A LESS-KNOWLEDGABLE BOSNIAN CAMPAIGN DURING THE 1566 SIEGE OF SZIGETVÁR

MANJE POZNATA BOSANSKA BITKA IZ 1566. ZA VRIJEME OPSADE SIGETA

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ABSTRACT

Though the magnitude of the presented Christian military ventures in the Croatian-Venetian perimeter should not be overrated, it is worth noting that the attacks against Novi Grad and Kostajnica took place during the sieges of Szigetvár and Gyula, which must have been a serious disruption to the Ottoman military command; Ákos Csányi’s letter dated August 31 states that 4000 cavalrymen from the camp besieging Szigetvár were recalled to Constantinople. This information is most probably false, the unit in question actually being the Turkish rescue army that arrived at the Sava to aid against the assault of the Hungarian troops. Apart from the numbers and the Bosnians’ involvement, the timelines also match. It suggests that archduke Charles not only led a successful campaign in the Turkish borderlands in Bosnia, but they also managed to divert major forces from the siege of Szigetvár. It is not their fault, however, that despite long-nurtured plans, neither Maximillian’s troops in Győr, nor the other unit in Komárom followed suit and they never launched counterattacks against Esztergom, Visegrád or Székesfehérvár. The tactics that had been successfully employed during 1555-56, namely disrupting a Turkish campaign by attack on a stronghold or by nearby mobilization, was abandoned everywhere in 1566, except in the Croatian borderlands.

Key words: Bosnian campaign, Miklós Zrínyi, Péter Erdődy, archduke Charles, Herward Freiherr von Auersperg, Joseph Freiherr von Thurn, Ferenc Frangepán, Kostajnica, Novi Grad

Due to the anniversary, the main events of 1566, the fall of Szigetvár and Gyula have been much discussed nowadays. However, the same year also witnessed events that are studied less or are virtually unknown. The present paper addresses one of these, an imperial-royal counterattack in the Croatian and Bosnian lands.

On May 1 1566, the 72-year-old Suleiman launched his seventh and last campaign in the Kingdom of Hungary. Similarly to the events of 1552, this war was also fought for Transylvania, even if outside Transylvania. The Habsburg court was intent on claiming the Szapolyai lands from János Zsigmond’s
control. At the Augsburg imperial diet in December 1565, the emperor called to the nobility for support, who decided to set up a major force of 40 000 footmen and 8000 riders. Parallel to the Augsburg sessions, archduke Charles was ordered to summon the Hungarian nobles in Pozsony. Needless to say, the Porte was soon aware of the emperor’s intentions as well. The sultan was unwilling to lose control over Transylvania by any means, thus at the turn of 1565-1566 he commanded the organization of a new campaign. The development was soon evident to the Habsburg Monarchy as well. Ákos Csányi, high prefect of the Nádasdy estates wrote the following in January 1566: »I can certainly inform your highness that news about the Turkish Emperor’s arrival has reached our castles. I have seen a letter from Babócsa as well, which show they are terrified of the news. I have told nobody else, but some four or more months ago I heard this from a Turk. God be my witness I thought before, that after claiming the lands and keeping our emperor under threats through diplomacy, and even taking tax from them, after all these years he would commit himself to raise armies with his wealth; this and more things are to come, and even risking dying in the campaign, his name is enemy. Indeed my lady, it is clearly spoken that he is arriving, and if it is not talked about in order not to upset our emperor, still, boatmaking along the Danube, collection of food, and counting the population of the lands could be started soon. Yesterday a prisoner of Ambrus Pálfy came from Buda, who was subjected to agha Piri. He spent three weeks in Buda at the pasha, he claims it for certain that the emperor is indeed arriving in time, but even before that the beglerbey is moving to Sziget, then to send up troops to king János’s son and to hold the Danube with the main army, but my lady if our good Lord wills it so, none of this comes to aught.«

