the Bey left for the camp, and our perplexity was extreme. His deputy found for me two carriages, which we loaded with our heavy luggage and goods and I went with them to Galatz, where we found a vessel from Trebizond about to return. On it I shipped our goods and our companions with a store of provisions and they set sail. Then I hired some men with muskets and set out on my return, fearing lest I should come across the Turks, who were on their march, robbing and murdering on their way. I found not a single person, not even a dog or any other animal, between Galatz and Bucharest. I stumbled on some dead bodies in my path. The whole world was a blank. I reached Bucharest on July 31, but did not find the Patriarch there, he having retreated, in fear and alarm, to Piteshti, where I joined him.

After spending nearly two months on horseback, going hither and thither, recovering all I could of our property, we started from Bucharest on September 9 for Galatz, reaching it on September 17. We stopped there twenty-two days, seeking for a ship to take us to Sinope, but found that the Vizir had taken all the ships to carry his stores and munitions to the Danube. Through our fears of traversing the Black Sea, we had waited these two years, hoping to be able to travel by way of Roumelia; and thence by good fortune to embark on some ship belonging to Christians on the White Seas. But to go by that route had, up to the present time, been utterly impossible. We saw from Galatz the fires on the mountains of the Majars and knew what they meant. At length we found a ship belonging to a Christian from Sinope, laden with barley; and we agreed to give him two hundred piastres [about £3] to take us to that port. We could scarce credit our senses when we had, at last, stowed our luggage on board the ship and found ourselves embarked clear of immediate danger from the invaders.

We left Galatz on October 13, and passed down the Danube to Kilia, a large castle at the mouth of the channel of the Black Sea. Here we heard the Mahometan azan (call to prayer), having for six years heard only bells. Here they catch sturgeons. At the opening into the Black Sea we found about seventy vessels that had been waiting more than two months for a wind to sail forth. On October 24 a favourable wind sprang up, and we got out to sea. In two days and a night we sailed two hundred and fifty miles to Varna Port. Here we passed a most wretched night ready to die of sea-sickness, for it blew a gale. At break of day we went on shore and stayed with a priest till the 29th, when the people of the ship fetched us back and we went with them, as going to the slaughter. The wind had changed and we sailed four hundred miles, crossing the channel of Constantinople from the Roumelian side to the coast of Anatolia, to Heraelea, where S. Theodore, a commander-in-chief, suffered martyrdom....

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