



# Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Karazin: An Adventurer in the Service of Catherine II, and the Anti-Ottoman Conspiracy in the Shadow of the Monastery Walls

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The eighteenth century was a “golden age” of adventurers, impostors, and mystifiers in Europe. It was also the era when the Russian Empire began an offensive policy in the Black Sea and Balkan region. It is not surprising that several extraordinary travelers and adventurers were associated with the Russian service in this area. Nazar Aleksandrovich Karazin (1731–1783) was an ethnic Bulgarian, a lieutenant colonel in the Russian service, intelligence officer, and secret emissary of Catherine II in the Danubian Principalities on the eve of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774. The son of a native of the Balkans, Karazin participated in all major battles of the Russian army in the Seven Years’ War in the ranks of the multinational Serbian Hussar Regiment, and retired with the rank of second major. In early 1768, he went on a trip to Bulgaria to claim an inheritance. Traveling as a private individual in Wallachia, Karazin, posing at his own initiative as a secret emissary of the Russian Empire, established secret contacts with representatives of the Russophile party in the high boyars and clergy of the principality. Without having the authority to do so, he reached a preliminary agreement with them on joint actions against the Ottomans in the event of the outbreak of a Russo-Turkish war. Returning to Russia Karazin presented his own project for organizing an anti-Ottoman uprising in the Balkan region. Catherine II approved the project, and in February 1769, Karazin, disguised as an Orthodox monk, set out from Kyiv on a solo journey back to Bucharest. He carried printed manifestos from Catherine II to the Balkan Slavs, and a large sum of gold. Traveling alone and on foot Karazin reached Bucharest, where he reestablished contact with the anti-Ottoman party and then returned safely. In November, at his own initiative, he even occupied Bucharest with his troops. The history of his activities provides a vivid example of how a lone adventurer can exert significant individual influence on the course of a war, and how the transnational network of Orthodox Church helped these efforts.

This article draws on previously unknown documents from the collections of the Russian State Military Historical Archive, the Russian Archive of Ancient Documents, and the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire.

**Keywords:** Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774, Russian Empire, Principality of Wallachia, Catherine II, Russian intelligence, secret diplomacy

For a variety of reasons that historians will long discuss, the European eighteenth century was not only an Age of Enlightenment and a period of rapid progress in science, technology, and government but also a time of unprecedented flourishing of the phenomenon of international adventurers, impostors, and mystifiers. These figures were active in a wide variety of fields, including secret diplomacy and espionage, political conspiracies and armed rebellions, alternative medicine and alchemy, secret societies, smuggling, gambling, and love affairs. Among them were ardent idealists and cynical swindlers, driven by a wide range of motives, from aspirations for the radical reorganization of human society to banal and vulgar enrichment.

One of the outstanding representatives of this adventurous eighteenth century was the man to whom this article is dedicated, Nazar Aleksandrovich Karazin. Karazin was an ethnic Bulgarian, the son of a Balkan native, a retired hussar officer in the Russian army, a traveler, an impostor, a political conspirator, and an intelligence officer. He later became a secret emissary of Empress Catherine II in the Danubian Principalities, a partisan commander, and the leader of an anti-Ottoman uprising in Wallachia at the beginning of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774. In 1768–1769, he made epic solo journeys across Moldavia and Wallachia, and his reports and political projects had a significant impact on the struggle between Russia and Ottoman Turkey, the national liberation movement in the Danubian Principalities, and the emergence of the so-called Eastern Question in international relations.

Despite Karazin's illustrious career and significant role in history, until recently very little was known about his life and work. His name has been mentioned repeatedly in works on the history of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1770, and some obviously fantastical information, dating back to nineteenth-century magazine publications, has also been reproduced.<sup>1</sup> A detailed scholarly biography of this man has never been written. However, I was able to find a number of new documents in the Russian State Military Historical Archive and the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (both in Moscow), which allow us to reconstruct a story of his life and adventures in considerable detail.<sup>2</sup>

1 For earlier works on Karazin, see Данилевський, “Василий Назаревич Каразин”; Багалей, “Назарий Александрович Каразин и его колокол”; Синица, “План Кантакузина”; Станчев, Вовк, Красько, “Назар Александрович Каразин в свете.”

2 In 2022, my book on Nazar Karazin was published in Russian in Moscow. See Каширин, *Освободитель Бухареста*. However, not a single dedicated study of Karazin has yet appeared in English.

Nazar Karazin's origins were inextricably linked to the Balkans. There can be no doubt about his own ethnic identity: he considered himself, and repeatedly called himself, a Bulgarian. In his official service documents of 1762 and 1764, the nationality section indicated that he was "of the Bulgarian nation from the military [family],"<sup>3</sup> while in his resignation petition of 1770, he described himself as "of foreign origin, of the Bulgarian nation."<sup>4</sup>

Karazin's father, Aleksandr Grigorievich, arrived in Russia in 1725 as part of a group of Balkan natives and residents of the Habsburg Monarchy who responded to the call of Emperor Peter I. It is noteworthy that he called himself a representative of the "Macedonian nation." He joined the Serbian Hussar Regiment, which was forming at the time in Kyiv, and served in its ranks during the Persian Expedition of 1731–1733, the War of the Polish Succession in 1734–1735, the War against Ottoman Turkey in 1736–1739, and the Russo-Swedish War of 1741–1743. In the summer of 1738, he was promoted to the first officer rank of *praporshchik* (warrant officer). By his retirement in 1747, at the age of 52, he managed to achieve only the rather modest rank of hussar captain.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Aleksandr Karazin was a professional soldier and a veteran of three major wars and a dozen military campaigns. Over the course of his service, however, he failed to acquire either high rank or significant wealth.

His son, Nazar Karazin, according to the inscription on his grave (in the church of the village Kruchik near Kharkov destroyed during the Soviet period), was born on October 14 (25), 1731.<sup>6</sup> Most likely, he spent his childhood in Sloboda Ukraine, on the lands of the Akhtyrka Cossack Regiment, where his family settled. The sources reveal nothing concerning the education Karazin received. According to family legend, he spoke Greek and Turkish, although there is no direct documentation of this. However, at that time, many Russian hussars of Balkan descent were able to speak Turkish, and it is quite possible that Nazar Karazin also possessed this skill. Otherwise, he would hardly have been able to undertake his future travels.

