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## *The Military Frontier and Emigration Challenges in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*



### **T**he *Cordon Sanitaire* and Migration Control

The Military Frontier (*Militärgrenze*) was the defence system of the Habsburg Monarchy at the border with the Ottoman Empire, spanning from the Adriatic Sea to the Carpathian Mountains. During the long history of this system from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its functions gradually grew increasingly complex. The original role of the Military Frontier was to defend the outer regions of the entire Monarchy, but in the 18<sup>th</sup> century new functions were introduced – using the Border to recruit soldiers for distant battlefields (which were compatible with regular troops), and carrying out the systematic control of movement and public health. One of the turning points in the development of the Military Frontier was in 1699, when the Treaty of Carlowitz (Karlovcı) between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire established a “linear” border, and its physical construction became the primary objective. In this way, the daily tasks of frontiersmen became primarily linked to the construction, maintenance and manning of watch houses (*Tschardaken*) and watchtowers, and of the roads and bridges that

connected them. After 1740, this network of border structures was systematically augmented by institutions for health inspection and the mandatory quarantine of individuals arriving from neighbouring countries. This entire system was called the sanitary cordon (*cordon sanitaire*). Manning the cordon, which – in practical terms – constituted a border within a border, became a priority task of the frontiersmen. Thus, the Military Frontier became a system for the oversight of public health and migration flows, and for securing the socioeconomic conditions for life in the state periphery<sup>1</sup>.

The initial purpose of the cordon was to defend the state from its enemies, but as health protection was added to its tasks, it essentially became a system for the control of movement. Consequently, the movement of individuals and groups was to be directed to “desirable” flows<sup>2</sup>. Border crossing points which included sanitary facilities (*Contumaz*) were established on the Habsburg side as the only legal points of crossing. In times when there was news of epidemics, their main purpose was to serve as mandatory quarantine stations for all travellers, as well as for goods and livestock in international transit, so as to prevent the spread of infectious diseases coming from the Ottoman side. Since the plague was the most feared disease, the entire cordon was called *Pestkordon*<sup>3</sup>. Depending on the level of threat posed by the plague, the regime in the cordon could be more lax or strict. At a time when the “plague was not only far on the Turkish side, but almost in Belgrade, at our doorstep”, border cities such as Zemun would receive special orders (*Policeyordnung*) concerning sanitation and hygiene, as was the case in 1762, 1771 and 1773<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The non-military function should be understood, on a large scale, as policing the Frontier (homeland protection) based on “cordon rules”. For an overview of the various roles of the Military Frontier, see: X. HAVADI, *Die Österreichische Militärgrenze: Staatliche Kontrolle der Grenze im Absolutischen Zeitalter*, “Geographia Napocensis” 3.2, 2009, p. 69–81.

<sup>2</sup> “Local and state authorities were concerned about some of the migrants as well as about some of the sedentary population because of their potential to create disorder”, in: *Europe 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*, vol. IV, ed. J. DEWALD, New York 2004, p. 152–153.

<sup>3</sup> The first *Pestkordon* in the Military Frontier was established in the 1720s and 1730s, but its “second phase” started in 1740, when 12 quarantine stations were set up. Their number rose to 18 by the mid-1750s. At first, they were the responsibility of a special Sanitary Court Commission (from 1753 *Sanitätshofdeputation*), only for the jurisdiction to officially be given to the Imperial War Council in 1776. Cf. J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations: Habsburg-Ottoman Border in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, PhD manuscript, Leiden University, Leiden 2019, p. 99–105, 106–107, 109.

<sup>4</sup> The content of the *Policeyordnung* delivered to the Zemun Magistrate on 8 September 1762 recommended preventive elevated sanitation and hygiene in the city (*Sanitätspraecaution*) due to the alarming vicinity of the plague on the Ottoman side. The same order was repeated on 12 December 1771. It seems that it was published every year thereafter, regardless of the actual circumstances. Cf. T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima arhive zemunskog magistrata od 1739. do 1804. god., Knjiga I (1739–1788)*, Beograd 1973, p. 330–331, 384.

Crossing the border at any point outside the system of quarantine stations was prohibited. Frontiersmen supervised the border to prevent crossings outside the envisaged points in a timely manner, to discourage offenders and ultimately sanction them. In Engelshofen's Regulation of 1747, which set out the "new model" of a regulated border in the Slavonian Military Frontier, several articles (out of a total of 69) mention the obligations of frontiersmen in terms of maintaining public order in the border area, which also included the prevention of illegal border crossings. In fact, the very first article of the Regulation envisaged that, in both wartime and peacetime, frontiersmen should keep watch so as to maintain order and security, both in the regiment and in the provincial hinterland, to persecute outlaws, to prevent the smuggling of money and goods, and to prevent "violations of quarantine" (Articles 1, 12 and 34). They were ordered to step up control of movement of money and goods and, in particular, of "diseases that could creep in from the Turkish neighbourhood", and to treat offenders on that account in the strictest way possible (Article 37). They were also tasked with the control of public roads, from which one was not allowed to stray, so foreigners, "even if they had a passport", were prohibited from entering side roads and had to return to the "customary imperial road" (Article 40)<sup>5</sup>.

