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**The forgotten war in the Transdanubia in 1566
The successful defense of Palota and the recapture of Veszprém and Tata¹**

Zoltán Péter Bagi was educated at the József Attila University from 1993 to 1998, and Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest where he completed his PhD. Title of his dissertation: “The relations between the Holy Roman Empire and Hungarian Kingdom at the turn of the 16. century”. He works as an archivist from 1999 in the National Archives of Hungary.

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The forgotten war in the Transdanubia in 1566
The successful defense of Palota and the recapture of Veszprém and Tata²
by Zoltán Péter Bagi

Due to the 450th anniversary, the main events of 1566, the fall of Szigetvár and Gyula are much discussed nowadays. Countless conferences, lectures, books and studies involved the subject country-wide. During this celebrant process, events that are not closely related with the history of Szigetvár and Gyula gain less attention, or are even ignored. Such neglected developments are the events in the northern Transdanubia (north from the Balaton lake), the successful defense of Palota and the recapture of Veszprém and Tata. Tevelj Arató György has recently written a shorter popular academic paper on the successful Christian campaign, which was published in the *Múlt-Kor* historical magazine.³ All this prompted me to collect and reassess the available sources on the events, and to create a summary that complements and details our present knowledge.⁴

On May 1, 1566, the 72-year-old Suleiman launched his seventh and last campaign in the Kingdom of Hungary. Similarly to 1552, the war was fought for Transylvania, though outside Transylvania. The Habsburg court was still intent on claiming the Szapolyai lands under János Zsigmond's control. To achieve this, the emperor called to the nobility for support at the Augsburg imperial diet in December 1565; according to Miklós Istvánffy, they voted to set up a major force of 40.000 footmen and 8.000 riders, an aid of double *Römermonat's* worth. Parallel to the talks in Augsburg, archduke Charles, son of

² I would like to thank Gábor Szatlóczky for his help and for the transcribed Ákos Csányi letters

³ TEVELJ ARATÓ 2016. 58-61.

⁴ For the 450-year anniversary, some articles and a new monograph about Miklós Zrínyi were published in 2016. For example: VARGA 2016.; FODOR-VARGA 2016. 181-202.

Ferdinand I, was ordered to summon the Hungarian nobles in Pozsony⁵. Needless to say, the Porte was also aware of the emperor's intentions. The sultan was unwilling to lose control over Transylvania for any reason, thus at the turn of 1565-1566 he commanded the organization of a new campaign. In addition, quite important position changes took place in Suleiman's inner circle in 1565. In June, grand vizier Seniz Ali died and the sultan decided that the second-in-command vizier, Sokollu Mehmet would be the successor in the position. The personal changes greatly affected Ottoman Empire's foreign politics, becoming more rigid and more aggressive than previously. Skirmishes resumed on Croatian borderlands of the Hungarian theatre of war⁶. It can be stated that the power ambitions of the new grand vizier and the Transylvanian policy led by emperor and Hungarian king Maximilian II converged into a newer Ottoman campaign (which also proved to be the last for Suleiman).

As early as January 1, 1566, Albert de Wyss, the Habsburg emperor's diplomat in Istanbul reported that the Transylvanian emissary was sent back to Gyulafehérvár with the message that János Zsigmond was to prepare for the campaign at early spring. He also gathered that the sultan planned to observe his armies at a military parade at the time of the spring equinox in Drinápoly, practice fasting and then commence with the campaign⁷. During the following months, Wyss kept sending his reports on the Porte's preparations, as inferred by archduke Ferdinand's letter dated February 21, 1566. On the 9th of the same month, the archduke was in Prague when he was informed by Maximilian II about the news sent from Istanbul, according to which the Porte was preparing war on both land and water. The emperor asked his brother for advice on how to act in the situation, as peace negotiations were underway between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy, with the latter party intending to exclude János Zsigmond from the process⁸. An active correspondence began between the brothers, as the emperor sent a Latin letter on 23 February and a German one two days later, repeatedly inquiring about advice on preparing for the war. Archduke Ferdinand replied on February 29, informing Wyss that the Court Military Council and the emperor were concerned about attack on three castles: Sziget, Eger and Gyula. They planned to fortify these and to deploy additional troops. In his response the archduke also suggested that in case

⁵ Abschiedt der Römischen Keyserlichen Maiestatt und gemeiner Stendt auf dem Reichßtage zu Augspurg Anno Domini MDLXVI auffgericht. Mainz 1566.; FORGÁCH 1982. 244-256.; ISTVÁNNFFY 2003. 388-389.

⁶ FORGÁCH 1982. 255-256.; VARGA 2016. 192-199.

⁷ VARGA 2016. 199-200.

⁸ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA) Kriegarchiv (KA) Alte Feldakten (AFA) 1566-2-1.; FORGÁCH 1982. 256.; ISTVÁNNFFY 2003. 389.; VARGA 2016. 200.

Miklós Zrínyi or László Kerecsényi resigned from their offices, the emperor should appoint a new, competent person to lead the local troops⁹. On March 22, Wyss reported that the long council hours at the Porte decided the goal of the campaign. Accordingly, Selim (the future sultan) was to stay in Ankara and keep the Persian shah in check. The beglerbey of Anatolia would march against Sziget with 30 thousand men, while the beglerbey of Temesvár, the bey of Szolnok, the Transylvanian prince and Moldovan voivod were accompanied by two more thousand janissaries from the Porte to march against Gyula. The sultan would remain either in Sofia or in Belgrade, along with the rest of the army¹⁰.