Following his father's example, Nazar Karazin followed the path of military service, and on December 1 (12), 1745, i.e., at the age of 14, he joined the Serbian Hussar Regiment, the same one in which his father served for a total of

3 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 81. Ч. 3. L. 61–62 ob.; RGVA. F. 490. Op. 5. Ed. hr. 301. L. 54–83.

4 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1868. L. 126–128 ob.

5 RGVA. F. 10. Op. 2/109. Ed. hr. 8. L. 926–926 ob.

6 All dates in the article are given according to the Julian and Gregorian calendars (old and new style, respectively). The difference between them in the eighteenth century was eleven days.

22 years. As part of the Serbian Regiment, Karazin took part in the Seven Years' War and participated in all four major field battles of the Russian army: Gross-Jägersdorf in 1757, Zorndorf in 1758, Palzig and Kunersdorf in 1759 (where he was wounded in the left arm by a saber), and the expedition to Berlin in 1760 (where he was wounded in the right leg by a bullet).<sup>7</sup> In July 1761, in a night skirmish in Silesia, he was captured by the Prussians, and he was held in captivity for the next six months, almost until Russia's unexpected withdrawal from the war. For his military distinctions, Karazin was promoted to the rank of *praporshchik* on January 1, 1760, and by the end of the war, he was a lieutenant.

Karazin then served briefly in the Bilyar Cavalry Regiment of the Trans-Kama Land Militia on the Orenburg borderline, in the Kazakh steppes. On October 1, 1764, he retired with the rank of second major<sup>8</sup> and lived in Sloboda Ukraine, where his father's family had settled. Karazin briefly held the administrative position of regimental judge for one of the Sloboda Cossack regiments (before their transformation into Sloboda Hussar Regiments). He then found himself retired again, without a fixed occupation or significant source of income. Up to this time, there had been nothing exceptional or surprising in the life or career of Nazar Karazin. He was a professional soldier, an experienced cavalryman, and a veteran with extensive war experience. Service in a hussar regiment and participation in partisan actions must have instilled in him a certain inclination toward risky undertakings and adventures. But, nothing foreshadowed the adventures that lay ahead.

As Karazin himself later recounted in his report to Empress Catherine II on December 29, 1768 (January 9, 1769), one day, he received news from abroad of the death of a relative. Then, having received a passport from the State Collegium of Foreign Affairs, he was released "to my fatherland, Bulgaria, to receive some inheritance left to me after the death of my uncle."<sup>9</sup> He departed in March 1768, but first, he had to travel to St. Petersburg to obtain a passport. According to the regulations in effect at the time, the Collegium of Foreign Affairs issued passports to private individuals for a relatively short period, usually a few months. These passports outlined the intended travel itinerary and required stamps at key points (for example, for an overland journey from St. Petersburg to the Balkans, such stamps were given in Moscow and Kyiv).

7 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 576–577 ob.

8 In the Russian Imperial army of the eighteenth century, second major was an officer rank, between the ranks of captain and prime major.

9 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 578–579.

Thus began Karazin's first known journey to the Ottoman Empire's Balkan domains. Knowing nothing of our main character's financial situation at the time, we can only assume that a retired cavalry officer could hardly have undertaken such a long journey other than on horseback, or at least by wheeled transport.

Retired second major Nazar Karazin traveled to Bulgaria as a private person to collect his uncle's inheritance. Since he traveled to the Balkans by land, he most likely followed one of the two main routes used by Russian travelers in the eighteenth century. Both initially led (with possible slight variations) from Kyiv through the border outpost of Vasytkiv, the towns of Fastiv, Nemirov, and Bratslav, and then the routes diverged. One ran along the left bank of the Dniester to the lands of so called Khan's Ukraine (under control of the Crimean Khanate), through Rashkov, Yagorlyk, and Dubossary to Bender, from where one could proceed via Causeni to Izmail on the Danube or turn west, to the Prut River and the possessions of the Principality of Moldavia.<sup>10</sup> It seems more likely, however, that from Nemirov or Bratslav Karazin took a different route, to the northern borders of Moldavia proper (whatever the case, he mentions neither the Ottoman border fortress of Khotyn nor the possessions of the Crimean Khan). This route led "to the village of Zhekovka and to the tract of Rusova Krenitsa and to Soroka, on the Dniester."<sup>11</sup> As numerous travel descriptions by Russian pilgrims in the eighteenth century reveal, heading to the Ottoman Empire, these travelers usually crossed the Moldovan border at the small town of Soroca on the right bank of the Dniester, where there was a customs post.<sup>12</sup> The Russian diplomat A. A. Veshnyakov also chose the route via Soroca, Magura, and Iași when traveling to Constantinople in 1734.<sup>13</sup> Prince M. N. Volkonsky, a member of the Grand Embassy to Ottoman Turkey, returned from Constantinople in the winter of 1741–1742 via Iași and also via Soroca, and then by post road through Tomashpol, Nemirov, and Pogrebyshe, then through the Vasytkiv outpost on the Russian border and from there to Kyiv.<sup>14</sup> The section of the route between Nemirov and Soroca was traditionally considered quite dangerous, as Ukrainian Haidamaks had long been known to commit banditry there. After crossing from the "Polish" to the "Constantinople" side (i.e., to the right bank)

10 Русов, *Русские тракты*, 77–81.

11 Ibid., 85.

12 Bezviconi, *Călători ruși*, 75, 77, 101.

13 Кочубинский, *Граф Андрей Иванович Остерман*, 27.

14 Волконский, "Журнал," 36.

of the Dniester, the road went mainly through sparsely populated areas, crossing obliquely the Moldavian lands between the Dniester and the Prut (the future region of Bessarabia) and then, after crossing the Prut and its right tributary (“a river called Sizha,” i.e., Zhizhia, or in Romanian, Jijia), it led to Iasi, the capital of Moldavia.<sup>15</sup>