During plagues, any crossing of the border could be banned, as it was believed that "danger was exacerbated in particular by covert crossings of people from Bosnia and Serbia". Therefore, in 1756, border commanders and quarantine officers were mandated to "apply the harshest measures against all clandestine crossings", for "as long as the prohibition (*die Sperrung*) on account of the uncertain situation in Bosnia was in place, or until the arrival of the order to end the quarantine duration of a full six weeks"<sup>6</sup>. In this way, obligations regarding the protection of public health were directly linked to the control of movement. In peacetime, the obligations of the frontiersmen (called *Land Miliz* before the *regulation*) in the province Temeswarer Banat were said to include the fight against "robbery, Turkish violence, prohibited activities and evils such as the plague"<sup>7</sup>. All these obligations could not be completely separated from one another, prompting Emperor Joseph II to state during his visit to the Military Frontier in 1768 that "even when there is no plague, the cordon must be maintained – because of groups of brigands always lurking on the Turkish side"<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> D. ROKSANDIĆ, *Engelshofenov regulament iz 1747. godine*, "Zbornik Centra za društvena istraživanja Slavonije i Baranje" 20.1, 1983, p. 235–253.

<sup>6</sup> T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Citation from the report of *Temeswarer Landesadministration* of 21 May 1751 (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖstA), Finanz- und Hofkammer Archiv (FHKA), Banater Akten (BA), rote Nr. 41, folio 485–522).

<sup>8</sup> A. HEGEDIŠ, *Josif II o svom putovanju u Banat 1768*, "Istraživanja" 9, 1986, p. 249.

The system of control at the Military Frontier was based on the network of watch-towers maintained by the frontiersmen. However, data shows that there was a lack of basic necessities, personnel and equipment, indicating deficiencies in the system of protection guaranteed by the Military Frontier. The ability to secure the border also hinged on the geographic features of the terrain. In some places, oversight was hindered or sometimes even impossible, resulting in frequent illegal crossings in some parts of the border. It would appear that the parts of the border passing over hills, mountains and forests – such as the region along the Una River bordering Bosnia, or along the Cerna River bordering Wallachia – were conducive to the secret crossing of large groups of migrants, up to dozens or even hundreds of families. On the other hand, vast swamps and river islands along the Sava and Danube rivers served as the crossing point for individuals, smugglers and bands of outlaws. Numerous sources indicate that certain sectors were prone to vulnerabilities. For example, when describing the problems in the surveillance of the Danube, General Engelshofen underscored that the Banat bank was poorly supervised because the distance between the watchtowers measured an hour or even two hours of walking, whereas the watchtowers along the Sava River in Slavonia and Srem were at less than half an hours' walking distance<sup>9</sup>. But the situation was not ideal on the Sava bank either, as witnessed by the description from a 1785 report, stating that after the closure of quarantine stations near Mitrovica (1777), “a long swath of around 5 hours' walking distance between Mitrovica and Rača remained unsupervised by frontiersmen's watchtowers”<sup>10</sup>.

The sanitary cordon and quarantine system have already been analysed in detail by historians. Interest in this topic rose in parallel with the emergence of contemporary migration policies and the introduction of a modern surveillance system<sup>11</sup>. However, it should not be overlooked that, besides its security and health functions, the Border itself was subject to the population policy of the Habsburg authorities through the centuries. In fact, the Military Frontier was the result of (controlled) immigration, given that sufficient population size was a prerequisite for the sustainability of the frontier system and the justification both for its initial role as a “protective wall” (in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries), and for its later role as a “manpower reservoir” (in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries)<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, the Frontier was a self-governed area, where the military authorities paid particular attention

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<sup>9</sup> J. ILIĆ MANDIĆ, *Banatska vojna krajina (1764–1800)*, Beograd 2020, p. 54.

<sup>10</sup> This fact contributed to a rise in the number of deserters from cavalry squadrons in Srem to the Ottoman side. Cf. T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 616.

<sup>11</sup> One of the most recent comprehensive papers on the subject of migration at the Habsburg-Ottoman border, which discussed the topic both synthetically and analytically, already cited: J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations...*, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> G. E. ROTHENBERG, *The Austrian Military Border in Croatia, 1522–1747*, Urbana 1960, p. 28, 116.

to population size and order<sup>13</sup>. This is attested by the existence of a law on its “internal” regulation. For example, it is revealing that none of the 155 articles of the *Basic Law of the Military Frontier* of 1807 pertained to the frontiersmen’s duties of keeping order, and its introductory part only has a short and superficial mention of the frontiersmen’s obligation “to help in the maintenance of the inner Frontier” (referring to the cordon)<sup>14</sup>. The Law on Emigrants of 1784 also only mentions the Military Frontier briefly. Its Article 23 notes that “if possible, their detection and capture should be made possible even within the Frontier”<sup>15</sup>.