Not only Vienna received news on the sultan's campaign. Ákos Csányi, high prefect of the Nádasdy-Kanizsai estates¹¹ had no contact with the diplomat in Istanbul, but based on the news learned from captives, he wrote as early as January 6, 1566 that the sultan was making preparations for a campaign against the Kingdom of Hungary. Via a Turkish prisoner, he was informed about the developments at the Porte and in the Ottoman Empire in advance. His information was confirmed by Ambrus Pálffy, who had been the prisoner of agha Piri. According to this account, "the emperor is indeed arriving in time, but even before that the beglerbey is moving to Sziget, then to send up many 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 may turn to aught"¹².

Just like the court, Csányi was aware of the sultan's campaign already in early January and kept collecting information during the months that followed. Based on the intelligence from captured Turkish soldiers, lieutenant Ferenc Horvát wrote on April 24 that Suleiman's ultimate goal was to conquer Vienna, but first he would capture Sziget, Gyula and Eger as well¹³.

However, the Habsburg court and local leaders not only monitored the news, they also began preparations for the war to come. 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 Alsólendva: "his majesty the emperor wrote to prince Charles from Augusta (today Augsburg, Germany) and ordered to provide rations for two hundred thousand people. According to his majesty's intentions, the prince

⁹ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-2-ad1.

¹⁰ VARGA 2016. 201.

¹¹ SZATLÓCZKI 2016. 133-138.

¹² Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (MNL) Országos Levéltár (OL) Magyar Kamara Archivuma (MKA) E 185 Nádasdy család levéltára (It.) Missiles 9. doboz (d.) Numerus (Nr.) 66.; BAGI – SZATLÓCZKI 2016.

¹³ ÖStA Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Hungarica Allgemeine Akten Fasc. 92. Konv. A fol. 111r-v.; VARGA 2016. 201.

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 Trnava, Slovakia) or Sempte (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) 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 (Saxon prince-electors Ágost) as *Obrist Feldhauptmann* and count Kinter Schwarzenberg as *Feldmarschall*"¹⁴.

It must also be noted that beyond the Court Military Council's preparations for war, there were ongoing planning and readying on local levels¹⁵.

While the Christian party was busy making plans, the Ottoman troops on the occupied lands made their move. Having learnt that the commander at Ajnácskő (Hajnáchka, Slovakia today) had left to travel to Eger with a good part of his men, the local Turkish forces equipped ladders and assaulted the castle in the early morning of April 24. The garrison that had been left to guard the stronghold were slain¹⁶.

After the Ajnácskő raid, pasha Arslan, beglerbey of Buda also decided to act before the sultan's army arrived; his apparently poor moral standing is described by Istvánffy as follows: "He himself (Arslan) was early to act and (...) as his mind was unhinged and he was intoxicated from having wine spirit and opium every day, his foolhardy counsel was to make his move before Suleiman's arrival and started the encounters, trusting that this would please his emperor"¹⁷.

*"The wrath of God is upon Us"*¹⁸

This was Ferenc Batthyány's exclamation in his letter dated June 12, 1566 to Orsolya Kanizsai, when the beglerbey of Buda laid siege to Palota. Istvánffy relates pasha Arslan's preparations as follows: "Thus artillery tools were pulled from the armories in Buda, drawing many wagons and beasts of burden to the towns and villages, carrying iron cannonballs and gunpowder, the Turks

¹⁴ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles. 12 d. nr. 1.; BAGI – SZATLÓCZKI 2016.

¹⁵ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles. 8 d. nr. 489.

¹⁶ ORTELIUS 1665. 104.

¹⁷ ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

¹⁸ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 4. d. No. 27.

rationed these not in tons or batches, but hidden in many woolen sacks, all this converging to Székesfehérvár”¹⁹.

By late May, the preparations on the beglerbey’s side was noted by Csányi as well, reporting about the matter on 29th of the month to Orsolya Kanizsai: “There are not much unheard news to be related to my lady [Orsolya Kanizsai], both the people in Sziget and Babócsa know that the Turks from Pécs and elsewhere march to meet bey Arslan and the Buda pasha is coming here, but I cannot believe there is not something else still behind the movements.²⁰ As the quotation confirms, Csányi was not aware of the precise movement directions of the Ottoman armies, but he did not expect them to come against the southern Transdanubia area. The high prefect had to resort on his intuition and past experience to judge the situations, as the news he received did not convey what Istvánffy relates, claiming that Arslan made no secret of Palota (Várpalota) being the campaign’s goal²¹. Trusting “the Hungarian Livy”, we can assume that the pasha’s intentions were known to the castle’s captain before the siege, as they had called for reinforcements to fortify the defenses²².

Palota was surrounded by the beglerbey’s troops by the evening of June 5. Albeit through differing methods, contemporary historiographers provide essentially the same reasons for Arslan’s choice. According to Ferenc Forgách, Palota was attacked because György Thury and his men had defeated a Turkish unit a couple of days before at Székesfehérvár²³. Istvánffy wrote about the same incident that the pasha moved against the castle “to take vengeance on Thury and his thugs at Palota”²⁴. All these considered, we can also assume that Palota and its garrison were regarded (though on a much smaller scale) similarly to Sziget and Gyula. All three castles could and did severely disrupt the army movements and supply lines in the occupied land, as they were fortifications from where dangerous raids could lash out.