When he arrived in the Moldavian Principality, Karazin was detained by the authorities—as one might conclude from his account, not by the Ottomans in the border district of Khotin, but by subordinates of the Moldavian ruler. According to Karazin’s account, “as soon as I reached the borders of the Ottoman Empire in Moldavia, the ruler there found me suspicious and I was accused of being a spy.”<sup>16</sup> Karazin spent four days in prison in Iași and then waited another 21 days until, in his words, “the Moldavian ruler from my homeland collected accurate information about me.”<sup>17</sup> The Moldavian ruler mentioned by Karazin was Hospodar (Prince) Grigore Ioan Callimachi (1735–1769), a member of a prominent Moldavian-Phanariote family who ruled Moldavia twice, in 1761–1764 and 1767–1769. During that period, amid the deepening crisis in Poland, Prince Callimachi pursued an unfriendly course toward Russia. A series of arrests of suspected Russian spies followed in Moldavia. In the spring of 1768, someone named Alexei Yankorov, referred to in a number of diplomatic documents as a Russian subject, nobleman, and officer, was captured in the town of Tutova in the southern part of the principality.<sup>18</sup> He was taken to Iași, thrown into an underground prison, and interrogated. Callimachi reported to Constantinople that this Russian had posed as a “landscape painter,” engaged in conversations with officers (it is unclear whether these officers were from the Hospodar or Ottoman service), and then, when interrogated, had given incoherent and confused answers, allegedly exposing himself as a spy. The Sublime Porte immediately ordered his execution, and before A. M. Obreskov, the Russian Minister Resident in Constantinople, could intervene, Yankorov was strangled (or according to other sources, beheaded).<sup>19</sup>

15 Рубцов, *Русские тракты*, 86.

16 RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 578–579.

17 Ibid.

18 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, vol. 7, 56–57; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, Supl. 1, vol. 1, 758; Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, 399.

19 Xenopol, *Istoria și genealogia Casei Callimachi*, 63–64; Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. 8, 310–11.



Immediately afterwards, Demetri Tschernakapsas, allegedly also a “Russian agent” in correspondence with western diplomats, was arrested in Moldova. Like Karazin, he was a retired hussar officer in the Russian service, Dmitrii Chernokaptsov, of Slavic Macedonian origin. According to the Moldovan side, he was an officer posing as a merchant, and letters were allegedly found on him “from Russian nobles to Romanian boyars,” urging them to resettle in Russia.<sup>20</sup> As the French ambassador in Constantinople reported, the case materials against this person also pointed to certain secret Russian designs against Montenegro.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the arrest of Karazin in the Principality of Moldavia, which occurred around April 1768, was not prompted by the ruler’s usual precautions or paranoia, but rather fully reflected his political course. Yankorov’s execution was swift and extrajudicial, and it could easily have turned out that, through the ruler’s machinations, our hero could also have been executed on some similar charge or pretext.<sup>22</sup>

However, Karazin, having confirmed his identity and intentions to the Moldavian authorities, had no intention of interrupting his journey. After a forced delay of almost a month in Iași, he continued south, toward the Danube and the borders of Bulgaria. From the Moldavian capital, a road well-known in Russia ran “to the village of Kentli, to the village of Vasilkov on the Burlat River, to the village of Burlat, to the village of Putseni, to the village of Pisk, and to the city of Galați.”<sup>23</sup> However, as Karazin’s account indicates, he did not proceed to the last-mentioned point (Moldova’s main port on the Danube), but rather “crossed” overland through the Principality of Muntenanu, i.e., Wallachia, and in the summer of 1768, “he arrived in the last days of July at the city of Ruschuk, located on the Danube,” and “at that very time, warlike turmoil broke out in the Ottoman cities on the other side of the Danube.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, Karazin’s route led through the eastern counties of Wallachia, the capital Bucharest, and then on to the Ottoman fortress of Giurgiu (Turkish: Yergöğü, Romanian: Giurgiu), on the left bank of the Danube opposite Ruschuk

20 *Fragmente zur Geschichte*, vol. 5, 255–56.

21 *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor*, Supl. 1, vol. 1, 757.

22 Academician N. Iorga drew a parallel between Karazin’s “secret mission” and the spy case of A. Yankorov. In his opinion, Karazin was able to operate successfully in Wallachia allegedly due to the youth and inexperience of the ruler there, Alexandru Ghica, while Grigore Callimachi prevented the “Russian spies” from doing the same in Moldavia. See Iorga, *Documente*, CLIII. Of course, this is not true. Karazin had no secret mission in the summer of 1768.

23 Русов, *Русские тракты*, 86.

24 RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 578–579.

(Bulgarian: Ruse). It is not entirely clear from our hero's words whether he managed to cross the Danube to Ruschuk itself and enter the historical lands of Bulgaria or whether he remained on the opposite bank at Giurgiu. Whatever the case, "before reaching his fatherland," Karazin was forced hastily to cut short his journey, and it is unlikely that he ever took possession of his Bulgarian uncle's inheritance. After the infamous Balta border incident of June 18 (29), 1768, which brought relations between Russia and Ottoman Turkey to the brink of war, the situation in the Danubian Principalities deteriorated, and, in Karazin's words, he "was forced to seek refuge in Muntenia, in a monastery called Curtea de Argeș." This was one of the most renowned monasteries in Wallachia, the Monastery of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Curtea de Argeș, 140 kilometers northwest of Bucharest, in the foothills of the Southern Carpathians (the Transylvanian Alps).

Karazin was warmly received at the monastery by its head, Archimandrite Kyrios Damaskin, a prominent participant in subsequent events. At the time, Damaskin was one of the most influential representatives of the Orthodox Church in Wallachia. An entire clan of his relatives occupied high positions in the church hierarchy. According to a detailed report by Karazin to the empress, the abbot of Curtea de Argeș informed his good friend, the powerful Wallachian nobleman Ban Pârvu Cantacuzino, Ban of Oltenia, about the Russian traveler in hiding. He came to the monastery specifically to meet him. Thus, the retired second major Karazin, at that time a private person without any assignments or powers, found himself embroiled in high-stakes intrigues.

The Romanian "Genealogy of the Cantacuzines," while generally confirming Karazin's account, presents the situation in a somewhat different light. According to this source, either Karazin himself failed to exercise sufficient caution or the young ruler of Wallachia, Prince Alexandru Ghica, had skilled spies at the Argeșan monastery. The author of "Genealogia" continues:

After the mutinous speeches multiplied, Alexandru the voivode appealed to the Argeșan abbot, demanding him to come to Bucharest with the aforementioned officer. After he arrived, the ruler summoned him and advised this Major Karazin to flee Wallachia quickly, because the Ottomans were planning to start a war with Russia soon, and then he should detain him and send him to the Porte.<sup>25</sup>

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25 Iorga, *Genealogia Cantacuzinilor*, 155.



Events were clearly unfavorable for Karazin. He had almost no time left, and so he took a great risk.

