

## = The Night Attack =

The Night Attack of Târgoviște ( Romanian : Atacul de noapte de la Târgoviște , Turkish : Tirgoviște Baskını ) was a battle fought between forces of Vlad III the Impaler of Wallachia and Mehmed II of the Ottoman Empire on Thursday , June 17 , 1462 .

The conflict initially started with Vlad 's refusal to pay the jizya ( tax on non @-@ Muslims ) to the Sultan and intensified when Vlad Țepeș invaded Bulgaria and impaled over 23 @, @ 000 Turks . Mehmed then raised a great army with the objective to conquer Wallachia and annex it to his empire . The two leaders fought a series of skirmishes , the most notable one being the Night Attack where Vlad Țepeș attacked the Turkish camp in the night in an attempt to kill Mehmed .

The assassination attempt failed , and Mehmed marched to the Wallachian capital of Târgoviște , where he discovered another some 20 @, @ 000 impaled Turks . The Sultan and his troops then sailed to Brăila and burned it to the ground before retreating to Adrianople . Both sides would claim victory : while Pope Pius II proclaimed Vlad Țepeș ' campaign a victory for Christianity , Mehmed II 's forces returned home with many captured slaves , horses and cattle . The halt in the Ottoman advance would prove to be brief .

## = Background =

After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453 , Mehmed set his target on other campaigns . In Anatolia , the Greek Trebizond was still resisting the Ottomans , and to the East the White Sheep Turkomans of Uzun Hasan , together with other smaller states , threatened the Ottomans . In the West , Skanderbeg in Albania continued to trouble the Sultan , while Bosnia was sometimes reluctant in paying the Jizya ( tax on non @-@ Muslims ) . Wallachia controlled her side of the Danube and Mehmed wanted to have control over the river , as naval attacks could be launched against his empire all the way from the Holy Roman Empire . On September 26 , 1459 , Pope Pius II called for a new crusade against the Ottomans and on January 14 , 1460 , at the Congress of Mantua , the Pope proclaimed the official crusade that was to last for three years . His plan , however , failed and the only European leader that showed enthusiasm for the crusade was Vlad Țepeș , whom the Pope held in high regard . Because of a lack of enthusiasm shown by Europeans for the crusade , Mehmed took the opportunity to take an offensive stand . Later that same year ( 1460 ) , he captured the last independent Serbian city , Smederevo , and in 1461 , he convinced the Greek despot of Morea to give up his stronghold ; soon thereafter , its capital , Mistra , and Corinth followed suit and surrendered themselves without struggle .

Vlad Țepeș 's only ally , Mihály Szilágyi , was captured in 1460 by the Turks while traversing Bulgaria . Szilágyi 's men were tortured to death , while Szilágyi was killed by being sawed in half . Later that year , Mehmed sent envoys to Vlad to urge him to pay the delayed Jizya ( tax on non @-@ Muslims ) . Vlad Țepeș provoked Mehmed by having the envoys killed and in a letter dated September 10 , 1460 , addressed to the Transylvanian Saxons of Kronstadt ( today : Brașov ) , he warned them of Mehmed 's invasion plans and asked for their support . Vlad Țepeș had not paid the annual Jizya ( tax on non @-@ Muslims ) of 10 @, @ 000 ducats since 1459 . In addition to this , Mehmed asked him for 1000 boys that were to be trained as janissaries . Vlad Țepeș refused the demand , and the Turks crossed the Danube and started to do their own recruiting , to which Vlad reacted by capturing the Turks and impaling them . The conflict continued until 1461 , when Mehmed asked the Prince to come to Constantinople and negotiate with him .

At the end of November 1461 , Vlad Țepeș wrote to Mehmed that he could not afford to pay the Jizya ( tax on non @-@ Muslims ) , as his war against the Saxons of Transylvania had emptied his resources , and that he could not leave Wallachia and risk having the Hungarian king take over his domains . He further promised to send the Sultan plenty of gold when he could afford to and that he would go to Constantinople if the Sultan would send him a pasha to rule over Wallachia in his absence . Meanwhile , the Sultan received intelligence reports that revealed Vlad 's alliance with Hungarian king , Matthias Corvinus . He sent the bey of Nicopolis , Hamza Pasha , to stage a diplomatic meeting with Vlad at Giurgiu , but with orders to ambush him there ; and thereafter , take