The preparations of the sultan were known in Vienna by the end of January or early February, as archduke Ferdinand’s letter from February 21, 1566 gives evidence. On the 9th of the same month, the archduke in Prague was informed by Holy Roman emperor and Hungarian king Maximillian II about the news from Albert Wyss, a Habsburg diplomat sent to Istanbul. According to these, the Porte was preparing for war on land and on water. The emperor asked his brother for advice on how to react in the situation: peace negotiations were underway between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy, with the latter intending to exclude János Zsigmond from the process. An active correspondence started between the brothers, as the emperor sent first a Latin letter on February 23 and a German one two days later, inquiring about advice on preparing for the war. Archduke Ferdinand replied on February 29, which letter reveals that the Court Military Council and the emperor were concerned about potential attack on three castles: Szigetvár, Eger and Gyula. They planned to fortify these and to deploy additional troops. In his response the archduke also suggested that in case Miklós Zrínyi or László Kerescényi resigned from their offices, the emperor should appoint a new, competent person to lead the local troops.

It is a less known fact that the Court Military Council had a complete campaign plan as early as April 1566. István Földvári, one of Zrínyi’s servitors wrote to Ákos Csányi on April 28, 1566 from Alsóендvá: »his majesty the emperor wrote to duke Charles from Augusta (today Augsburg, Germany) and ordered to provide rations for two hundred people. According to his majesty’s intentions, the prince shall have a significant army and he himself shall wage war, hurrying from Augusta. His majesty will be at Vienna with his camp, and ordered Ferdinand to move to Nagyszombat (today Trenava, Slovakia) or Sempete (today Šintava, Slovakia), along with his Czech and Moravian troops. He gave orders to duke Charles to be at Potoly (today Ptuj, Slovenia) with his armies from Styria, Korontál (today Carintia)«

5 ÖStA KA AFA 1566-2-ad1.
and Kranjola (today Slovenia). The good troops with whom his majesty the emperor shall travel in person shall be led by the duke of Saxona (Ágost Saxon prince-elector) as Obrist Feldhauptmann and Count Kinter Schwarzenberg as marshall.»

As the letter shows, archduke Charles had the role of uniting the Styrian, Carinthian, Krajnian, Croatian and Slavonian armies at Ptuj. Some of these troops was not condemned for waiting, they also launched raids into the lands under Ottoman occupation, as related in Farkas Giczy’s letter to Orsolya Kanizsa dated September 4, 1566 from Sjeničak Lasinjski (today Sjeničak Lasinjski, Croatia), or as discussed in the military report of the Court Military Council at the end of the year. Let us recount what took place in the Croatian-Venetian borderlands. The archduke, who had been still in Vienna in July 1566, moved out to the appointed armies. As an overture for the campaign preparations, on the night before August 10, a Turkish army of 800 infantrymen and 300 riders attacked Topusko (today Croatia). The old outer stockades were breached easily, and because most stationed soldiers were at the moment away, the attackers captured 203 prisoners, 300 animals and 20 horses. Farkas Giczy, the prefect at Sjeničak Lasinjski, gave the following witness account in his letter to Ákos Csányi: »The Turks came to Topusko the previous month, the night before the last Saturday prior to Our Lady’s day. I was present at the castle and the Turks who arrived were 800 footmen and 300 riders strong, and as the outer stockade walls were indeed old, they had easy entry; the positioned soldiers were not on duty, but each away at their homes. As the castle folk had no sentries, two hundred and three were taken captive, together with children, girls and women, three hundred cattle and even more than twenty horses were stolen.»

Péter Erdődy, ban of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia was ordered by the emperor to call an assembly. The letter of king Maximillian was read out to the Croatian-Slavonian noblemen in Zagreb, informing them that duke Charles, the emperor’s brother, was arriving to defend Croatia with a great army, and the lands along the river Una would be freed from Turkish rule. Archduke Charles was in Graz at the time and sent an order to the same assembly that the ban and the nobility should take care of the provisions for the arriving army on the one hand, and prepare for warfare themselves on the other hand. Erdődy and all other officials in the borderlands were ordered to launch attacks into the occupied lands, until Charles arrived to take over the command. The nobility organized the responsibilities of provisions and enlistment, marking Sjeničak Lasinjski, south-east from Zagreb, as the camp for the Croatian armies that gathered south of the Sava and Kupa rivers. After much persuasion on the ban’s and the Zagreb bishop’s part, Farkas Giczy took the office of lieutenant in the nobility’s forces. He was also responsible for appointing units from the Croatian army in case the defense of the Perner, Hrezna, Topusko and Bović strongholds becomes necessary.