Thus the pasha led his forces against the stronghold commanded by György Thury. To calculate the numbers and power of this army, Hungarian historiographers have relied on Antal Verancsics’s and Istvánffy’s work. The Eger bishop of the time noted down the following: “Pasha Ozlam of Buda took Palotavár by force, with five thousand Turks and countless commoners carrying wood to build siege works, storming with ten cannons”²⁵. The

¹⁹ ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

²⁰ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 9. d. No. 74.

²¹ ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

²² ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

²³ FORGÁCH 1982. 257.

²⁴ ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

²⁵ VERANCSICS 1981. 119.; VERESS D. 1983. 94.

“Hungarian Livy” also discusses the strength of the attacking army. According to him, pasha Arslan’s army had eight or nine thousand Turkish soldiers, beginning the siege with “four old tarack cannons and as many smaller ones, too”²⁶. Though at first glance it could seem that the accounts of the two historians contradict each other, my opinion is that they rather support each other’s validity. The Ottoman army (and the Christian armies of the period, too) was accompanied by a major number of non-combatant people, doubling or tripling the numbers of the whole army camp. As quoted from Verancsics, the various siege works, like the engineering of ditches here, were carried out by the subjugated peasants of the area. This was far from being a unique development, the siege of Sziget also involved herding the peasants not only from the surrounding areas, but from around Eszék as well; these were taken to dig entrenchment ditches or to help building the ramp designed by Ali Portug²⁷. Considering this, it can be assumed that the eight or nine thousand Turks related by Istvánffy could in fact be part actual soldiers and a major part consisting of every kind of non-combatant groups.

As to the numbers and artillery capacity of the Ottoman army, there are three contemporary German sources to complement the Hungarian historians’ work. One is the official report from the conclusion of the campaign, in the archives of the Court Military Council. Unlike Verancsics and Istvánffy, its anonymous author cites no numbers of the Buda beglerbey’s troops, only notes down that the pasha led quite few troops into the campaign. Their artillery firepower is handled in a similarly offhand manner, only stating that it consisted of big and small cannons²⁸. Another source is the July 5 report by Leonhard Tievesch, notary in Körmöcbánya (Kremnica in Slovakia), writing that the pasha of Buda came to storm Palota with 8.000 soldiers, seven heavy siege cannons and many other big artillery²⁹. A third and previously never used source is a German-language newsletter combining news on several developments. This relates that Arslan had no more than ten thousand men but was expecting further reinforcements³⁰. Two letters from Csányi to Orsolya Kanizsai and dated June 14 also inform about which armies of Arslan’s vilayet he ordered to join them in the campaign. The first document states that the bey of Koppány also joined the beglerbey’s forces³¹. Still the same day the high prefect wrote to his lady that he had received László Kerecsényi’s man sent

²⁶ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 392.

²⁷ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 417.

²⁸ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.

²⁹ MATUNÁK 1897. 271.

³⁰ Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.

³¹ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 9. d. No. 76.

from Gyula, and this informed them as follows: “the bey of Szekszárd and Mohács went to Palota, first the bey of Fülek was camped at Szolnok then moved this day with all their folks, saying that they took half of the peasants with them, with earthworking tools, four hundred riflemen going to Palota after a “csauz”, that the bey of Mohács and Sekszárd marched through some village Tormás, and the bey of Simontornya left for Pécs to join bey Hamza at his camp in Pécs”³². If Kerecsényi’s man was correct, then pasha Arslan combined all the mobilizable forces in the Buda vilayet to attack Palota, the strength of this army not exceeding ten thousand, however.

The question arises: how many men did Thury, lieutenant (or Hauptmann, in German sources) and prefect of Palota command to defend the walls?³³ An inventory list made between July 20 and 29 informs about how many soldiers and equipment were in Palota at that time. Organized in different units, 100 Hungarian cavalry, 93 infantry divided into squads, and two artillery operators. The defenses of the stronghold included one large bomb-launching cannon, nine big and small “falconette” cannons, along with 153 small firearms³⁴. However, Thury had more than this small number when the siege came, as he had requested reinforcements from Győr and Pápa. From the first, perimeter captain Eck Graf zu Salm³⁵ sent 100 infantrymen led by lieutenant István Izdenczy. In addition, Enyingi Török Ferenc from Pápa also contributed to the defenders of Palota. This means that altogether 250 cavalry and the same number of footmen were available, according to Istvánffy³⁶. The imperial vice-chancellor Johann Ulrik Zasius von Rabenstein³⁷ wrote in his June 18 letter to Saxon prince Ágost that Palota is defended by 500 men³⁸.

Before discussing the siege as described by Istvánffy, Zasius, Forgách and Ortelius, a detour is to be made. When we examine our sources, an interesting contradiction can emerge. Istvánffy, the excerpt military report and Zasius also mention that the captain in Palota sent men to spread word about the garrison’s situation and to request aid and help³⁹. The Hungarian historian also relates that Thury sent his brother Farkas Thury and Ferenc Pálffy⁴⁰ to take the news to Győr and from then to Vienna⁴¹. It could be assumed that the call for aid

³² MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 9. d. No. 77.

³³ SZATLÓCZKI 2016. 105-132.

³⁴ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-7-5.; VERESS D. 1983. 93.

³⁵ PÁLFFY 1997. 276.

³⁶ ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

³⁷ Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie 1898. 706-708.

³⁸ MARCZALI 1882. IX-X., 72.