That same night, Karazin, having come to Ban Pârvu, revealed himself, saying that if he were willing to secretly serve Russia by reporting on the state and actions of the Turks, and then, when Russian troops entered Wallachia, to provide them with as many volunteers as he could and provisions, then not only he but his entire family would receive extraordinary favors from Her Majesty the Empress of All the Russians, and that the Empress's every intention was to liberate Wallachia from the tyrannical yoke of the Turks.<sup>26</sup>

This was a fateful step, a direct and open recruitment and incitement to conspiracy by the most influential nobleman of Wallachia. Had Karazin been mistaken, such frankness to Ban Pârvu could have cost him his head. In Karazin's "most humble declaration," the content of his conversations with Ban Pârvu is presented slightly differently than in the "Genealogy of the Cantacuzenes." According to Karazin, the Wallachian nobleman came specifically to see him at the Curtea de Argeș Monastery (rather than Karazin coming to him in Bucharest) and was the first, at his own initiative,

to explain his plan in the midst of conversation: that if war were to break out between Russia and the Turks, and after the Russian army had waged its first battle with the Turks, he, Cantacuzino, intended to stir up rebellion against the Turks in that Muntean land with all the nobility.<sup>27</sup>

Karazin then went on to detail the basis for Ban Pârvu's plan for an anti-Ottoman uprising. A key figure in this plan was the renowned church figure Sofronie of Cioara (Romanian: Sofronie de la Cioara), later canonized by the Romanian Orthodox Church. He was an influential preacher and spiritual leader in Transylvania, where in the 1750s and 1760s he had relentlessly fought the attempts by the Habsburg authorities to impose a church union before being forced to flee across the Carpathians to Wallachia.<sup>28</sup> In 1768, at the time of Karazin's arrival in the Danubian Principalities, Sofronie of Cioara was abbot of the Vieroși Monastery near the village of Mioveni in the same Argeș County, just

26 Ibid.

27 RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 578–579.

28 On the struggle of the Romanian Orthodox population of Transylvania for their religious rights against Habsburg oppression in the eighteenth century, and in particular about Sophronia of Cioara, see Dragomir, *Istoria dezrobirii*.

30 kilometers from the Curtea de Argeș Monastery. Archimandrite Sofronie was closely associated with Damaskin of the Argeșan Monastery, as well as with the Cantacuzino-Măgureanu boyar family. He also wielded enormous influence among the Orthodox Vlachs north of the Transylvanian Alps.

According to Cantacuzino, Sophronie could quickly form a militia of up to 20,000 men consisting of Transylvanian refugees, including former granichars, that could be used against Ottoman rule. The Ban of Oltenia proposed to Karazin that he use this force of Transylvanian refugees to capture Bucharest and then the Ottoman strongholds and supply depots on the left bank of the Danube. However, Cantacuzino emphasized that these actions would have to be preceded by the Russian army's first victories over the Ottomans and the advance of a Russian corps to the Danube.<sup>29</sup> In other words, cooperation between the Russian command and the Wallachian rebels was a prerequisite.

Immediately after the meeting with the Ban of Oltenia, "that same night Major Karazin departed for Russia."<sup>30</sup> Without knowing the exact dates, we can assume that Karazin's stay at the Curtea de Argeș Monastery and his communication with Cantacuzino (either there or in Bucharest) took place sometime during August and September 1768. Whatever the case, as soon as Karazin left, the Sultan's *ferman* (official decree) arrived in Bucharest from Constantinople, announcing the beginning of war with the Russian Empire. War was officially declared on Russia by the Sublime Porte at a solemn audience in the hall of the Great Divan on Friday, September 25 (October 6), 1768.

If Karazin had decided to return home by his previous route through Moldavia, he would have found the principality already overrun by Ottoman and Tatar cavalry. Under these circumstances, his return to Russia in the autumn of 1768 was even more dangerous than the journey to the Danube in the spring. A draft of a document by Count P. A. Rumyantsev indicates that Karazin returned to Russia via the Ottoman fortress of Khotyn, where troops were being concentrated on the border of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He also managed to observe the Turkish military preparations there and obtain valuable information from a certain Ottoman or Polish Bar Confederate commander.<sup>31</sup>

Returning to the Russian Empire, Karazin traveled to the city of Glukhov, the administrative center of Malorossia, where he had an audience with the powerful ruler of that province, Count P. A. Rumiantsev. He outlined the results

29 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 578–579.

30 Iorga, *Genealogia Cantacuzinilor*, 156.

31 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 104. L. 176–176 ob.

of his visit and presented the plan proposed by Cantacuzino. Rumiantsev immediately recognized the potential of this project and, on December 12 (23), 1768, he gave Karazin a letter of recommendation to Count N. I. Panin, head of the Russian Empire's foreign policy department. With this valuable document, Karazin immediately rushed to the capital. If he left Bucharest at the end of August or September 1768, then in the following weeks he covered at least 900 kilometers to Kyiv. But Glukhov is located almost 300 kilometers northeast of Kyiv, meaning that in about three months Karazin traveled about 1,200 kilometers. The journey from Glukhov to St. Petersburg along the main postal route through Sevsk, Kromi, Orel, Mtsensk, Tula, Serpukhov, to Moscow and then through Tver, Torzhok, Vyshny Volochok and Novgorod was another 1,200 kilometers. Karazin reached St. Petersburg from Glukhov in about two weeks and by the end of December, he had already presented his project to Panin. His "most humble declaration" is dated December 29, 1768 (January 9, 1769). Thus, the retired second major spent almost the entire past year on the road, but this was only the beginning of his travels.

At that time, the Russian Empire's top leadership, caught off guard by the outbreak of war with Ottoman Turkey, was hastily developing plans for military and political action in the context of the escalating conflict. The influential court party of the Orlov brothers advocated the idea of a "diversion" in the Greek Archipelago and the Western Balkans, but at the time, these plans lacked any concrete details. Therefore, the rival party of the Panin brothers immediately became interested in the project of an anti-Ottoman uprising in the Danubian Principalities, which major Karazin had proposed. It is worth noting the observation by the Romanian historian S. Vianu that the idea of an uprising in Wallachia would have been of particular interest to the Russian leadership at that time.<sup>32</sup> The other Danubian Principality, Moldavia, was by then much better known to the Russians. Russian troops had already entered its territory in 1711 and 1739, and Russia was home to a considerable number of Moldavian émigrés, both nobles and ordinary hussars. Wallachia, however, was further away, with weaker ties, and in many ways, it represented terra incognita for St. Petersburg.