### **Anti-emigration state policy**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Habsburg migration policy resulted from the principles of a comprehensive economic and political doctrine of mercantilism, which highly valued population size as the key for state self-sufficiency and power<sup>16</sup>. Considering that adequate population size was a priority for the authorities, the resulting attitude was naturally that immigration (i.e. settlement) should be supported, whereas emigration (i.e. exodus) was undesired. Certainly, neither that position nor its implementation in practice were without their problems. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many European states had laws that pertained to the control or prohibition of emigration<sup>17</sup>. In keeping with the spirit of the times, Habsburg rulers Maria Theresa and Joseph II endeavoured to attract new immigrants, whilst preventing their own subjects from emigrating<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> For more about economic and social organisation in the Military Frontier during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, see: K. KASER, *Slobodan seljak i vojnik – Povojačeno društvo (1754–1881)*, vol. II, Zagreb 1997, *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Introductory part of the 1807 Basic Law (*Grundgesetze für Karlstädter- Warazdiner, Banalen, Slavonische und Banat Militärgrenze*), in: S. GAVRILOVIĆ, *Osnovni graničarski zakon iz 1807 (1808) godine*, “Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju” 38, 1988, p. 144.

<sup>15</sup> T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 542.

<sup>16</sup> Mercantilism was the philosophical framework of economic policy characteristic of the rise of European absolutism, i.e. national states and international market. Cf. *Mercantilism*, [in:] *Europe 1450 to 1789...*, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> A law restricting emigration was, for example, adopted in 1768 by some south German states to prevent mass emigration of its population for the benefit of colonisation efforts of foreign states – Prussia, the Habsburg Monarchy and Russia Cf. P. BECKER, *Governance of Migration in the Habsburg Monarchy and the Republic of Austria*, [in:] *National Approaches to the Administration of International Migration*, Amsterdam–Washington DC 2010, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Habsburg Chancellor Kaunitz was quite worried, given that the “struggle for colonists” was already giving rise to true “diplomatic wars” between European states. In spite of this, recruitment did not stop, but merely abated Cf. F. A. J. SZABO, *Kaunitz and enlightened absolutism 1753–1780*, Cambridge 2004, p. 339–340.

Emigration (*Emigratio, Auswanderung*)<sup>19</sup> was unfavourable because it carried a threat of depopulation. This was clearly stated in the *Patent on Emigration* of 1784 that banned it, which defined emigrants as “people who leave the area they are inhabiting without permission, and with the intention of permanently departing”<sup>20</sup>. The question then arises how European empires could support immigration into their own borders without ruining good neighbourly relations. The answer lay in the tacit affirmation of immigration, and acceptance of refugees who formally embarked on this step (allegedly or truly) of their own volition. An important precondition was for the refugees to have not left their former authorities a legal reason based on which they could insist on their return, such as having committed acts of violence or leaving behind outstanding debt. The policy of good neighbourly relations between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire was in place throughout the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the exception of the last Austro-Turkish War (1788–1791), and continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Peace with the Ottoman Empire was a cornerstone of Habsburg foreign policy at a time when wars were fought on the other side, with Prussia and later with Napoleon and France<sup>21</sup>.

Notably, emigrants were not mentioned in peace treaties (such as the Treaty of Carlowitz of 1699, Treaty of Passarowitz of 1718, Treaty of Belgrade of 1739 and Treaty of Sistova of 1791), nor in rulers’ decisions on the regulation of frontier order (“decrees” of Austrian emperors and “firmans” of Ottoman sultans). Instead, imperial edicts (“patents”) were used, which pertained to illegal emigration and desertion and applied to all Habsburg Hereditary Lands (*Erblände*), which included the areas of the Military Frontier. Furthermore, from different sources it can be concluded that illegal border crossings were regulated and sanctioned according to the perpetrators’ motivations, and were classified into different types: emigration, desertion, robbery and vagrancy. The following collective identifiers were used for the perpetrators: *Emigranten, Deserteur, Raubbern* and *Vagabunden*. The authorities believed that public order was jeopardised by these groups, because their violations had the following effects, in particular order: they reduced the size of the population, and by extension of the troops, endangered property and lives, and threatened domestic political order<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Sources used the Latin and German versions of the term equally: Latin *Emigratio*; German *Aussiedlung = Auswanderung*. Cf. *Priručni višejezični rečnik za arhiviste*, eds. Z. STEVANOVIĆ, D. JAKŠIĆ, S. SAMARDŽIĆ, R. NAD, Z. MANDIĆ, Novi Sad 2012, p. 47, 98.

<sup>20</sup> The original citation: “Als ein Auwanderer ist zu betrachten, wer aus unsern sämtlichen Erbländern in auswärtige entweicht, mit dem Vorsatze nicht wieder zu zurückzukehren” Cf. T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 535.

<sup>21</sup> K. A. ROIDER, *Austria's Eastern Question 1700–1790*, Baton Rouge, 1982.

<sup>22</sup> More about the legal differences between robbery, desertion and armed emigration on the border, in: L. ČELAR, *Držanje Srba-graničara za vreme rusko-turskog rata 1768–1774. godine*,



Differentiating between violations according to motivation was important for pronouncing sentences. An example will illustrate this. In June 1771, there was a failed attempt of six armed men from Zemun to cross the border at Jupalnic (Banat) into Wallachia, and join the Russian army that was located there. The reports exchanged after their capture and sentencing state, among other things, that the group “was to be considered vagabonds and armed emigrants, which is why the (proposed) penalty for robbers was not to be applied to them”<sup>23</sup>. The case in question is relevant not only because it reveals that emigrants were de facto labelled as perpetrators of illegal border crossing, which were differentiated from other similar offenders, but also because it literally stated that the entire case was to be resolved in accordance with a certain legal regulation of Empress Maria Theresa. In fact, it was explicitly stated that their emigration attempt (*Emigrationsversuch*) was supposed to be punished according to the Empress’ “Patent published in Vienna on 19 July 1762, and 16 November 1763”, which stated that “any inhabitant of the state who flees the state without permission and is caught in the act of emigrating should, if this was the first instance, be sentenced to five years of digging trenches”<sup>24</sup>.