³⁹ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.; ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

⁴⁰ ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

⁴¹ ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 391.

happened immediately after the start of the siege, but the imperial vice-chancellor's letter from June 18 disrupts the clear picture. Zasius writes that a brother of György Thury made his way from the castle and related the events between June 6 and 10 in Vienna⁴². In his work, Csaba D. Veress interpreted Istvánffy's and the vice-chancellor's text in such manner that on June 10 the captain sent another brother to call for aid⁴³. This is not entirely impossible, as other member of the Thury family were serving in the castle, for example Márton Thury, who is assumed to be "György's uncle's kin", his cousin⁴⁴. However, I tend to agree with Rezső Szij and interpret the texts otherwise, the argument being that only one event happened, not two. Unfortunately, Szij does not explain in his 1960 book why he judged so, tasking me with the reasoning⁴⁵. This hypothesis is supportable by indirect and direct means as well. Beginning with the first, Istvánffy only mentions Farkas Thury's mission; fond of soldiers' stories and anecdotes, the author would most probably include if another brother of György Thury's were sent to Győr or Vienna.

This indirect evidence alone would not sufficiently support my hypothesis, though. The doubt is dismissed, however, by a protocollum entry among the received documents. Dated June 11, Thury's report from the siege is registered⁴⁶. This implies that the Thury brother (Farkas)⁴⁷ mentioned in Zasius's letter must have arrived the same day to the imperial city.

Independently from the lieutenant-prefect's call for help, the emperor mobilized the available troops. Maximilian II and the Court Military Council must have been informed about Palota's siege from Salm, rather than from Thury. The Military Council's protocollum entry about the Győr captain's first report of the events was recorded on June 7.⁴⁸ The same day, the Court Military Council ordered Salm to rescue Palota from the siege.⁴⁹ Two days later, Thury was sent orders to stand ground⁵⁰, but any significant mobilization to lift the siege began only on June 10 when Salm received another order to stand ready to march for Palota.⁵¹ Also on June 10, Lazarus von Schwendi was ordered to immediately send the cavalries of Georg von Praun and Christoph von

⁴² MARCZALI 1882. 72., 78.

⁴³ VERESS D. 1983. 94-95.

⁴⁴ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-7-5.; SZIJ 1960. 94.; ISTVÁNYFFY 2003. 393.

⁴⁵ SZIJ 1960. 91-92.

⁴⁶ ÖStA KA Hofkriegsrat (HKR) Wien Protokoll (Pr.) Expedit (Exp.) Band (B) 145 Fol.: 110r.

⁴⁷ MARCZALI 1882. 72.

⁴⁸ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 109v.

⁴⁹ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Registratur (Reg.) Band (B) 146 Fol.: 149v. No. 35.

⁵⁰ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 150r. No. 43.

⁵¹ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 150v. No. 51.

Schellendorf to help Thury's men⁵². Both Istvánffy and the year-closing military report relate that when Maximilian II learned about the predicament from Farkas Thury, he called the county troops and the armies of the borderlands, along with the recently recruited infantries in the Holy Roman Empire, to gather to arms in Győr⁵³. Protocollum entries also verify that the court took these measures. On June 11 and 12, military councillors gave orders to the armies and noblemen of the region to march to lift Palota's siege⁵⁴. On June 13, Salm was probably yet unaware of these decisions as he asked the Court Military Council to send the order to county armies and the Hungarian lords alike, to join the operation⁵⁵.

On June 12, the Court Military Council sent orders to Georg von Helffenstein and to Salm to come to aid the besieged castle⁵⁶. Tiesch's report from July 5 informs that the expected unit arrived on June 11. The notary from Körmöcbánya also related that following this Helffenstein and Salm were ordered to come to break the siege of Palota⁵⁷. All this means that immediately after the start of the siege, the relief army to break siege began to be organized in Vienna and Győr.

While the emperor, the Court Military Council and Salm were organizing their relief army, the siege continued. The Turks brought up ridges for protection and fiercely barraged the castle walls. Zasius writes in his report that between June 6 and 10, many thousands of cannonballs were shot at Palota, destroying one turret⁵⁸. Ortelius's work from 1665 says that the pasha had the walls barraged continuously for eight days. With around 1500 missiles launched, the walls were completely leveled⁵⁹. Forgách also mentions the severe artillery fire⁶⁰, but Istvánffy gives the most details, relating that the pasha first targeted the so-called Móre-bastion right to the gate, but the formidable defenses stood against the artillery fire. The pasha then relocated the artillery on the hill facing the eastern walls, successfully blasting an opening on them. Incidentally, the falling debris filled the moat as well⁶¹. However, Arslan could not launch the attack, as local prisoners (Péter Pap, and a student also called Péter) claimed

⁵² ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 150v. No. 53.

⁵³ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.; MARCZALI 1882. 72.; ISTVÁNYFFY 2003. 391.

⁵⁴ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 151r. No. 61.; ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 151r. No. 63.

⁵⁵ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 111r.; FORGÁCH 1982. 257.

⁵⁶ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Reg. B 146 Fol.: 151r. No. 65.; MARCZALI 1882. 77-78.

⁵⁷ MATUNÁK 1897. 271-272.

⁵⁸ MARCZALI 1882. 72.

⁵⁹ ORTELIUS 1665. 104.

⁶⁰ FORGÁCH 1982. 257.

⁶¹ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 115v.

that the troops would also need to traverse a ten or twelve-foot deep vaulted cellar under the chapel. Thus the pasha continued to have the walls barraged, but the defenders also kept shooting at enemy strongpoints as commanded by Thury. They managed to kill two grenadiers brought from Buda⁶².