him to Constantinople . Vlad was forewarned about the ambush and planned to set an ambush of his own . Hamza brought with him 1 @, @ 000 cavalry and when passing through a narrow pass north of Giurgiu , Vlad launched a surprise @-@ attack . The Wallachians had the Turks surrounded and fired with their handgunners until the entire expedition @-@ force was killed . Historians credit Vlad ?epe? as one of the first European crusaders to use gunpowder in a " deadly artistic way " . In a letter to Corvinus , dated February 2 , 1462 , he wrote that Hamza Pasha was captured close to the former Wallachian fortress of Giurgiu . He then disguised himself as a Turk and advanced with his cavalry towards the fortress where he ordered the guards in Turkish to have the gates open . This they did and Vlad ?epe? attacked and destroyed the fortress . In his next move , he went on a campaign and slaughtered enemy soldiers and population that might have sympathized with the Turks ; first in southern Wallachia , then , in Bulgaria by crossing the frozen Danube . While in Bulgaria , he divided his army into several smaller groups and covered " some 800 kilometers in two weeks " , as they killed over 23 @, @ 000 Turks . In a letter to Corvinus , dated February 11 , 1462 , he stated :

I have killed peasants men and women , old and young , who lived at Oblucitza and Novoselo , where the Danube flows into the sea , up to Rahova , which is located near Chilia , from the lower Danube up to such places as Samovit and Ghighen . We killed 23 @, @ 884 Turks without counting those whom we burned in homes or the Turks whose heads were cut by our soldiers ... Thus , your highness , you must know that I have broken the peace with him ( Sultan Mehmet II ) .

The Christian Bulgarians were spared and many of them were settled in Wallachia . His precise numbers were counted as such : At Giugiu there were 6 @, @ 414 victims ; at Eni Sala , 1 @, @ 350 ; at Durostor 6 @, @ 840 ; at Orsova , 343 ; at Hârsova , 840 ; at Marotin , 210 ; at Turtucaia , 630 ; at Turnu , Batin , and Novograd , 384 ; at Sistov , 410 ; at Nicopolis and Ghighen , 1 @, @ 138 ; at Rahova , 1 @, @ 460 . When hearing about the devastation , Mehmed ? who was busy besieging a fortress in Corinth ? sent his grand vizier , Mahmud , with an army of 18 @, @ 000 to destroy the Wallachian port of Br?ila . Vlad ?epe? turned back and defeated the army , and according to the Italian chronicle de Lezze , only 8 @, @ 000 Turks survived . Vlad ?epe? 's campaign was celebrated among the Saxon cities of Transylvania , the Italian states and the Pope . A Venetian envoy , upon hearing about the news at the court of Corvinus on March 4 , expressed great joy and said that the whole of Christianity should celebrate Vlad ?epe? 's successful campaign . An English pilgrim to the Holy Land , William of Wey , passing through the island of Rhodes while on his way home , wrote that " the military men of Rhodes , upon hearing of Vlad ?epe? 's campaign , had Te Deum sung in praise and honour of God who had granted such victories .... The lord mayor of Rhodes convened his brother soldiers and the whole citizenry feasted on fruit and wine . " The Genoese from Caffa thanked Vlad ?epe? , for his campaign had saved them from an attack of some 300 ships that the sultan planned to send against them . Many Turks were now frightened of Vlad and left the European side of their empire and moved into Anatolia . Mehmed , when hearing about the events , abandoned his siege at Corinth and decided to go against Vlad ?epe? himself .

= = Preparations for war = =

= = = The Ottomans = = =

Mehmed sent messengers in all directions to assemble an army , ' in which in numbers and armaments must have been equal to that which he had employed on the siege of Constantinople . ' On April 26 or May 17 , 1462 , the sultan moved with his army from Constantinople with the objective of conquering Wallachia and annexing the land to his empire . The Sultan himself wrote in a letter addressed to one of his grand viziers , that he took 150 @, @ 000 men with him . The Greek historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles wrote of Mehmed 's army as " huge , second in size only to the one that this sultan had led against Constantinople . " He estimated the force at 250 @, @ 000 , while the Turkish historian Tursun Bey mentioned 300 @, @ 000 . The same numbers were put by an anonymous Italian chronicle found in Verona , believed to have been written by a certain

merchant named Cristoforo Schiappa . A letter of a Leonardo Tocco to Francesco I Sforza , duke of Milan , wrote that Mehmed had recruited 400 @,@ 000 men from Rumelia and Anatolia , with 40 @,@ 000 being constructors of bridges armed with axes . Another point is the one given by Venetian envoy at Buda , Tommasi , who mentioned a regular force of 60 @,@ 000 and some 30 @,@ 000 irregulars . These consisted of the janissaries ( the elite troops ) ; infantry soldiers ; sipâhis ( the feudal cavalry ) ; saiales ( the sacrificial units composed of slaves who would win their freedom if they survived ) ; acings ( the archers ) ; silahdârs ( the custodians of the sultan 's weapons who also protected the flanks ) ; azabs ( the pikemen ) ; beshlis ( who handled the firearms ) ; and the praetorian guard that served as the sultan 's personal bodyguards . Vlad 's half @-@ brother , Radu the Handsome , who willingly served the sultan , commanded 4 @,@ 000 horsemen . In addition to this , the Turks brought with them 120 cannon , engineers and workers that would build roads and bridges , priests of Islam ( ulema ) and muezzin , who called the troops to prayer , astrologers who consulted Mehmed and helped him make military decisions ; and women " reserved for the night pleasures of the men . " Chalcocondyles reported that the Danube shipowners were paid 300 @,@ 000 gold pieces to transport the army . In addition to this , the Ottomans used their own fleet that consisted of 25 triremes and 150 smaller vessels .