Emperor Joseph II adopted a special *Patent on the Prohibition of Emigration (Auswanderungspatent)* on 10 August 1784, which applied to the entire Hereditary Lands. The articles of this comprehensive law have been ascertained from its circular printed version which was distributed to all regional and border authorities, including the towns (*Militärcommunitäten*) in the Military Frontier<sup>25</sup>. In the prolegomenon of that law, the ruler concluded that it was necessary for “emigration to be first prohibited by law and then suppressed through penalties”<sup>26</sup>. A total of 47 provisions of that law considered various aspects of the offence, including the offender’s motivation, extenuating or aggravating circumstances, and the actual consequences of the offence. As a result, this kind of purposeful emigration was

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“Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke” 12, 1956, p. 65–66; S. GAVRILOVIĆ, *Okružnice iz 1727, 1771. i 1811. protiv razbojništva u našim zemljama pod austrijskom vlašću*, “Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju” 21, 1980, p. 86.

<sup>23</sup> These were the words of General Mitroffsky, the main commander of the Banat Military Border in Timișoara, in response to the sentence proposed for these offenders (ÖStA, Kriegsarchiv (KA), Hofkriegsrat (HKR), 1771 – 39 – 138).

<sup>24</sup> T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 317. This document was also noted in: J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations...*, p. 210.

<sup>25</sup> Resolution against the emigration and those who inspired the emigration of Habsburg subjects, issued by the Emperor Joseph II in August 1784. Cf. T. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 535–548, dok. no. 220. The version published by Ilić was preserved in the archives of the Zemun Magistrate, coincidentally among the documents from 1833, when that law was by all accounts still in force. The same document was also noted in: J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations...*, p. 210.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 535.

to be differentiated from an exodus resulting from “foreign recruitment”, “cunning enticement” and “violent abduction”. Some 30 articles were dedicated to variations in terms of the conditions, motivations and other circumstances that led to an offence being labelled emigration<sup>27</sup>.

Article 4 is particularly noteworthy because it explicitly states that all kinds of departures are not only undesirable, but also prohibited, given that the authorities has envisaged that “no one at all is allowed either to emigrate on their own, or to send their children or other persons under their authority to a foreign country”. It is further stated that, even in individual cases where it may be justified, “approval for emigration into foreign states must always be requested in a timely manner”<sup>28</sup>. Anyone intending to travel must obtain approval in the form of a passport, according to Article 12 of the Law<sup>29</sup>. The departures of craftsmen and merchants were particularly undesirable, leading to the recommendation that “attention to emigration of craftsmen and merchants must be doubled”<sup>30</sup>. The authorities encouraged the denouncement and physical prevention of emigration. It envisaged that informing on emigrants should be rewarded with 5 forints “per person”, while their capture was even more lucrative, with the reward as high as 12 forints “per person”<sup>31</sup>. The set of punishments and rewards was far more pronounced in the case of foreign state agents (“Emissairs”) charged with the crime of enticement (*Verführung* and *Fremd-Werbung*) among the subjects of the Monarchy<sup>32</sup>.

Desertion was a particular kind of prohibited departure, performed by individuals abandoning their military obligation. The escape of frontiersmen was seen not only as an unwanted loss of troops, but also as treason for the benefit of a foreign army and sovereign. Even Engelshofen’s Regulation of 1747 defined in its Article 13 that all frontiersmen who left their companies and fled were to be punished and removed from the Slavonian Military Frontier into civilian territory<sup>33</sup>. In April 1751, Empress Maria Theresa adopted the “Patent on the Strict Punishment for

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 535–536. An “apparent” offence of emigration included acts perpetrated by 1) people who left with the intention of joining a foreign military or civilian service, 2) people who left to a foreign monastery, 3) people who “intended to settle in a foreign land, where they had no property or store”, and 4) a female left to get married in a foreign country. In addition, the regulations declared that an emigrant was 1) someone who has been absent for 3 years without notifying the authorities thereof, 2) even if the absence was permitted, if it was extended without requesting an extension, and 3) someone who failed to respond to an open (court) invitation to return.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 536.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 538.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 539.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 542.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 546–547. Third section of Law, regarding “Von listigen Entführung”, in Articles 41–45.

<sup>33</sup> D. ROKSANDIĆ, *Engelshofenov regulament iz 1747. godine...*, p. 241.



Harbouring and Aiding Deserters”<sup>34</sup>. In the first lines of the Patent, the Empress stated that the need to adopt this regulation arose, “although numerous diverse strict orders have been adopted in all our Hereditary Lands”, because “the harmful evil of desertion has taken its toll”<sup>35</sup>. It is possible that the issuing of the Patent on Desertion was not only motivated by frequent desertions of soldiers from regular troops, but also by the fear of mass desertion by frontiersmen from recently demilitarized military borders on the Tisza and Maros rivers, which also happened in 1751. Their refuge was the “protector” of Orthodox Christians, Russia, which was at that same time forming its own frontiers in the area west from the Donetsk River<sup>36</sup>. Seeing as they had lost their previous service in demilitarized borders, officers and frontiersmen first asked for permission to be released from Habsburg military service, followed by a permission to move to Russia. The authorities in Vienna granted this permission in an effort to affirm their “friendly relations” with the Russian ruler. In truth, the Habsburg authorities wanted to conceal their strong aversion to emigration into Russia, especially because it occurred both in legal and illegal ways, threatening to reach massive proportions<sup>37</sup>.