The case of Thury's alleged wound is also worth discussing. Forgách mentions in his work that the captain at Palota "got a frontal (...) wound"⁶³. Ortelius relates even more. He claims that Thury was severely wounded and was also called to surrender by the besiegers, which he declined⁶⁴. However, Istvánffy does not mention Thury as wounded at all. Apart from the captain's valorous stand, he merely noted down that Thury himself rode to meet Salm's troops on June 17. Somewhat later it is mentioned that Thury was unwilling to continue to serve at Palota, where "little fame and fortune" is won, so he resigned from his position and was succeeded by his cousin Márton Thury. Meanwhile György Thury "managed the troops at Győr", in other words, he became the *Feldmarschall* over the armies of the Győr perimeter captain⁶⁵. Lacking more sources to clear the case, it is hard to tell which historian is closer to the truth. Thury himself sent a report about the siege on June 20, probably not randomly omitting if he had to give his blood to defend the castle in his charge, but this document is not extant and was probably lost during the major cleanups of the military archives⁶⁶. It seems certain that even if he was wounded, it could not possibly be as serious as Ortelius claims, otherwise he would not be able to participate in later battles in the course of June and July.

Sources also differ on the discontinuation of the siege. Ortelius relates that on June 14 Helffenstein sent 90 wagons to collect fodder, protected by 900 infantrymen and some cavalry; this was spotted by pasha Arslan's scouts and resulted in abandoning the siege⁶⁷. Istvánffy and Verancsics gives other, more reliable information about the affair. They claim that the scout Lufti Deli mistakenly identified the wagons that Salm sent out to improve fortifications (with wood collected from the nearby Bakony forests)⁶⁸ as the rescue army. In truth, the purpose of these was just to transport wood from Bakony. The 1566 military report and Tievesch's account inform similarly, therefore Istvánffy probably wrote his version in the knowledge of the above sources and with providing additional stories⁶⁹. A protocollum entry also shows that Salm wrote

⁶² ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 392.

⁶³ FORGÁCH 1982. 257.

⁶⁴ ORTELIUS 1665. 104.

⁶⁵ SZÍJ 1960. 92., ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 393.

⁶⁶ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Exp. B 145 Fol.: 113v.

⁶⁷ ORTELIUS 1665. 104.

⁶⁸ ISTVÁNFFY 2003. 392-393.

⁶⁹ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.; MATUNÁK 1897. 272.

on June 14 to the Court Military Council that he gave orders to wagons in order to fortify Győr⁷⁰. Arslan's scouts must have mistaken these wagons and the protecting troops to be the relief force, thus the Ottoman army failed and left most of their siege equipment behind⁷¹. Thus Salm could write to the Court Military Council on *June 17* that Palota was saved from the siege⁷².

*"We have trust and faith in His Deity"*⁷³

Arslan could not afford encountering the Christian army led by Salm and Helffenstein, thus retreated to Székesfehérvár⁷⁴. Tielech's July 5 report suggests that this happened in two stages. Seeing the lit signal bonfires, the beglerbey of Buda retreated from Palota, but planned to return and resume the siege the next day. Meanwhile, however, he was informed that the Győr camp had got reinforcements, as Klaus von Hatstatt's regiment and Schellendorf's cavalry arrived, so he abandoned the plan. At the same time, Salm intended to acquire the entire artillery of the pasha, so they sent Schellendorf's cavalry forward, but the attempt failed⁷⁵. According to Istvánffy and Ortelius, they only managed to obtain two small wheeled cannons and the food and gunpowder that was left behind, which they transported to the castle. Salm arrived with the reinforcements and ordered more men to the garrison and had the collapsed walls restored⁷⁶. The latter seemed necessary, as Zasius reported on June 25 that "the Turkish might resume Palota's siege once again. There are frequent skirmishes with the guards"⁷⁷.

However, leaders of the gathered German and Hungarian armies were also planning an attack. According to Istvánffy, there was a debate in the Palota camp about whether the army should march against Veszprém or Tata. The former was only twenty kilometres away, and the stronghold "would not withstand cannonballs with its old and feeble stockades"⁷⁸. Some among the military council, though, argued for attacking the strategically important crossing point, Tata. It was closer to Komárom and Győr⁷⁹ and its garrison often

⁷⁰ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 111v.

⁷¹ VERANCSICS 1981. 119.; FORGÁCH 1982. 258.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 393.

⁷² ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 113v.

⁷³ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 4. d. No. 28.

⁷⁴ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.; MATUNÁK 1897. 273.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 393.

⁷⁵ MATUNÁK 1897. 273.

⁷⁶ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 115v.; ORTELIUS 1665. 104.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 393.

⁷⁷ MARCZALI 1882. 72.

⁷⁸ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 393.

⁷⁹ KELENIK 1998, 47–48.

raided the Christian lands⁸⁰. The German-language newsletter relates that Salm and Helffenstein arrived at Palota and decided in agreement with György Thury that they would march against Veszprém⁸¹. Verancsics also mentions the same⁸². Unfortunately, the year-concluding military report does not mention this event, but the protocollum entries of the Court Military Council and Zasius's report give additional details. It seems that Salm and Helffenstein had sent their expert opinion as early as June 20, with the subject of how further operations were planned⁸³. It is also possible that that decision was made at the camp in Palota, but it is certain that the operation did not start from Palota and not only Veszprém was its original course. There are three sources that can support this claim. Zasius's letter from June 25 relates the following: "The Győr camp wants to capture Tata (...) They marched towards Tata"⁸⁴. It is certain that the imperial vice-chancellor was among the first to know about the planned campaign, which eventually started at the end of June. On the other hand, Tiesch's report dated July 2 from Vienna implies that the council decided: the Christian army would attack Tata first, then Veszprém and Székesfehérvár⁸⁵. On June 26, the Court Military Council ordered supply officer Christoph Teuffel⁸⁶ to supervise the provisions of the army under Tata⁸⁷.

