Reply to Dumschat and Steindorff

Oleg Rusakovskiy
Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia, Bulgaria
rus00504@gmail.com

Almost 357 years have passed since Christoph Bousch, the author of the diary in question, died in Mitau, Courland, on the way to Moscow from his embassy trip to Berlin. And it has been more than eight years since I first encountered the manuscript containing his work through archival research at the Library of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. Almost a year has now gone by since Bousch's diary began its life as a printed book. I would like to take the opportunity kindly offered by *Vivliofika*'s editorial board not only to respond to the reviews prepared by Prof. Steindorff and Dr. Dumschat, but also to share some thoughts I have gathered over the past year. This look back on the published edition was particularly stimulated through the book's presentations at the Belorussian Institute in Prague and the Max Weber Network Eastern Europe and Justus Liebig University in Gießen. I express my thanks to the organizers and participants of these presentations, especially Mikola Volkau, Vladislav Rjéoutski, and Gleb Kazakov. Their questions and remarks sparked further reflections on the unresolved issues regarding Bousch's biography and his text, as well as on the opportunities for further studies utilizing the diary's information.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Ludwig Steindorff and Sabine Dumschat, for the suggestion they made in their reviews. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Steindorff for pointing me to the original edition of Frano Gundulić's travel account, which I had overlooked during my own search for sources. As the reviewer noted, the Italian original discards the misinterpretation present in the Russian translation I quoted and discussed in my introduction. In fact, Gundulić did not refer to "our language," whether Slavic, Italian, or German, when commenting on Bousch's inadequate proficiency. Instead, Gundulić simply stated that Bousch was not capable of providing adequate translations, either due to inexperience, linguistic shortcomings, or some other reason. I fully support Steindorff's call to revise the existing Russian translation of Gundulic's text and insist that every researcher – myself included – should be highly wary when working with Petković's Russian edition.

I also agree with Ludwig Steindorff that my edition of Bousch's diary has some deficiencies that may cause discomfort for readers (particularly historians) when using it in their academic work. Due to technical reasons, it was impossible to publish the Russian and German texts side by side, with the corresponding sections of the translation and the original placed on the same page spread. Still, adding the folio numbers from the manuscript to the Russian translation would facilitate prompt switching between the Russian and the German versions – a task that could have been done relatively easily, but which I did not undertake. Hopefully, if there will be further editions of Bousch's diary in the future (although neither I nor the publisher currently plan such a project), this format will be applied. Some technical constraints also led to a sufficient reduction in the commentary's length. In most cases, I only commented on those passages that clearly contradicted information from other sources or provided new and significant evidence missing in previously known sources and historiography. In many instances, I had to omit cross-references to other accounts if they complied with Bousch's narrative, and I also refrained from identifying his sources for some passages, even though I might have made qualified suggestions about them.

Bousch's origin and early life before he came to Russia as a military captive in August 1654 still represent the most puzzling aspect relating to the diary. Contemporaries shared contradictory remarks on his background, among which the idea of Courland as his native country emerges as the most convenient explanation – one supported both by existing Russian Chancery records as well as by some Western travel and diplomatic accounts. However, this would not explain Bousch's apparent indifference towards Courland and his overexpressed sympathy for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the "Poles" as a political nation in early modern terms, and the Polish king. Moreover, Bousch's postulated origin from Courland would neither explain why some foreign observers identified him as a Pole or a Livonian, nor why his knowledge of Russian was so advanced as to allow him to have been employed in the Ambassadorial Chancery less than a year after being captured in 1654. As we know, contacts between Moscow and Courland were not frequent enough to expect such fluency in Russian, especially in the written language practiced in the tsars' realm, from a person born in Courland.

There is, however, a hypothesis, which was not discussed in my introduction, but which could potentially reconcile this conflicting evidence about Bousch's origin.[1] He might have been born not in the Duchy of Courland but in Polish Livonia, that is, the area on the middle Daugava, possessed by the Commonwealth by 1654 and partitioned between Russia and Sweden in the first years of the war. The region was very close to Courland geographically and it might have been easy for Bousch to pretend to being a Courlander if he was indeed born there and did not want to attract attention to some details of his earlier biography, especially to the fact that he might have been the subject of the Polish king and not of the Duke of Courland. This might also explain why some accounts specified Bousch's origin from Livonia in terms of geography, and some others – from Poland, due to his supposed citizenship. The birth and education in Courland would also provide Bousch with better access to training in written Polish, possibly, the Western Russian written in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and even the Russian practiced in Moscow, as the contacts with the tsardom were easier from Polish Livonia than from Courland. A potential weakness of this hypothesis is that Bousch did not seem to focus on this region, as he also did not on Courland. The idea of Bousch's origin from Livonia, thus, warrants further investigation but looks promising for future research in Polish archives.