The echoes of emigration to Russia resonated for decades to come. Desertion to Wallachia to join the Russian troops during the Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774) stirred some bitter memories of the emigration of frontiersmen to Russia after 1751, as a consequence of the demilitarization of the Tisza and Maros Military Frontier. Mere months after the arrival of the Russian army in Wallachia, in the spring of 1770, there was news that 12 Slavonian and 42 Banat frontiersmen (from the Illyrian Regiment) had managed to escape there<sup>38</sup>. In relation to this case, the

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<sup>34</sup> The Patent on desertion was preserved in the form of a copy in the documents of the municipal archive in Zemun from 1784, because in November of that year the Imperial War Council ordered that it be declared again. For that purpose, a copy was delivered from the Slavonian General Command. Draconian measures against people aiding deserters were notable. Cf. T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 9–12. The same document, issued in Innsbruck in April of 1751, also used in: J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations...*, p. 209.

<sup>35</sup> T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> The result of this wave of emigration was the establishment of two frontier areas in the Russian Empire: Slaveno-Serbia and Novoserbia. The research of this topic started with the work: M. KOSTIĆ, *Srpska naselja u Rusiji: Nova Srbija i Slavenosrbija*, Beograd 1923.

<sup>37</sup> The procedure of leaving the Austrian army only appeared to be simple, judging by the description by one of the most renowned participants of that emigration wave, Austrian lieutenant and later Russian major general, Simeon Piščević, in his memoir first published in 1884. The Serbian edition of the memoir was used here: S. PIŠČEVIĆ, *Život generalmajora i kavaljera Simeona sina Stefana Piščevića*, Novi Sad 1998.

<sup>38</sup> J. ILIĆ MANDIĆ, *Banatska vojna krajina...*, p. 358. As previously earlier, a similar attempt was made by 6 “armed emigrants” from Semlin caught near Jupalnic while trying to defect to the Russian Army in Wallachia in June 1771 Cf. L. ČELAP, *Držanje Srba-graničara...*, p. 65–66.

Emperor noted in May 1770 that four of the recaptured 13 deserters “perished on account of excessive diligence of the officers”, undoubtedly during punishment<sup>39</sup>. By the end of the century, the public was aware of the fact that the dynasty was less afraid of the influence of the Holy See than the influence an instructed Synod in Petrograd could exert. The suspicion towards Orthodox Church leaders, given their links to the Russian court, was woven into the foundation of the metropolitan’s oath, prescribed by the Regulation of 1777, stating that the metropolitan “must not act contrary to the interests of the Holy Austrian House and Court”<sup>40</sup>.

Contrary to the undesirable border crossings that were to be prevented and discouraged, the authorities endeavoured to affirm a favourable form of cross-border movements – travelling with a passport (“Passeport”). The validity of passports rested on the consent of central/local authorities given to individuals to travel or move out<sup>41</sup>. It was prescribed that passports should contain information which, in addition to a description of the document holder (name, marital status, appearance of hair, physique and clothing), included the subjecthood of the individual (*turkische Unterthanen* or *kayserliche-königliche Unterthanen*), and the purpose and destination of travelling<sup>42</sup>. In legal terms, what emigrants were missing to make their travel legal was precisely the permission to move out, which the authorities had to grant to them in the form of an appropriate document, such as a passport. Immigrants were also lacking these permissions, but their status was interpreted differently.

## The Military Frontier between Mass Immigration and Emigration

The institution of the Military Frontier existed for centuries as the embodiment of the continuous immigration policy of the Habsburg authorities. From its inception in the 16<sup>th</sup> century until its abolition in 1872–1881, the Military Frontier

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<sup>39</sup> This fact was not alleviated even by the knowledge that the cause of defection was a poor harvest, according to a note of Emperor Joseph II Cf. C. FENEŞAN, *Die Zweite Reise Kaiser Josephs II. Ins Temeswarer Banat (1770)*, “Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs” 45, 1997, p. 243.

<sup>40</sup> One such interpretation of the above formulation in the oath came from the editor of Bartenstein’s work of 1802. Cf. J. Ch. BARTENSTEIN, *Kurzer Bericht von der Beschaffenheit*, Frankfurt, Leipzig 1802, p. XIII, XIV (Vorrede).