The leaders who were already at camp, Herward Freiherr von Auersperg, Oberstleutnant of Croatian border, the ban Péter Erdődy, the Hauptmann of the Krajnian nobles, Joseph Freiherr von Thurn and other officials, held a war council and decided that Novi Grad (today Bosnia-Herzegovina) must be attacked. Why was this stronghold their chosen target? The decision was influenced by strategic and

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6 MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles. 12 d. nr. 1. See in the Appendix.
7 Farkas Giczy was related to the palatine Tamás Nádasdy. In 1555-57, he served in the palatine’s cavalry, first in Kaniza, then in the Rábaköz. He took part in the 1556 campaign against the Turk, in the battle of Babócsa and the siege of Korotna. He became the prefect of Sjeničak Lasinjski in 1559. His brother János served under László Kerescényi during the 1566 siege of Gyula, belonging to those few who survived and were not even captured.
8 MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles. 13 d. nr. 11. See in the Appendix. MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles. 13 d. nr. 8.
9 ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.
10 MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles. 13 d. nr. 9.
11 ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.
13 ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.
psychological arguments. The castle at the bank of the Una was owned by Miklós Zrínyi, like the other riverside stronghold, Bosanska Kupa (today Bosnia-Herzegovina). In late June of 1565, both was captured by Bosnian bey Sokollu Mustafa, a nephew of grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed. The defenders were all slain.\textsuperscript{14}

In accordance with the Court Military Council’s decree, 3000 Hungarian, Croatian and German cavalry and 800 infantrymen were combined on August 24 at Topusko, 30 km south-east off Sjeničak Lasinjski. They marched to the Una, with the infantry carrying orders to charge the Novi Grad castle. Part of the cavalry was sent to the castle of Kostajnica (today Bosnia-Herzegovina) with Giczy and Ferenc Frangepán as lieutenants, which place had been captured by the Ottomans long ago; this enabled the Christians to raid and plunder the lands up to the Sava river and they could block a potential Turkish counterattack.\textsuperscript{15} According to Giczy, the Vlach-populated region was pillaged, with more than 300 prisoners taken.\textsuperscript{16} Beside this, they went to ambush the guards of Kostajnica as well. The plan involved the Croatian light cavalry as bait, which was to lure the enemy riders from the castle. The German and Hungarian light cavalry units were standing by at their hiding place and had to ambush the deceived pursuers. The Turks in the Kostajnica garrison did make the sortie out, trusting that backup would arrive from the neighboring strongholds. They got trapped soon, though, and lost many; some were taken captive and others cut down. However, many of them made it back to the castle.\textsuperscript{17} After their glorious victory, Giczy and Frangepán returned with the troops and their 300 captives to the siege camp under Novi Grad.

Giczy’s account relates the following: »From where we were descending to the castle, there were outrages from behind, and the calls came also from other directions, »Turks! Turks!« Bey Hlewnay Husrem were camped between Krupa and Novi Grad and heard the shots; thus he saddled up and rode out with some entourage toward the shot; my lord Zlámy (Ferenc Frangepán) were not with the Germans at that time and thus my lord Zlänyi hit them. Even though the bey had the better numbers than my lord Zläny. But the bey fell from his mount and was captured by the Germans. No one has been allowed to speak with him, except the Ban and my lord Asperger. One reason for not allowing talk is that the prisoner is severely wounded. The barber who tends to his wounds says talking is hard for his head yet.«\textsuperscript{18} Giczy relates that Ferenc Frangepán left the camp with a small squad and attacked bey Husrem and his entourage, who had separated from the Turkish army gathering between Krupa and Novi Grad. They took the wounded bey with them as prisoner. During interrogation, the captives told differing alternatives about the purpose of bey Husrem and his troops coming from the Krupa castle: »...these could not equivocally tell why the bey had mobilized; some claim there were news about my lord the ban intending to take Podravska Moslavina and they went to aid that; others state they bey wanted to march to Bović with the purpose of raiding it; yet others do not know whether any of these were causes for him to arrive.«\textsuperscript{19}