Before examining why the army diverted from its original course, a brief detour is worth, to mention the numbers and characteristics of Salm's and Helffenstein's troops. That means the available soldiers of the Győr perimeter forces, Helffenstein's infantry recruited in the Holy Roman Empire, and Hatstatt infantry and Schellendorf's 4 or 500 cavalry⁸⁸, who had joined the army before breaking the siege around Palota.

A significant force of Hungarian soldiers also joined the Christian army. The emperor had called the local Hungarian nobles and neighboring provinces to arms⁸⁹. Forgách lists the armies gathered near Pápa in detail⁹⁰. The extant correspondence also gives evidence that who could have participated in the

⁸⁰ FORGÁCH 1982. 258-259.; VERESS D. 1983. 96.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 393-394.

⁸¹ Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.

⁸² VERANCSICS 1981. 120.

⁸³ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 154r. No. 121.; ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 154r. No. 123.

⁸⁴ MARZALI 1882. 73.

⁸⁵ MATUNÁK 1897. 267.

⁸⁶ KENYERES 2002. 163-202.; KENYERES 2004. 337.

⁸⁷ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 157r. No. 175.

⁸⁸ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 153v. No. 110.; ORTELIUS 1665. 104.; MARZALI 1882. 73.; MATUNÁK 1897. 272-273.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 392.

⁸⁹ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 151r. No. 61.; ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 151r. No. 63.

⁹⁰ FORGÁCH 1982. 257.

campaign during late June. Ferenc Török⁹¹, János Pethő⁹², László Gyulaffy⁹³, György Thury⁹⁴, Kristóf Nádasdy⁹⁵, János Choron and Bálint Magyar and their men⁹⁶.

The numerical strength of the army at Győr can also be assessed. Istvánffy writes that the army to save Palota counted a total of 14.000 soldiers in mid-June⁹⁷. In his July 5 letter, Tievesch mentions a somewhat greater army of 15.000 strong, going against pasha Arslan⁹⁸. A June 28 report mentions “15.000 men marching toward Győr”⁹⁹. As we have seen, the same army that went to the later campaign had gathered to save Palota, thus arguably its size was similar, around 15.000 men.

The attack against Tata did not take place then, as events took a different turn already at the beginning of the campaign. Zasius wrote the following on June 25 to the Saxon prince-electors: “They started towards Tata, but detoured to Fehérvár at once. Their intention is to ambush the Turkish camp”¹⁰⁰. It was reported by the vice-chancellor on July 2 and by Tievesch on July 5 that pasha Arslan successfully avoided the battle and retreated his forces to Buda¹⁰¹. Thus no fighting took place again, but the Turkish soldiers captured by Bálint Magyar told that the Veszprém bey rode out for a raid with 300 riders. All narrative sources and the 1566 yearly military report also discuss the event in more or less detail¹⁰². The most significant differences are between the most detailed accounts. According to the German newsletter and Tievesch’s report, Bálint Magyar and his light cavalry scouted toward Tata¹⁰³ when they contacted seven Turkish soldiers. They attacked them, killing two and capturing two

⁹¹ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 30. d. No. 2.; MARZALI 1882. 72.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

⁹² MARZALI 1882. 72.

⁹³ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 30. d. No. 2.; FORGÁCH 1982. 258.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

⁹⁴ MARZALI 1882. 73.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

⁹⁵ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 22. d. No. 14.; MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 22. d. No. 15.; MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 22. d. No. 16.

⁹⁶ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 30. d. No. 2.; Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.; MATUNÁK 1897. 274.

⁹⁷ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 393.

⁹⁸ MATUNÁK 1897. 273.

⁹⁹ MARZALI 1882. 78.

¹⁰⁰ MARZALI 1882. 72.

¹⁰¹ MARZALI 1882. 73.; MATUNÁK 1897. 273-274.

¹⁰² ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.; Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566., ORTELIUS 1665. 104.; VERANCSICS 1981. 120.; FORGÁCH 1982. 258.; ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

¹⁰³ Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.

more, with the rest probably escaping. They headed back to the Christian camp with the two captives, and these related the situation in Veszprém during their interrogation¹⁰⁴. However, Istvánffy claims that Ferenc Török sent a raid led by his man Demeter Csokonai, and these brought back a Turkish captive¹⁰⁵. After the interrogation, the Hungarians tried to persuade Salm to use the opportunity and attack Veszprém. Zasius related in his July 2 report¹⁰⁶ that Thury was especially active and succeeded in persuading the perimeter captain, while Istvánffy lists Török and Gyulaffy, apart from the ex-lieutenant at Palota, to propose the attack on Veszprém¹⁰⁷.

Thus the march took a new direction and went to Veszprém through Palota¹⁰⁸. Our sources relate basically the same chain of events, with Salm and Helffenstein beginning the siege on June 29 with their Hungarian and German soldiers and capturing it by assault the next day. Based on Istvánffy's description, we could assume that the Christian army took Veszprém by raid¹⁰⁹. But the greatest difference is in the details on the collapse of the wall section at the siege of Veszprém. The "Hungarian Livy" mentions two times when this happened. The captive and Demeter Csokonai also said that "the walls of the site were so feeble that when he (Demeter Csokonai) and his comrades were targeted upon seeing them under the walls and the smaller cannon was fired, the wall collapsed and crumbled down"¹¹⁰. Then, after the arrival of the besiegers, "other parts of the stockades were weak for their age and was destroyed, together with their grenadiers (...)"¹¹¹.