<sup>41</sup> P. BECKER, *Governance of Migration...*, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> The form of printed passports was prescribed by Article 10 of the Patent on the Punishment for Aiding Deserters of 1751 (repeated in 1784), which envisaged that it should contain information on the name of the holder, name of the regiment, company, (marital) status, as well as the appearance of hair, shirt, cloak, undershirt and trousers. Cf. T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 12.

was open to settlers – but only under specific conditions<sup>43</sup>. All Ottoman-Habsburg wars in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (1683–1699, 1716–1718, 1737–1739) were an opportunity not only for territorial expansion, but also for winning over new people and settling them on the Habsburg side. It was in these circumstances that the Great Exodus (*Velika seoba*) of the Serbs of 1690 and the Second Exodus of 1737–1739 took place<sup>44</sup>. However, it should not be overlooked that those wars were the first time that areas inhabited by Orthodox Christians (Serbs and Romanians) came under the sovereign authority of the Monarchy, which had spread to the areas of South Hungary, Srem, Bačka and Banat, and temporarily, between 1718 and 1739, to parts of Serbia, Bosnia and Wallachia as well. New borders which had to be defended were then established along the Sava and Danube, Tisza, Maros and Cerna, and for a short time the Zapadna Morava and Olt rivers. Thus, the immigration wave from the Balkans was mainly directed towards the new borders and the mainland in South Hungary. For example, the inhabitants of Austrian Belgrade departed the city in 1739 and moved primarily to the neighbouring Zemun, Petrovaradinski Šanac (Novi Sad) and Karlovci, transforming those villages to border towns<sup>45</sup>. Mass immigration from the territories of Serbia and Bosnia related to war also occurred during the last Austro-Turkish War (1788–1791)<sup>46</sup>.

After 1740, when the epoch of great wars ended and a territorial status quo was established between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, opportunities for a mass retreat of the population from hostile territory disappeared. The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was marked by efforts to build a stable border system on the Sava, Danube and Cerna rivers, and by efforts to support “low intensity” immigration and, consequently, control and prevention of emigration. On numerous occasions, Emperor Joseph II expressed the position that an influx of

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<sup>43</sup> There is an extensive literature on the settlement, as it is inseparable from the general history of the Military Frontier. One particularly coherent recent review is found in the following encyclopedia article: K. KASER, *Siedler an der habsburgischen Militärgrenze seit der Frühen Neuzeit*, [in:] *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa. Vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, eds. K. J. BADE, P. C. EMMER, L. LUCASSEN, J. OLTMER, Paderborn–München–Wien–Zürich 2007, p. 985–990.

<sup>44</sup> Both migrations to the Monarchy took place in parallel with the retreat of the Austrian army during the Great Turkish War (1683–1699) and Austro-Turkish War (1737–1739). Regardless of the debatable details regarding the consequences of those wars and the extent of the migrations, it is certain that they involved tens of thousands on both occasions.

<sup>45</sup> In 1763, the inhabitants of Zemun declared in one of their complaints that among them were “predominantly those who had crossed over from Belgrade, and who had left everything in Belgrade”. Cf. T. Ž. ILIĆ, *Beograd i Srbija u dokumentima...*, p. 165–167.

<sup>46</sup> In addition to the immigration of former military volunteers and their families, sources describe, for instance, the crossings of thousands of people from the vicinity of Niš and other places along the Road to Istanbul to the Monarchy.

the Serbian population (*Raizen*) was desirable, and that “for the gradual increase in population size, settling members of the ‘Raizen Nation’ and emigrants from Turkey or Wallachia would surely be cheaper and more useful than other foreigners”<sup>47</sup>. This message was sent not only by the Emperor and top state officials, but also by the representatives of the central government on the periphery. For example, in 1761 Baron Krepel of the Illyrian Court Deputation (*Illyrische Hof Deputation*) informed the Imperial War Council that the Orthodox Christian municipality in Brod on the Sava River had been abandoned to the extent that settlement should be allowed again “even from Turkey, although care should be taken, given the highly sensitive relations with Turkey”<sup>48</sup>. There was tacit consent that new arrivals should be settled in secret to avoid upsetting relations with the Ottomans.

Immigration of individuals from Ottoman areas proved to be vital, especially given that other immigration flows, which had been active in the 1760s and 1770s, soon began to dwindle. By the 1780s already, it was clear that the settling of South Hungary, Banat and Transylvania, and the newly won Galicia, would not be possible if the colonization was limited solely to German colonists from the Empire, and to other “internal” colonists, such as the Protestants from the Hereditary Lands who settled in Transylvania. The wave of Theresian colonization splashed the territory of the Border to a lesser extent. Specifically, in 1764, the Settlers’ Regiment (*Ansiedlungsregiment*) was established in Southwest Banat around Pančevo, with the idea that its frontiersmen would be colonist veterans (*Halb-Invaliden*) released from imperial veterans’ homes and garrisons (*Invaliden-House*) in Vienna, Buda, Bratislava and Ptuj. The intentions of the authorities regarding the preferred origin of the colonists are best shown by the fact that from the 1770s that regiment was called the German Banat Regiment (*Deutsch-banatische Grenzregiment*). However, the plan for frontiersmen to be predominantly German veterans did not materialize. At the tail end of the colonization wave, in 1781, there were just over 7,000 colonists (*Deutschen*), who made up around 20% of the total population in the regiment. After the war of 1788–1791, the settlement of that regiment was reoriented to other sources (such as Hungarians and Slovaks from Hungarian provinces), but the most stable inflow came from Serbia and other Ottoman border areas<sup>49</sup>.

The regulation of the Military Frontier according to the “new model” was aimed at unification based on a system of regiments and battalions. The regulation of 1753 set out the “complete unit strength” of regiments which was the norma-

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<sup>47</sup> J. Ch. BARTENSTEIN, *Kurzer Bericht von der Beschaffenheit...*, p. XIX.