= = = The Wallachians = = =

Vlad ?epe? asked the Hungarian king for assistance.He received no support despite promises made by Corvinus and instead called for a mobilization that included " not only men of military age , but also of women and of children from the age of twelve up ; and included Gypsy slave contingents . " Various sources mention the strength of his army to be between 22 @,@ 000 and 30 @,@ 900 , with the most popular accepted number set at 30 @,@ 000 . The letter of Leonardo Tocco which put the numbers of the Turkish army at an exaggerated strength of 400 @,@ 000 , exaggerated also the Wallachian strength which was estimated at 200 @,@ 000 . The majority of the army consisted of peasants and shepherds , while the boyars on horseback ? who were few in numbers ? were armed with lances , swords , and daggers and wore chainmail as armour . Vlad 's personal guard consisted of mercenaries from many countries and some Gypsies . Before battle , it is believed that Vlad told his men that " it would be better that those who think of death should not follow me " .

= = Battle = =

The Turks first tried to disembark at Vidin , but were pushed back by arrows . On June 4 , a contingent of janissaries landed in the night , at Turnu Severin , where 300 of them died from Wallachian attacks . The Serbian @-@ born janissary , Konstantin Mihailovi? , recounted their encounter with Vlad ?epe? :

When night began to fall , we climbed into our boats and floated down the Danube and crossed over to the other side several miles below the place where Vlad 's army was stationed . There we dug ourselves trenches , so that cavalry could not harm us . After that we crossed back over to the other side and transported other janissaries over the Danube , and when the entire infantry had crossed over , then we prepared and set out gradually against Vlad 's army , together with the artillery and other equipment that we had brought with us . Having halted , we set up the cannon , but not in time to stop three hundred janissaries from being killed ... Seeing that our side was greatly weakening , we defended ourselves with the 120 guns which we had brought over and fired so often that we repelled the prince 's army and greatly strengthened our position ... Vlad , seeing that he could not prevent the crossing , withdrew . After that the emperor crossed the Danube with his entire army and gave us 30 @,@ 000 coins to be distributed among us .

The Ottoman army managed to advance as Vlad ?epe? instituted a policy of scorched earth , poisoned the waters , and also created marshes by diverting the waters of small rivers . Traps were created by the digging of pits , and then covered with timber and leaves . The population and animals were evacuated to the mountains and as Mehmed advanced for seven days , his army suffered from fatigue as " he found no man , nor any significant animal , and nothing to eat or drink .

" Vlad adopted guerrilla tactics as his cavalry made several hit @-@ and @-@ run attacks . He would also send ill people suffering from lethal diseases , such as leprosy , tuberculosis , syphilis ? and in more significant numbers ? those who suffered from the bubonic plague , to intermix with the Turks and infect them . The bubonic plague managed to spread in the Ottoman army . The Ottoman fleet launched a few minor attacks on Br?ila and Chilia , but without being able to do much damage , as Vlad ?epe? had destroyed most of the ports in Bulgaria . Chalkokondyles writes that the Sultan managed to capture a Wallachian soldier and at first tried to bribe him for information ; when that didn 't work , he threatened him with torture , to no avail . Mehmed was said to have commended the soldier by saying , " if your master had many soldiers like yourself , in a short time he could conquer the world ! "

The Turks continued with their advance towards Târgovi?te , after failing to capture the fortress of Bucharest and the fortified island of Snagov . On June 17 , when the Turks camped south of the capital , Vlad ?epe? launched his night attack with 24 @,@ 000 , or possibly with only 7 @,@ 000 to 10 @,@ 000 horsemen . Chalkokondyles retells the story that , before making his attack , Vlad went freely into the Turkish camp disguised as a Turk , and wandered around to find the location of the Sultan 's tent and learn about his organization . The anonymous Italian chronicle of Verona mentions that Mehmed had disallowed his soldiers to exit their tents during the night , as to not cause panic in case of an attack . The chronicle goes on explaining that Vlad ?epe? , being aware of Mehmed 's strategy , had decided for an attack in the night , knowing how to proceed in his offensive when the enemy soldiers would have to remain in their tents . The skirmish would last from " three hours after sunset until four the next morning " and would cause great confusion in the Ottoman camp . The Wallachians made noise from their buglers and illuminated the battle with their torches ; and in that night , they launched not one , but several attacks . Documents differ on the exact result of the skirmish : some sources say that the Wallachians slaughtered a great number of Turks , while others say the Ottoman losses were minimal . Many horses and camels were , however , killed . Some chronicles blame a Wallachian boyar named Gale? , who supposedly led a simultaneous attack on the Turks with a second army , for not being brave enough to cause the expected devastation on the enemy . Vlad ?epe? himself aimed for the tent of the sultan , as he routed the Asian cavalry , but mistakenly went for the tent of the two grand viziers Ishak Pasha and Mahmud Pasha .