In theory, the essence of Karazin's undertaking sounded quite simple. As Cantacuzino had proposed in August 1768, the Russians were to establish contact with him, secretly deliver an official message from the Empress and the required number of printed copies of a manifesto calling on Christians to rebel

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32 Vianu, *Din lupta*, 66–67.

against the Ottomans, for distribution in Wallachia and Rumelia. Then, depending on the political and military situation, further coordination between the conspirators in Bucharest and the command of the Russian field army was to be ensured. Karazin volunteered to act as a liaison envoy, and his show of initiative met with considerable approval. Thus, Karazin was soon to embark on a new journey to the Danubian Principalities, this time with an official secret mission and all the necessary materials and powers. As a reward for his work and initiative and to enhance his status as an imperial emissary, Karazin was then promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Karazin's proposal met with approval at the highest level, and on January 19 (30), 1769, Catherine II signed a manifesto calling on the peoples of the Danubian Principalities and the Balkan Slavs to revolt against the Ottoman Empire and to provide assistance to the Russian army. For her part, the Empress promised them mercy and protection. She also hinted, albeit somewhat vaguely, at the possibility of achieving complete independence. As the Empress figuratively put it in a rescript to Prince A. M. Golitsyn, commander in chief of the First Army, the objective of the first stage was "to start a fire with opportunely thrown sparks, which could then spread throughout the area."<sup>33</sup> Along with the manifesto, on January 19, the empress signed a letter addressed to Cantacuzino, promising mercy and refuge in the event of an unfavorable development. A gold medal in honor of the coronation of Catherine II (i.e., 175.84 g, or 5.65 troy ounces) was sent to Cantacuzino, and two gold pectoral crosses with precious stones were given to Damaskin and Sofronie.

Before his departure from St. Petersburg, Karazin, in addition to the aforementioned precious gifts for the allies in Wallachia, received from Panin 400 gold coins, most likely Dutch ducats weighing 3.3–3.5 grams of pure gold, to cover all expenses. In the eighteenth century, these coins were minted "piratically" by the Russian authorities and were the primary means of payment for the financing of various foreign political, military, and commercial enterprises of the Russian Empire. Converted to today's currency, using the price of physical gold, Karazin received approximately 190,000 US dollars.

Karazin himself developed a plan for his subsequent mission, which was approved by the Russian authorities. He was to travel to Wallachia alone, on foot, disguised as a monk of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, a native of the Balkans, embarking on a new pilgrimage. Karazin chose, as an incognito identity for

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33 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 612–617 ob.

himself, Simeon Putnik,<sup>34</sup> a Dalmatian Serb and Venetian subject who had traveled to the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra in 1765 to venerate the holy relics. Further preparations for the mission were to take place in Kyiv, where Karazin departed on January 30 (February 10), 1769. Kyiv Governor General F. M. Voeikov and Archimandrite Zosima of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra received a decree to provide Karazin with full assistance. In order to make his cover story plausible, a document was prepared for Karazin in Kyiv bearing the name of the (fictitious) monk Simeon Putnik, the signature of Archimandrite Zosima, and the seal of Lavra.

The head of the secret bureau of the Kyiv Provincial Chancellery, Pyotr Veselitsky, an experienced diplomat and intelligence officer, a Serb by origin, and a polyglot, immediately began translating the manifesto into Wallachian (or what one would think of today simply as Romanian, which until the nineteenth century was written in the Cyrillic alphabet) and Serbian, and by February 22 (March 5), the translations were ready. After this, he personally oversaw the entire printing of the texts, which was carried out within the Lavra in an atmosphere of strict secrecy. The printing press was moved from the printing house to a separate room, and the typesetter and four illiterate (!) assistants were sworn in before work began. To print in Wallachian, two additional Cyrillic letters had to be specially created, and 130 copies were printed in each of the two languages.

Simultaneously with the translation and printing of the manifesto, the newly promoted lieutenant colonel Karazin himself was busily preparing for his journey deep into enemy territory. With Karazin's meticulous personal involvement, appropriate attire and special equipment "containing secrets" were prepared for him. Voeikov's report of March 27 (April 7), 1769, summarizing our hero's preparations for his journey, contains a valuable description of how the newly-appointed monk Simeon Putnik was equipped:

He clearly has with him a written document given to him by the archimandrite of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, an old psalter, in a binding of which the charter to the ban is very discreetly hidden, one wooden flask, such as those used by wandering monks in those parts to quench their thirst on the road. It is double-bottomed and serves to preserve parcels, one choker, and a simple wooden monastic staff, which holds

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34 In both Russian and Serbian, the word "putnik" literally means "traveler" or "wanderer."

ten copies each of the Manifesto in Greek, Slavonic-Serbian, and Volokh [i.e., Wallachian] languages.<sup>35</sup>

Karazin's plan for his movement was initially outlined in St. Petersburg but was then thoroughly developed at the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra. According to this scheme, the empress's secret emissary was to arrive at the Dniester within the Halych district of the Rus' Voivodeship, significantly upstream from the Polish fortress of Kamenets-Podolsky. Near the border, Bar Confederates, Ottoman and Tatar patrols roamed the Dniester in the area of Khotyn and Kamenets, so Karazin decided in advance to bypass the troubled areas to the north, taking the route through Letychev, far in the rear of the Russian First Army. The distance from Kyiv to the Dniester along this route is at least 500 kilometers.

As planned, at the last Russian outpost he encountered, Karazin changed into his monastic habit and transformed himself into the pilgrim monk Simeon Putnik. From that moment on, he found himself completely alone, absolutely autonomous, and left to his own devices, in territory not controlled by Russian troops, without any guarantee of outside support or protection. As can be concluded from Voeikov's description of his equipment, he was not carrying any weapons.

Having crossed the Dniester near Halych, monk Simeon had to travel toward the Carpathian Mountains through the lands of Polish Pokuttya (roughly the south of today's Ivano-Frankivsk oblast of Ukraine) on foot through sparsely populated mountainous and forested terrain. This was still the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, whose legitimate authorities maintained a position of friendly neutrality toward Russia. However, in reality, here began a land engulfed in the chaos of armed rebellion and a "small war" between the Russian cavalry patrols and the Polish Confederates. After crossing the Dniester, Simeon Putnik's next stop was "a desert monastery called the Great Skete [...] on the very border in the mountains opposite the place where Moldavia borders Transylvania."<sup>36</sup> This was the widely known name of the famous Orthodox Manyava Monastery of the Exaltation of the Cross, founded in 1606 by Schemamonk Job (Knyaginitsky) in the inaccessible Carpathian foothills, 40 kilometers southwest of Stanislaviv (now Ivano-Frankivsk). At the Manyava Monastery, Karazin was to secure the consent of its abbot and then, if successful, he would proceed southeast, along the line of the Eastern Carpathians, through

35 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 635–635 ob.