<sup>48</sup> *Ilirska dvorska komisija deputacija – Beč 1745–1777*, eds. J. VALRABENŠTAJN, J. KARABA, Novi Sad 2010, p. 438.

<sup>49</sup> J. ILIĆ MANDIĆ, *Banatska vojna Krajina...*, 92, p. 109–122.

tive requirement for performing primary tasks – maintaining order in the cordon, defending homes in the Frontier and providing troops for distant European battlefields<sup>50</sup>. Furthermore, the aim of the regulation of the border system was centralization in both administrative and economic affairs. It was thus accompanied by a set of measures, such as the census of household members and keeping lists of recruitment and mobilization. From early 1770s, it had begun with resolving issues related to land ownership through cadastral and tax reform, and planned construction and regulation of settlements – all of which affirmed the position of frontiersmen as individuals with obligations related to their households and land ownership. As a result, the status of frontiersmen approached that of subjects in the civilian mainland (*Unterthanen, Bauernschaft*)<sup>51</sup>.

As a form of resistance by the Frontier population to the growing pressures of regulation and centralization, there were occasional episodes of mass emigration. These were mostly undertaken by inhabitants of areas geographically “predisposed” to “undetected” emigration. Unlike the border along the Sava and Danube rivers, the border on the Una River facing West Bosnia was difficult to oversee and thus conducive to crossings. For this reason, this part of the border saw cases of reversible migration – from the Banal Military Frontier (*Banal Militärgrenze*) and the Karlovac Generalate (*Karlstädter Generalat*) to Ottoman Bosnia and vice versa<sup>52</sup>. For example, the regulation of the Banal Border was cause for the emigration of frontiersmen to the Ottoman side in 1752–1753, since they opposed the new measures which mandated that they pay for their uniforms with their own funds (which hit the frontier households hard, but was necessary for the unification of border troops and regular troops). However, that same population did not hesitate to emigrate again, this time from Bosnia back to the Monarchy, certainly in order to avoid the pressures exerted by the crews of local Ottoman forts. That wave of immigration lasted from February to June 1755 and counted over 700 people, which included not only the immigrants from 1752 and 1753, but also new arrivals from the surroundings of forts Kladuša, Prijedor and Novi (Grad). The main centre for the reception of these immigrants on the Habsburg side was the quarantine station at Kostajnica, which was founded on the Una River, certainly not by chance in 1753. After they

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<sup>50</sup> Serbelloni's Regulation of 1753 in Slavonia Military Frontier prescribed the complete unit strength to 4,080 frontiersmen (in the first line of defence) per regiment. That meant that every regiment required at least 10,000 adult men to comprise three lines of defence. Cf. F. Š. ENGEL, *Opis Kraljevine Slavonije i Vojvodstva Srema* (1786), Novi Sad, 2003, p. 135.

<sup>51</sup> The question of the privileges of frontiersmen over those subjects arose long before the abolition of serfdom in 1848, as noticed in: K. KASER, *Slobodan seljak i vojnik...*, p. 197; J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations...*, p.147–148.

<sup>52</sup> J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations...*, p. 160.

had been gathered, the immigrants were transported to parts of the Slavonian Military Frontier, which contained available arable land for their settlement<sup>53</sup>.

Another example of mass emigration from the Habsburg frontier to the neighbouring side – though under different circumstances (but essentially for similar reasons) – was the emigration of the Romanian population (*Wallachen*) from Banat to the Principality of Wallachia, the territory of the Ottoman vassal which was occupied by Russian troops between 1769 and 1771. Driven by the events in Wallachia, the Habsburg military authorities initiated the militarization of 35 settlements along the Cerna and Upper Timiș rivers from 1769 to 1772. Thus began the regulation of the last unregulated segment of the Banat Military Frontier, with the rationale of forming an “uninterrupted belt” toward Habsburg Transylvania. The introduction of military administration and imposing frontiersman obligations upon people who had previously been subjects of the cameral district administration led to a reaction and resistance in the form of emigration and rebellion. General Papilla, the commander in that part of the Frontier, reported in 1771 that the emigrants were families that did not want to live as frontiersmen. Some time later, in April 1772, the general gave a report about the second cause of the emigration: “the presence of the Russian army and volunteers in Wallachia could drive all our villages to emigrate to Wallachia”. These reasons stimulated around 600 families to emigrate from 23 villages in East Banat between May 1771 and July 1772. When 235 families were returned from Wallachia to Banat in the second half of 1772 (with the help of the Russian army) and sent to quarantine to the station near Jupalnic, their resettlement to inner provinces was considered, since former emigrants could not be trusted to guard the Border<sup>54</sup>.

Finally, mass emigration was “endemic” in certain regions, where it was motivated by existential necessity. Such was the emigration of frontiersmen from the Karlovac Generalate, where periodic droughts, poor harvests and food shortages gave rise to true exoduses. Due to insufficient land resources, the Karlovac Generalate (known also as *Upper or Croatian Border*) was overpopulated in relation to its agricultural potential<sup>55</sup>. Contingents of frontier families from that

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<sup>53</sup> S. GAVRILOVIĆ, *Građa za istoriju vojne granice u XVIII veku*, vol. II, Beograd 1997, p. 275, doc. 185; p. 277–278, doc. 190; p. 402–404, doc. 242; p. 504, doc. 301; p. 506–507, doc. 304; p. 519, doc. 312; p. 520–521, doc. 314; p. 523, doc. 316; p. 529–530, doc. 319; p. 537–538, doc. 326; p. 543–545, doc. 330; p. 548–550, doc. 333, 334; p. 556–557, doc. 338; p. 560, doc. 342; p. 562, doc. 345; p. 564, doc. 346; p. 569–571, doc. 350; p. 591–592, doc. 369; p. 596–598, doc. 373.