A Wallachian point of view of the events was recorded by the papal legate , Niccolò Modrussa , years later at the court of Buda when Vlad was being imprisoned by Corvinus . It is said to have been told by a Wallachian veteran :

The sultan besieged him and discovered him in a certain mountain where the Wallachian was supported by the natural strength of the place . There Vlad had hidden himself along with 24 @,@ 000 of his men who had willingly followed him . When Vlad realized that he would either perish from hunger or fall into the hands of the very cruel enemy , and considering both eventualities unworthy of brave men , he dared commit an act worthy of being remembered : calling his men together and explaining the situation to them , he easily persuaded them to enter the enemy camp . He divided the men so that either they should die bravely in battle with glory and honor or else , should destiny prove favorable to them , they should avenge themselves against the enemy in an exceptional matter . So , making use of some Turkish prisoners , who had been caught at twilight when they were wandering about imprudently , at nightfall Vlad penetrated into the Turkish camp with part of his troops , all the way up the fortifications . And during the entire night he sped like lightning in every direction and caused great slaughter , so much so that , had the other commander to whom he had entrusted his remaining forces been equally brave , or had the Turks not fully obeyed the repeated orders from the sultan not to abandon their garrisons , the Wallachian undoubtedly would have gained the greatest and most brilliant victory . But the other commander ( a boyar named Gale? ) did not dare attack the camp from the other side as had been agreed upon .... Vlad carried out an incredible massacre without losing many men in such a major encounter , though many were wounded . He abandoned the enemy camp before daybreak and returned to the same mountain from which he had come . No one dared pursue him , since he had caused such terror and turmoil . I learned by questioning those who had participated in this battle that the sultan lost all confidence in

the situation . During that night the sultan abandoned the camp and fled in a shameful manner . And he would have continued to this way , had he not been reprimanded by his friends and brought back , almost against his will .

The janissaries , under the command of Mihalo?lu Ali Bey , pursued the Wallachians and killed 1 @,@ 000 @-@ 2 @,@ 000 of them . According to the chronicle of Domenico Balbi , the total casualties for the conflict are numbered as 5 @,@ 000 for the Wallachian side and 15 @,@ 000 for the Ottomans . Even though the morale of the sultan and his army was low , Mehmed decided to besiege the capital , but instead found it deserted with its gates wide open . The Turkish army entered the capital and for half an hour , the army marched on the road that was bordered by some 20 @,@ 000 impaled Turks . There , they found the rotten corpse of Hamza Pasha impaled on the highest stake , to symbolize his ' high ranking ' . Other sources say that the city was defended by the soldiers , while the impaled corpses lay outside the city @-@ walls for a distance of 60 miles . Chalkokondyles , when remarking the reaction of the sultan , wrote : " The sultan was seized with amazement and said that it was not possible to deprive of his country a man who had done such great deeds , who had such a diabolical understanding of how to govern his realm and its people . And he said that a man who had done such things was worth much . "

Mehmed ordered for a deep trench to be dug out around the Turkish encampment in order to prevent enemy penetration and the following day ( June 22 ) , the Turks retreated . A few days later , Vlad 's cousin , Stephen III of Moldavia , who wanted to retake Akkerman and Chilia , decided to launch an attack on the latter . The Wallachians rushed to the scene with 7 @,@ 000 men and managed to defend the town , while wounding Stephen in his foot by artillery fire . On June 29 , the Sultan reached Br?ila , which he burned down , and then sailed to Adrianople , where they arrived on July 11 . On July 12 , the Turks called for a celebration for their " Great victory " over Vlad ?epe? . The Turks had enslaved many of the local inhabitants , which they marched on their way south together with 200 @,@ 000 cattle and horses .

= = Popular culture = =

French writer , Victor Hugo , wrote about the conflict in his poem *La Légende des siècles* ( *The Legends of the centuries* ) .

The film Bram Stoker 's *Dracula* begins in 1462 with the Ottoman invasion of Wallachia ; a night battle takes place ( ostensibly the Night Attack ) , ending with Vlad ?epe? ' victory .

The Big Finish Productions audio drama *Son of the Dragon* depicts the battle from the perspective of the Fifth Doctor and his companions .