Istvánffy connects the destruction of the wall section from friendly artillery fire with Csokonai's raid. The rest of the sources relate that this occurred after the arrival of the Christian armies, though the descriptions differ in the details. Forgách and Verancsics only briefly mention the wall's collapse. The first was informed that this happened by chance and the same time when the Christian army arrived¹¹². The German-language newsletter provides more details. According to this, Salm and Helffenstein ordered the earthworks and the barraging of the walls on June 29. The defenders reacted by fierce artillery fire which resulted in the walls collapse¹¹³. However, Tiesch's report from July

¹⁰⁴ Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.; MATUNÁK 1897. 274.

¹⁰⁵ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

¹⁰⁶ MARCZALI 1882. 73.

¹⁰⁷ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

¹⁰⁸ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 22. d. No. 14.

¹⁰⁹ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

¹¹⁰ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

¹¹¹ ISTVÁNYFY 2003. 394.

¹¹² VERANCICS 1981. 120.; FORGÁCH 1982. 258.

¹¹³ Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.

5 and the Selmebánya diplomats' July 14 letter to Körmöcbánya tell a different story. The latter mentions that the count (Salm) rode around the castle to investigate weak points. They shot at him and this caused the wall collapse¹¹⁴. Tieleesch gives the following details on the events. Salm was joined by Hans von Rueber and one German cavalry battalion to scout the castle's weak spots. The defenders attempted to shoot them, but their efforts backfired and a great wall section collapsed. Salm was reported to call out: "Hear! This is God's will! A sign that the Lord intends to grant us Veszprém!"¹¹⁵. Tieleesch and the Selmebánya letter agree that the Győr perimeter captain had the cannons target the broken wall section, to prevent the defenders from rebuilding it¹¹⁶. In other words, the Christian artillery began shooting only after the collapse of the wall section. We also considered the year-concluding military report as well to ascertain the timeline, but the excerpt only informs that the movement of the great cannon in Veszprém caused the disaster that sealed the defenders' fate¹¹⁷.

The defenders also attempted to disable the besiegers' cannons by approaching and spiking them. A letter informs that 60 Turks lashed out from the castle at night, but the troops in the siege fortifications repelled them¹¹⁸.

The next day was Sunday, June 30, when the Hungarian and German soldiers attended sermon, at 9 o'clock they cried Jesus three times and fired three cannons. Salm and Helffenstein chose five thousand men from the two nations to charge the castle from three directions. The first German unit (four infantry battalions) attacked at the fallen wall section, while the second unit (two battalions) went against the far side of the castle. The Hungarian charged the castle gate. In his work, Forgách gave details on the latter: "The Hungarians brought down the gate with axes, others climbing on ladders; first László Gyulaffy and his men broke in and threw torches on the roofs; soon the Germans also rushed in; incidentally, the stored gunpowder also detonated"¹¹⁹. A day-long combat ensued where every member of the garrison, except for three Hungarians, were slain. The women and children survived, though, as they were hiding under the vaults of a church¹²⁰. Istvánffy also mentions that Hatstatt was given a "tall maiden of much grace" as a gift¹²¹. The attackers took heavy casualties as well, having lost two hundred men¹²². On July 18, Teuffel

¹¹⁴ MATUNÁK 1897. 270.

¹¹⁵ MATUNÁK 1897. 274.

¹¹⁶ MATUNÁK 1897. 270., 274-275.

¹¹⁷ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.

¹¹⁸ MATUNÁK 1897. 270.

¹¹⁹ FORGÁCH 1982. 258.

¹²⁰ Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.; MATUNÁK 1897. 270., 275.

¹²¹ ISTVÁNNFFY 2003. 394.

¹²² Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.

was ordered by the Court Military Council to organize the provisions for soldiers wounded during Veszprém's siege¹²³. The Christian troops acquired a great amount of loot (horses, gold, silver and clothes)¹²⁴. However, both Istvánffy and Forgách relate that the Germans and Hungarians had disputes over the spoils of war. This resulted in serious fights as well¹²⁵.

Salm was responsible for Veszprém's defense. He ordered Mihány Széchényi there and provided him with his own cavalry and two hundred infantrymen¹²⁶. However, they found no food and Salm wrote to Orsolya Kanizsai on July 2, asking for flour, wine and cattle¹²⁷. On July 7, the Court Military Council ordered Teuffel to provide Palota and Veszprém with food¹²⁸. It seems this was a persistent problem, as Salm and Helffenstein were requesting an organization of supplies as late as July¹²⁹. The castle and its vicinity had endured so much constant fighting that they were in very poor condition, and the Győr captain had to return to Győr again¹³⁰.

The first entry in the Court Military Council's protocollum about the recapture of Veszprém is dated July 4¹³¹. Three days later, Salm and Helffenstein received a letter of gratitude for lifting the siege of Palota and the recapture of Veszprém¹³².

The armies returned to Győr and commenced to Tata after some rest. The exact start date of the campaign is unknown, but it is certain that it did not conclude by mid-July, as Forgách claims¹³³. On July 18, Rueber was ordered by the Court Military Council to stay with the troops going against Tata¹³⁴. Gábor Szentgyörgyi, secretary to Orsolya Kanizsai wrote on July 22 from Pozsony that he had no news about the castle yet¹³⁵. This means the siege must have been ongoing then. The protocollum entries also give evidence that the Christian army was still under the walls on July 23¹³⁶. On July 26, the Court Military

¹²³ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 167r. No. 129.