36 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1811. L. 637–638.

Pokuttya to Bukovina, to the city of Suceava, the ancient capital of the Moldavian princes. There, according to Voeikov, he was supposed to make a stop at the “famous Soceava Monastery” (probably, the renowned Monastery of St. John the New in Suceava, or the Holy Spirit Monastery in the village of Dragomirna, 12 kilometers north of Suceava).

According to the plan developed with the participation of Archimandrite Zosima, the monastery in Suceava (or Dragomirna) was to provide Karazin with guides for his further journey south to Bucharest. Indeed, as we see, the secret mission involved a whole network of hidden connections between influential Orthodox monasteries across four countries (Russia, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Moldova, and Wallachia). This is precisely why the pilgrim Simeon Putnik, as his identification document suggested, traveled from monastery to monastery as a monk, so this legend and the chosen plan perfectly matched each other.

The distance from the Great Manyava Skete to Suceava, measuring the route through the major settlements of Pokuttya and Bukovina (Kolomyia, Sniatyn, and Chernivtsi) was at least 200 kilometers. The sources do not reveal whether Karazin followed the well-trodden highway or whether a guide led him along secluded paths. Whatever the case, his route lay through a remote and sparsely populated forested area. On the way from the Maniava Monastery to Suceava, Simeon Putnik crossed another border and entered enemy territory, which was controlled by the Ottoman forces. He arrived in Suceava on April 4 (15), 1769, as we know for certain from his report to the commander in chief of the Russian First Army, the aforementioned Prince A. M. Golitsyn. This report, sent from Suceava on April 6 (17) with Hieromonk Clement, is the only known report from Karazin during his journey to Bucharest. In this report, Karazin attempted to convey to Golitsyn all the information he had managed to gather about the enemy and the situation in the theater of war. On that same day (April 6), Karazin set out from Suceava toward the capital of Wallachia. “I am on this day,” he wrote, “with God’s help, going to Muntenia.”<sup>37</sup> We have no later reports from him about this journey. Only one thing is known for certain: having overcome all difficulties and dangers, Simeon Putnik managed to arrive at his main destination. The family history by Mihai Cantacuzino (a younger brother of Pârvu) attests to this: “Just at the time when the Turks were continually marching through Bucharest, Karazin, whose name was Nazarie, dressed in monastic

37 RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1845. L. 336–337.



robes and a *kamilavka*,<sup>38</sup> came through the mountains on foot, and, having entered the monastery of Argeș, arrived with the Abbot of Argeș in Bucharest and, having met with Pârvu Cantacuzino, who was then the Grand Spătar, as I have described above, gave him a letter that he brought from Her Majesty the Empress of All the Russians.”<sup>39</sup> Damaskin also mentioned in his petition that Karazin “came back to me in 1769 directly to the monastery in monastic robes.”<sup>40</sup>

Thus, Karazin’s desperate and adventurous undertaking was crowned with success. As planned, he managed, alone, to cover hundreds of miles on foot, disguised as a monk, to reach his destination and deliver his precious and mortally dangerous cargo safely. From Cantacuzino’s reply to the Empress, signed in Bucharest on May 19 (30), 1769, we know the exact date of Karazin’s arrival: May 7 (18).<sup>41</sup> Thus, having left Kyiv on March 14 (25), Catherine II’s emissary made the entire journey to the capital of Wallachia in 55 days, and from the day of his departure from Suceava, in exactly one month—a journey that seems astonishingly fast. The distance from Suceava in Bukovina to Bucharest as the crow flies is 360 kilometers, and such a route would largely follow the ridges of the Eastern Carpathians. A human, on horseback or on foot, would inevitably have to travel a significantly longer distance along one of several possible detour routes, either across the plains of Moldavia, along the Carpathians, skirting them from the east, or further west, through Habsburg Transylvania, with a double crossing of the Carpathian mountain range, first through the Forested Carpathians between Bukovina and Transylvania, then through the Southern Carpathians (the Transylvanian Alps) into Wallachia.

We do not know which route Karazin chose. In 1768, he traveled through Moldavia. Now, the principality was occupied by Ottoman and Tatar troops, and travel through the region was mortally dangerous. Karazin himself, in his petition to the Empress dated April 15 (26), 1770 (a summary report on his findings), wrote of the efforts

which I was forced to endure to conceal myself not only from the Turks but from everyone, so as not to be recognized while walking on foot through the deserted Hungarian mountains to Bucharest and back to the army for three thousand miles, which is why I severely crippled my legs.<sup>42</sup>

38 From the Greek “kalimavkion” (καλυμαύχιον), an Orthodox clergy headdress, high and dark in color.

39 Iorga, *Genealogia Cantacuzinilor*, 157.

40 AVPRI. F. 69. Op. 1. 1781 r. Ed. hr. 4. L. 3–6 ob.

41 Iorga, *Genealogia Cantacuzinilor*, 425–427; RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1845. L. 602–602 ob.

42 RGVIA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1868. L. 126–128 ob.

These words suggest that a significant portion of his route ran through the “Hungarian Mountains” (as the Carpathians were called in Russia from ancient times) or through their foothills. Even today, the Romanian Carpathians are one of the wilderness areas of Central Europe, with significant populations of wolves and bears. But in the eighteenth century, it was a true wilderness, dangerous for a lone traveler. Of course, the journey of which Karazin wrote in his petition (“three thousand miles” on foot) is something of an exaggeration. If we consider that his march began in Galicia on the Dniester, then the route from there to the Maniava Monastery, to Suceava, then (assuming that he moved by the shortest route, through the Habsburg territory) across the wooded Carpathians to Bystrita, and then south through the Transylvanian Alps to the Curtea de Argeș Monastery and then to Bucharest must have been at least 800 kilometers. And his return journey from Bucharest to the Russian army camp at Derazhna was practically the same length (750–800 kilometers). But in total, during his wanderings in 1768–1769, first as a private person and then as a secret emissary, Karazin traveled, by our rough estimates, more than 6,000 miles (including at least 4,000 miles on foreign territory), and this before he assumed command of a cavalry detachment and again advanced toward the Danube in military order. In short, he proved a truly tireless traveler. At the time, Karazin was 37 years old, in the prime of his physical fitness. Professional cavalymen, however, are rarely good walkers and are usually not inclined to this activity. Moreover, our main character, as we recall, had been wounded by a bullet in the right leg during the Berlin expedition of 1760. Despite this, wanting to preserve the secret of his mission at any cost, Karazin avoided people and walked through the most deserted places, along untrodden mountain paths, and in a monk’s robe, not the most comfortable garment for hiking in rough terrain.