<sup>54</sup> J. ILIĆ MANDIĆ, *Forging the Wallachian Military Border, 1769–1772*, “Banatica” 31, 2021, p. 251–273.

<sup>55</sup> It was noted that even in such conditions and for unknown reasons, Lika was a region characterized by a constant influx of immigrants, both from Bosnia and Venetian Dalmatia. Cf. J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations...*, p. 160–162.



area were occasionally directed to the parts of the Military Frontier with more unused land – such as the Slavonian Military Frontier and Banat Military Frontier (so-called Lower Border). Some years with pronounced emigration because of intense famines caused by droughts were: 1715, the 1730s and 1740s, as well as 1764, 1768–1770 and 1774. Stages without emigration were practically rarer than those when news of departures were numerous<sup>56</sup>. Despite the looming threat of depopulation of the Karlovac Generalate, the trend of moving out continued. On the one hand, the regiment authorities resolved the famine problem by granting to frontier families formal permission to move to the Lower Border (to Slavonia, Srem and Banat), or at the very least, they did not hinder them in this. On the other hand, higher authorities, i.e. the General Command in Karlovac and the Imperial War Council in Vienna believed that any mass departure – or even individual ones – from territories of the regiments should not be permitted. Instead, they championed systemic solutions, such as purchasing grain reserves (1782) or issuing annual authorizations to individuals to cross over to territories of the counties to get food, after which they would return to the Frontier (1785). Despite the regulation of the Imperial War Council of 1781 declaring that no frontiersman or family may leave the Karlovac Generalate without its express consent, departures continued. It is estimated that close to 10,000 people left the territory of the Generalate without regiment approval in the period from 1774 to 1784. In 1785 and 1786, there were demands for the return of the released frontiersmen, leading up to a veritable “hunt for frontiersmen through the counties”. Proposals for resolving the situation in the Karlovac Generalate, such as placing certain battalions under state funding, forming grain reserves and carrying out a reform of land distribution, were mostly not implemented in a sufficiently comprehensive way<sup>57</sup>. In the period 1802–1804, due to droughts and poor harvests, the regiment authorities again resorted to issuing temporary release to frontiersmen, usually for a period of 8 to 12 months, so they would leave for Slavonia and Srem for nourishment and food purchases<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> S. GAVRILOVIĆ, *Migracije iz Gornje krajine u Slavoniju i Srem od početka XVIII do sredine XIX veka*, “Zbornik o Srbima u Hrvatskoj” 2, 1991, p. 7–67. The scope of emigration is attested by the fact that around 1000 Serbian and Croatian families moved out from the Upper Border in 1774, of which 220 families moved to Banat, 61 to the Brod Regiment, 210 to the Gradiška Regiment and 478 to the Petrovaradin Regiment.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12, 15, 19, 20. In 1786, in the territory of the Požega and Virovitica Counties, 5,344 frontiersmen were registered who had mostly fled in 1784–1785.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27. As in previous years, most frontiersmen exceeded the deadline for return and attempted to permanently settle in the “Lower Lands”, and the search for them in some cases lasted until 1806–1807.

## Conclusion

Concerns over depopulation were the main reason for maintaining strict anti-emigration laws, even in conditions when it was harmful to the bare existence of the Frontier population, such as in the Karlovac Generalate. Periodic occurrences of large groups of emigrants and deserters, and even outlaws, resulted from the circumstances at the time rather than mere chance. By all accounts, they stemmed from two factors – an existential threat caused by a lack of food, and attempts by the authorities to change the current social or economic order. Unlike the inhabitants of the civilian mainland, the population of the Military Frontier had the opportunity to escape the disadvantages of their station by fleeing to the other side of the border, where, as a rule, they were welcome<sup>59</sup>.

It is a fact that emigration and immigration cannot be viewed as separate processes, and that they occurred frequently (and even reversibly) between the territories of the two empires. However, the authorities did not pay as much attention to emigration, seeing as it was not a matter of public health in the way immigration was. For this reason, most emigrants were “discovered” in the sources only during their attempts to return to the Habsburg side. Whether for this reason, or because the cases were indeed so few, there is an impression that mass emigration was not too frequent. Conversely, emigration of individuals and families was far more common. Indeed, this type of emigration was part of everyday life in all segments of the Frontier. Motivation for individual emigration was mainly private in nature, ranging from a call to adventure, escape from justice and sanctions, debts and imposed obligations, to bad environment and love<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Though they are few, sources indicate that the Ottoman border area was also subject to the policy of recruiting immigrants from the Habsburg side, and that they included not only deserters, but also entire families, even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. D. MATANOVIĆ, *Svakodnevnica na granici Habsburške monarhije i Osmanskog carstva*, “Prilozi” 31, 2002, p. 106.

<sup>60</sup> *Loc. cit.*; J. PEŠALJ, *Monitoring migrations...*, p. 155–160.

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