Discussing Bousch's probable origin and his linguistic competencies, it is worth mentioning another hypothesis that was not discussed in my introductory article. The hypothesis was first raised during my presentation of the book at the seminar organized by the Belorussian Institute in Prague. Some participants suggested that Bousch's diary might have originally been written in Polish and later translated into German, probably, by the employees of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg in the 1730s. I do not find this hypothesis convincing for two main reasons. First, the text, in the form it is presented in the surviving manuscript, bears many features characteristic of the German prose of the seventeenth century and, in general, looks very German in style. Second, there is no evidence of this hypothetical translation or any payment for it, while the papers documenting the academy's activities at the time are generally well-preserved. For these two reasons, I am inclined to dismiss the idea, but it is still worth further consideration and analysis by scholars who are equally well-versed in both German and Polish texts of the seventeenth century. A closer linguistic analysis may, among other things, provide a deeper understanding of

[1] I am particularly thankful to Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg who recently mentioned this hypothesis during a discussion at the Justus Liebig University of Gießen.

Bousch's possible origin and particularities of his German, as well as of corrections that may have been made to the original text by eighteenth-century scribes.

Reflecting on the opportunities for further historical studies that could utilize Bousch's evidence, I would recommend a closer focus on two distinct research fields. The first concerns the diplomatic, and to a much lesser extent, military history of the Russo-Polish War from 1654 to 1667 and the related conflicts. As I pointed out in my introduction, Bousch was not in the army and did not engage in war personally, except for some short periods, and his information about military events was mainly secondary, although, in most cases, quite accurate. Diplomacy was a different matter, as the diary may add many interesting details to our knowledge about Russo-Polish, Russo-Swedish, and Russo-Imperial negotiations between 1655 and 1664. In my commentary, I tried to highlight instances where Bousch's narrative derives from other known sources, including unpublished Russian diplomatic accounts (*stateinye spiski*) and edited diaries and memoirs by Polish and Imperial ambassadors. However, much more work remains to be done in analyzing archival documents from Moscow, Vienna, Warsaw, and other locations. The first attempt to incorporate Bousch's evidence into such a multidimensional analysis was made by Daniel Waugh and Ingrid Maier in the case study on the negotiations in Wilno (Vilnius) in 1656, in their seminal volume on cross-cultural communication and information exchange in seventeenth-century Russia.[2] Much more can be done, using the diary, to reconstruct the history of later diplomatic missions, as Bousch developed his own style and ideas over the course of the war, and his later accounts, particularly, those about the negotiations in Durovichi in 1664, are far more detailed and comprehensively written than the notes from the earlier years.

The second field, which I briefly touched on in my introductory article, relates to the eighteenth-century use of the diary and the work undertaken by Johann Georg Lother und Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer at the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in the 1730s to collect information and produce the biography of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. Although their approach to sources was totally uncritical and the result of their work—the manuscript held in the Library of the Academy of Sciences—was largely a compilation, it is worth further exploration by historians interested in eighteenth-century historiography. Such research may help identify some of the sources that Lother and Bayer used, which I was unable to identify myself. First, there is the anonymous diary of a German officer in the tsar's service, who took part in the Russian campaign in Ukraine from 1668 to 1669 and in the suppression of Razin's rebellion in the years thereafter.[3] There is a possibility that this diary represents another previously unknown source, available not in the original, but in the detailed paraphrase provided by Lother and Bayer. Further examination of this source and, in general, of the text of this royal biography, would be highly desirable.

As the editor, I can only join the reviewers' hopes that Bousch's diary, unknown for such a long time, will find a wide readership among professional historians, history students, and a broader audience.

[2] Daniel C. Waugh and Ingrid Maier, *Cross-Cultural Communication in Early Modern Russia: Foreign News in Context* (Seattle and Uppsala: ResearchWorks at the University of Washington libraries, 2023), 559–569. DOI: https://doi.org/10.6069/XCSQ-BF71.

[3] Biblioteka Akademii Nauk, Nauchno-Issledovatel'skii Otdel Rukopisei, Rukopisi latinskogo alfavita, F 16: *Leben und Taten Alexei Michalowitz*, fols. 309r–324v.