Karazin’s secret arrival in Bucharest with manifestos, a letter, and precious symbolic gifts from the Empress was of great importance in strengthening ties with the pro-Russian party and preparing an anti-Ottoman conspiracy. The “Genealogy of the Cantacuzinos” contains the following:

After this, the aforementioned Ban Pârveu, or *Spătar* Cantacuzino, began correspondence, first with Golitsyn, then with Field Marshal Count Rumyantsev and General Stofel (Lieutenant General H. F. von Stoffeln – *V. K.*), who arrived with an army in Moldavia, in Iași, giving them all possible information about the movements and intentions of the Turks.<sup>43</sup>

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43 Iorga, *Genealogia Cantacuzinilor*, 167.

The letter from the Grand Spătar of Wallachia to the Empress was dated May 19 (30) or May 22 (June 2), 1769. And from Karazin's final petition, it follows that he arrived with him at Golitsyn's camp on June 2 (13), 1769, i.e., one and a half to two weeks later. The main forces of the Russian First Army at that time continued their protracted encampment at the village of Derazhnya near Letichev and Medzhybizh, more than 100 kilometers northwest of Khotyn. A comparison of distance and time shows that he had to cover at least 60 kilometers per day, which, when moving on foot through the mountains, is beyond human strength. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that he covered some sections of this route on horseback.

Thus, on June 2 (13), 1769, Karazin safely arrived from Bucharest to Golitsyn's camp. A report from the commander in chief on June 6 (17) confirms this: "The day before yesterday, the renowned Lieutenant Colonel Karazin returned to me with letters to Your Imperial Majesty and to me from Bucharest from the local commander, Prince Kantakuzin."<sup>44</sup> According to Catherine II's instructions regarding Karazin's mission, after his return from Bucharest, he was to be at the disposal of Golitsyn's headquarters and used for similar tasks. In July 1769, when the main forces of the First Army were besieging the Khotyn fortress, Karazin was sent deep into the Principality of Moldavia to communicate with the local pro-Russian boyars. With his help, Golitsyn established contact with the *stolnic* Constantin Kogălniceanu, who at that time was the *ispravnic* (head of the local administration) in three counties in the central part of northern Moldova (Dorohoi, Botoșani, and Hârlău). Lieutenant Colonel Karazin was sent to him with a salvoguard (a formal document guaranteeing inviolability of his property and protection from requisitions by Russian troops) from the commander in chief.

In early September 1769, a turning point occurred in the military operations of the main forces of the Russian and Ottoman armies on the Dniester near Khotin. The Ottoman troops began a disorderly retreat, and the Khotin fortress was captured by the Russians without a fight. After this, Golitsyn decided to send an elite corps to advance deep into Moldova to occupy the capital, Iași, and compel the principality to swear its allegiance. Ahead of this corps, Lieutenant Colonel Karazin was sent to Moldova at the head of a small detachment of Cossacks and so-called Arnauts, irregular units drawn from various ethnic groups in the Balkan region who had entered Russian service. The commander in chief

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44 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1845. L. 423.

handed him a letter addressed to Pârvu Cantacuzino, signed on September 10 (21), announcing the capture of Khotin and calling for an immediate uprising. Karazin was ordered to proceed directly to Bucharest with his detachment.<sup>45</sup> This was no longer a secret mission but rather partisan and insurgent actions.

The documents did not reveal the exact size of the detachment initially entrusted to Karazin, but as of the end of October, as reported by Brigadier S. M. Rzhevsky, "Lieutenant Colonel Karazin had up to 1,000 Arnauts and Cossacks," including the local volunteers who had joined.<sup>46</sup> Karazin's own documents from November 1769 indicate that he had a total of 159 Don Cossacks under his command at the time, including those from Fedotov's regiment and others, as well as 24 recruited Cossacks. Of this number, 50 Don Cossacks were stationed with Karazin in Wallachia. Thus, he had no more than two hundred Cossacks in Russian service.

At the end of September, Karazin's detachment occupied the strategically important town of Focșani on the border between Moldova and Wallachia. At this advanced outpost, Karazin was entrusted with the task of holding off the enemy, and in this role, he and his small detachment were essentially left to their own resources. The nearest garrison of regular Russian troops was 200 kilometers behind, in Iași. However, Karazin was no stranger to relying solely on his own forces. In his own words, in Focșani, "I was stationed six weeks later and gathered a considerable number of volunteers, with whom I fought daily against the Turks from Brailov."<sup>47</sup> On the Danube plain, on the border between Moldavia and Wallachia, a continuous "small war" of cavalry parties began, which was bloody and exhausting.

Simultaneously, a large-scale uprising against the Sublime Porte began in the northeastern counties of Wallachia in October 1769. Karazin maintained contact with these rebels, as well as with the leaders of the pro-Russian conspiracy in Bucharest. Karazin's detachment took part in the famous battle of November 5 (16), 1769, near Galați, where a small Russian detachment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel F. I. Fabritsian routed superior Ottoman forces, captured the ruler of Moldavia (Constantine Mavrocordatos), and occupied this important trading port on the Danube. At the same time, Karazin dispatched a party of Cossacks, Moldavians, and Wallachian rebels to raid Bucharest. He himself later

45 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1845. L. 471-472 ob.