¹²⁴ Wahrhaffte neue Zeitung...1566.; MATUNÁK 1897. 270., 275.

¹²⁵ FORGÁCH 1982. 258.; ISTVÁNYFFY 2003. 394.

¹²⁶ ISTVÁNYFFY 2003. 395.

¹²⁷ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 30. d. No. 2.

¹²⁸ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 162v. No. 37.

¹²⁹ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 124v., ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 127r.; ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 129r.; ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 131v.

¹³⁰ ORTELIUS 1665. 104.; MATUNÁK 1897. 270.

¹³¹ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 121v.

¹³² ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 162v. No. 43.; ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 163r. No. 48.

¹³³ FORGÁCH 1982. 259.

¹³⁴ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 166v. No. 126.

¹³⁵ MNL MOL MKA E 185 Nádasdy család lt. Missiles 39. d. No. 19.

¹³⁶ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Exp. B 145 Fol.: 131v.

Council replied to Salm's and Helffenstein's report about the successful siege¹³⁷. One day later, Hans Tazgern was sent to fortify Tata's defenses¹³⁸. Also on July 27, Salm and Helffenstein were ordered to send the two Turkish captives to Vienna¹³⁹.

The siege must have commenced in the second half of July. We are not only unable to date the recapture of Tata, but our sources give us very little on the detailed events as well. Only Ortelius and Istvánffy include some brief descriptions in their works. According to these, Salm and Helffenstein demanded the garrison to give up the castle. The answer was no, so the Christian artillery began to break the fortifications, soon blasting an opening that enabled assault. Similarly to the siege of Veszprém, Salm divided the attacking troops into three units. He secretly moved a thousand musketeers in the right-side moat. He sent a force of the same strength in front of the already collapsed walls. Two thousand men had to charge the castle gate. When Salm gave the signal and they commenced, the whole garrison rushed to defend the collapsed walls. Then the Győr captain also charged the main gate with his men, he broke in and took the central castle. However, the guards did not surrender and in the ensuing fierce battle the besiegers killed everyone but fifty persons. These had locked themselves up in the inner castle, led by a jannisary agha named Kurt. They had to give themselves up before long, though. Several beys were captured, including pasha Arslan's cousin, who was sent to Vienna. Salm put "a choice 50 Germans from the army of Gáspár of Thüringia" to defend the castle¹⁴⁰.

Following the capture of Tata, the Turkish garrisons in the strongholds of the Vértes hills, Vitány (administrative district of Vértessomló) and Gesztes (Várgesztes) abandoned their duties and fled their castles¹⁴¹. Istvánffy writes that Salm ordered men into these structures as well, before returning to Győr¹⁴². Ortelius relates the same in his work. He also informs that beside Vitány and Gesztes, Csókakő and Zsámbék were also abandoned. The strongholds themselves were simply burned up. Salm was able to take the vacated castles easily and ordered guards into each¹⁴³. However, the detailed war report at the end of the year suggests that only Vitány and Gesztes were currently held by the Christians¹⁴⁴. The catalogs of the Buda vilayet castles show that the

¹³⁷ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 171v. No. 202.

¹³⁸ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 171v. No. 203.

¹³⁹ ÖStA KA HKR Wien Pr. Reg. B 146 Fol.: 171v. No. 204.

¹⁴⁰ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.; ORTELIUS 1665. 105.; ISTVÁNFY 2003. 395.

¹⁴¹ ORTELIUS 1665. 105.; ISTVÁNFY 2003. 395.

¹⁴² ISTVÁNFY 2003. 395.

¹⁴³ ORTELIUS 1665. 105.

¹⁴⁴ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.

mentioned castles already had Turkish guards in 1569. Klára Hegyi assumed that Vitány was under Ottoman control only until 1566¹⁴⁵. In contrast, the war report relates that Gesztes and Villány was recaptured by the Ottoman armies who were sent to Székesfehérvár still in 1566. In fact, both stronghold hosted only a small garrison. The Turks brought three cannons to attack Gesztes and started the siege. After some days, the defenders had to surrender. The garrison in Vitány did not even meet the attackers and fled, leaving the stronghold behind¹⁴⁶. My opinion is that control over the two castles was swapped two times in 1566, while Zsámbék and Csókakő was merely abandoned by the Turkish guards, but Salm did not occupy them. This is how they can be present in the 1569 Turkish catalogs.

Summary

To sum up my paper, I would like to draw attention to two important aspects. 1566 is a tragic year of the Hungarian history, due to Miklós Zrínyi and the heroic defenders of Szigetvár. However, beside the fall of Gyula and Szigetvár, beside the collapse of the perimeter in Somogy, the Hungarian and German armies carried out a significant and quite successful campaign in the Northern Transdanubia before the sultan's campaign. The successful defense of Palota, pasha Arslan's defeat and the recapture of Veszprém and Tata are strategically significant achievements. Both castles were wedged into the Hungarian chain of castles, as constant threats to the provinces in the Transdanubia. Losing Szigetvár and Gyula can be regarded as great strategic disadvantage for the Hungarians, but the same can be said about Palota, Veszprém and Tata on the Turkish side. On the other hand, I also employed and revisited old and new sources to present, detail and comment on the events in the northern Transdanubia during June and July of 1566.

¹⁴⁵ HEGYI 2007. 585-587., 651., 653-654., 1016-1017.

¹⁴⁶ ÖStA KA AFA 1566-13-3.

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