Meanwhile, the Christian infantry took and burned the town under Novi Grad. The ban and Auersperg were discussing attacking the upper castle when they received word that the Bosnian pasha who had been busy at the siege of Szigetvár, came to the Sava with a 4000-strong army to lift the siege.\textsuperscript{20} Therefore Erdődy and Auersperg changed their minds and went against these, ambushing the enemy off Novi Grad. The Turks were badly defeated in the battle, with many Bosnian officers and soldiers fallen. The Christians pursued the retreating troops and took their cannons and war gear, too.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{15} ŐSIA KA AFA 1566-13-3.
\textsuperscript{16} MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család It. Missiles. 12 db. nr. 11.
\textsuperscript{17} ŐSIA KA AFA 1566-13-3.; MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család It. Missiles. 13 d. nr. 11.
\textsuperscript{18} MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család It. Missiles. 13 d. nr. 11.
\textsuperscript{19} MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család It. Missiles. 13 d. nr. 11.
\textsuperscript{20} ŐSIA KA AFA 1566-13-3.
\textsuperscript{21} ŐSIA KA AFA 1566-13-3.
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Burdened with a large amount of pillaged goods, Erdődy’s and Auersperg’s armies withdrew to the Glina river, where the seriously injured bey Husrem was interrogated. His confession is known via Giczy’s account: »as to the emperor’s army, he knows this: they shall not leave Sziget before winning it. From there the emperor shall move to Eger and proceed to capture that. He also said that there was news about Gyula taken, but even if Gyula was not captured, the emperor is to march to Gyula after Eger and he shall take that castle as well. There he shall divide the army and move to Buda for the winter; he does not know about the emperor’s plans for the coming spring.«

According to the year-closing military report of the Court Military Council, there were skirmishes in the Croatian-Venetian borderlands even after the events in late August. A part of archduke Charles’ troops attacked Pozsega, burned up the place and plundered most of the surrounding land. In late September, the ban’s units were prowling and raiding up as far as Velike.

Though the magnitude of the presented Christian military ventures in the Croatian-Venetian periphery should not be overrated, it is worth noting that the attacks against Novi Grad and Kostajnica took place during the sieges of Szigetvár and Gyula, which must have been a serious disruption to the Ottoman military command; Ákos Csányi’s letter dated August 31 states that 4000 cavalrymen from the camp besieging Szigetvár were recalled to Constantinople. This information is most probably false, the unit in question actually being the Turkish rescue army that arrived at the Sava to aid against the assault of the Hungarian troops. Apart from the numbers and the Bosnians’ involvement, the timelines also match. It suggests that archduke Charles not only led a successful campaign in the Turkish borderlands in Bosnia, but they also managed to divert major forces from the siege of Szigetvár. It is not their fault, however, that despite long-nurtured plans, neither Maximilian’s troops in Győr, nor the other unit in Komárom followed suit and they never launched counterattacks against Esztergom, Visegrád or Székesfehérvár. The tactics that had been successfully employed during 1555-56, namely disrupting a Turkish campaign by attack on a stronghold or by nearby mobilization, was abandoned everywhere in 1566, except in the Croatian borderlands.

**Fig 1.** The progress of the campaign. Hungarian mobilizations in red, Turkish mobilizations in green.
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APPENDIX

István Földvári for Ákos Csányi, Lendava, 28 April 1566


Hosszútóti György egy pénzért sem vitt, hiszen hogy jól érti kegyelmed.