46 RGADA. F. 293. Op. 1. Ed. hr. 5369. L. 1-3.

47 RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. Ed. hr. 1868. L. 126-128 ob.

explained this in one of his reports by saying that, according to his information, word of a conspiracy in the Wallachian capital had begun to leak to the Ottomans. The conspirators faced the threat of death, and so Karazin decided to act preemptively. He himself wrote that his main motive was to prevent the death of people sympathetic to Russia. The detachment he sent, numbering only 500–700 men, suddenly attacked Bucharest on the night of Thursday, November 5 (16) to Friday, November 6 (17), 1769. Romanian sources give different dates for this event (November 5, 6, and 7), but Karazin himself explicitly wrote in his report that the attack on Bucharest took place on November 6 (17). The detachment was led by Karazin's longtime comrades, Ilie Lăpușneanu, Damaskin, and Abbot Sofronie of Cioara. From within the city, they were given some aid by poorly armed supporters of Cantacuzino. Taken by surprise, the Ottoman garrison of about 2,000 men under Kara Müselim Aga fled south to the Danube without putting up any serious resistance. The ruler of Wallachia, Gregory III, was detained and sent to Russia as an honorary prisoner.

Then, with the main body of his detachment and at his own initiative (without having received any orders to do so from his superiors), Karazin marched from Focșani to Bucharest and entered the capital on November 19 (30), 1769. The period from early November to approximately mid-December 1769 marked the culmination of Karazin's activity in the Danubian Principalities. For several weeks, he effectively commanded all the Russian forces in Wallachia and, together with Cantacuzino, governed the principality. With literally no more than a few hundred irregular cavalry under his command, he defended the region's vast borders. If Cantacuzino was the political leader of the uprising in Wallachia, Karazin assumed the role of its military leader and defense commander. According to the church chronicler Dionysius Ecclesiarchus, Karazin and "Colonel Ilie" (Lăpușneanu) "sat on the throne of the ruler."

However, the Ottomans, having amassed forces on the Danube, launched a counteroffensive, and Karazin and a small detachment of Cossacks and Albanians found themselves besieged in the Comana Monastery, halfway between the Danube and Bucharest. Resisting fiercely, Karazin's detachment repelled the Ottoman attacks. However, Major Alexander Anrep's Jäger Battalion and Cantacuzino's Wallachian detachment, which had come to Karazin's aid from Bucharest, were ambushed on December 14 (25) on the road to the Comana Monastery and, in a battle in which they were hopelessly outmatched by the Ottoman forces, they were completely annihilated. Pârvu Cantacuzino,

a longtime and loyal ally of Karazin, the leader of the pro-Russian party in Wallachia, perished in the fighting.

At the same time, Major General A. G. Zamyatnin, who had arrived in Bucharest, assumed command. From that time on, Karazin lost his exceptional status and remained merely the commander of a detachment of irregular light cavalry. At its head, he participated in the fight against an Ottoman attack on Bucharest in January 1770, where, in the heat of a cavalry battle, he fell with his horse and suffered several broken ribs. In February, he and his detachment participated in a campaign against the Ottoman fortress of Giurja, where he distinguished himself and pursued the enemy up the Danube to the city of Turnu, taking rich trophies.

Soon after, however, Karazin's military career came to a close. On April 15 (26), 1770, his resignation from service was sent to St. Petersburg. The reasons for this decision remain unclear. Karazin cited his wounds and his deteriorating health, which he claimed as a result of his extensive work. However, it is quite likely that by this time, his relations with many senior commanders of the regular army had deteriorated significantly, as they could not tolerate his special status, his willfulness, or his guerrilla style of action. Commander in Chief P. A. Rumiantsev treated Karazin with sympathy and supported his petition to the Empress. On May 25 (June 5), 1770, Karazin was dismissed from service with the promotion to the rank of colonel, and he was granted the villages of Kruchik and Osnovintsy near Kharkov, with serfs.

He did not participate again in the war with the Ottoman Empire, nor, as far as the sources suggest, did he travel. Nazar Karazin died on March 14 (25), 1783, according to the accounts of peasants in his village, as a result of a severe leg fracture when his horse fell after slipping on ice at the gates of his own house. His eldest son, Vasily Karazin (1773–1842), became an outstanding public figure and educator, one of the inspirers of the creation of Kharkov University, and his memory is especially revered in those parts.

Nazar Karazin's activities as a traveler, conspirator, secret emissary, and guerrilla commander in the Danubian Principalities lasted only about two years, from the spring of 1768 to early 1770. But during this short time, he played an exceptionally important role in the developments in the Balkan–Danube region. During his first trip to the Balkans, before the outbreak of war, acting as a private individual, he managed to convince prominent representatives of the Russophile party in Wallachia (Kyrios Damaskin and Pârvu Cantacuzino) that he was a secret emissary of Catherine II, and he outlined a plan for a joint attack against the Porte.



Upon returning to Russia, Karazin then gained the attention of the Russian Empire's highest leadership for his project, developed a plan for his secret mission, and then personally carried it out. His journey from Kyiv to Bucharest, disguised as a monk on a pilgrimage, was an epic feat of personal courage and endurance. The success of his mission established connections between the top leadership of the Russian Empire, the command of its army, and the leaders of the pro-Russian party in Wallachia and Moldavia. These contacts laid the foundation for cooperation throughout the war of 1768–1774 and in subsequent years.

Without a doubt, Nazar Karazin possessed an extraordinary penchant for adventurism, mystification, and risk, as well as outstanding charisma and personal courage. He was neither a profound intellectual nor a man of book culture or high literacy, but he possessed a practical mind, extensive and varied life experience, a vast knowledge of the Balkan region and its peoples, and an ability to win people's trust. Karazin was uncompromisingly opposed to the Turks and their dominance in the Balkan–Danube region, and, as far as can be judged, he was entirely sincere in these convictions. Service in the hussars and his experience in guerrilla warfare instilled in him a unique attitude toward the property of others, matters of military booty, and personal enrichment. In this regard, he and his Arnaut subordinates were perfectly matched.

The authorities of the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century experienced many difficulties and concerns associated with impostors and political conspirators. However, at the same time, they knew how to single out some of them from the crowd and channel their talents and energy in a useful direction. This was the case with Nazar Karazin. Thanks to his adventurism and personal courage, Russia achieved significant advantages in its struggle against the Ottoman Empire. The uprising in Wallachia initiated by Karazin in the autumn of 1769 and the subsequent expulsion of the Ottomans from Bucharest marked a significant milestone in the history of Russian–Romanian relations and in the history of the national liberation struggle of the Danubian Principalities against Ottoman rule. It can therefore be argued that Nazar Karazin's solitary and perilous journeys left an indelible mark on the region's political history in the modern era. This also provides us with some important and intriguing details concerning the tools and methods that were used to promote Russian penetration into the Balkan–Danubian region at the dawn of the Eastern Question.



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