Farkas Giczy for Orsolya Kanizsai, Castle of Sjeničak Lasinjski, 4 September 1566

Tekéntetes és nagyságos, kényeztes asszonyom, éltemig való szolgálatomat nagyságodnak, mint kényeztes asszonyomnak. Innent, ez földnek állapatyáról nagyságodnak egyéb hírt nem írhatok, hanem Bán uram és Aspergár uram az tôb német urakkal és Zlúny, Tersachyki és Blagay urammal mentenek vala az Ön vize felé, Újvár alá. Én innent az nagyságod szolgával, mind lovgaggal, gyaloggal el mentem vala. Az Ön vizen által mentenek és Újvárnak az útvárosát mind el égették, az vár felé. Ki házak voltanak agáké, vajdáké, azokat mind el égették, jóllehet, hogy Aspergár uram Bán urammal azt végezték volna, hogy az kízz kiszabadítsa az ablakban lesznak, azokat Zlúny urammal mi őrizik, hogy ha Kasztianycáról török jüne, de Zlúny uram éjel el szakadat vala tülelem, hanem szolgálatoman velem. Az oláhokat bizony választg majd ablokjok, és égetenek, hogy az egész had háromszáz rabcnal tóból hoztönt, hogy mi az ablakanak bele talán úgy érzeznek Ujvár alá, hogy immár az váras éget. Az honnand mi az vár alá erezkedünk, vala alá, háttul meg siakadának, más felőlis mondák, hogy török, török. Az Hlewnay Huszrem bég hált volt azon év Krupa közöt, és Újvár közöt, hogy az lővészel halotta, úgy últ volt fel egy paripája egyénén hámagával, az lővésre meygen volt, Zlúny uram akkor nem németekkel volt, és reá ült öltöt Zlúny uram. Jólehet, hogy mikor az bégre reá úttöntek, az bég tőb meg magával volt, hogy sem Zlúny uram. De az paripa az békkel el eset, és az németek fogták meg az besten. Még senkit nem hadtak vele beszélni, hanem Bán uram és Asperger uram beszéllel vele. Ez okáért sem hagynak vele beszélni, hogy fölotte igen sebes. Az barbély az kí köztő, azt mongya, hogy nehéz az fejének, ha beszélnek vele. Ugy Ujvár alól meg török az Glynia vizen innend meg a víz, Csejermicának híják, Bán uram és Aspergár uram szállottanak volt meg ot az víz mellett. Aspergár uram Bán uramát hittal volt hozzára és mentenek volt az béghe alá, égterületenek tule. Bán uram nek wend mondák, hogy azt manta az bég, hogy ne báncsajtokat mest, mert hogy szólék nehéz az fejének, ingyen császár hada felől ezt tuggya, hogy Szigetet el nem haggya, míg meg nem veszi. Önand osztán Eger alá meygen, aztis meg veszi. Eztis monta, hogy hírón az, hogy Gyulát meg vetíték, de ha meg nem vettékis, Eger alól Gyula alá meygen, aztis meg veszi. Önand osztán népet el osztja, és újmagá Budára meygen őt telél, kikeletre való szándékát nem tuggya. Eszt ez dolgot, ez előttis nagyságod tudására adtam volna,
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SAŽETAK

Iako ne bi trebalo precijeniti značaj zabilježenih Kršćanskih vojnih pohoda u sklopu hrvatsko-mle-
tačkih ratova, vrijedi spomenuti da su se napadi na Novi Grad i Kostajnicu zbili za vrijeme opsade
Sigeta i Gyule, te da su vjerojatno uzrokovali značajnu pomutnju u vojnom zapovjedništvu Osmanlij-
skog carstva; Pismo koje je Ákos Csányi napisao 31. kolovoza navodi da je 4000 pripadnika konjice
koja je Siget držala pod opsadom bilo pozvano u Konstantinopolis. Ova je informacija vrlo vjerojatno
netočna, jedinica u pitanju je zapravo turska obrambena vojska koja je stigla do Save da pomogne pri-
likom napada mađarskih snaga. Osim samih brojki i uključenosti Bosne postoji i podudarnost na vre-
menskoj crti. Može se naslutiti da je nadvojvoda Charles ne samo vodio uspješnu bitku na granicama
Osmanlijskog carstva u Bosni, već je uspio i preusmjeriti glavne snage na područja Bosne.

Te nagyságodnak szolgája, Giczky Farkas