

MOLDAVIAN UPRISING OF 1574 IN POLISH SOURCES

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Abstract: *This paper deals with events that took place in Moldavia in 1574. The hospodar Ioan Vodă, refusing to pay a drastically increased tribute to the Ottoman Empire, risked the Sultan's wrath, and thus lost his office. He did not go to Constantinople as the Padishah wanted, but instead decided on an armed confrontation with troops sent to cast him off the throne. However, the conflict was not merely a personal matter for Ioan: it took the form of a nationwide uprising – the hospodar was supported in the struggle by both the upper and lower layers of Moldavian society. At stake was an end to Ottoman domination. Although the chances of defeating the Turks were small, Ioan's troops prevailed for quite some time. A unit of Cossacks who came to Moldavia from the borderlands of the Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth, under the leadership of the nobleman Świerczowski, played an essential role in the events described. They constituted one of the most valuable (and perhaps even the most valuable) combat formation in Ioan's army. Another Polish thread also appears here: namely, a commitment made by the border magnates (Olbracht Laski and Prince Ostrogski) to help Ioan. Although these were only promises, it caused considerable anger with Sultan Selim II. Their fate was sealed by the betrayal of one of Ioan's commanders. The defeat was decided by the betrayal of one of the commanders. However, the military disparity between the forces at Ioan's disposal and the potential of the Ottoman Empire suggests that the defeat of the Moldavians was only a matter of time.*

Keywords: *Ioan Vodă, Moldavia, the Ottoman Empire, Cossacks, Świerczowski.*

Rezumat: *Articolul se ocupă de evenimentele care au avut loc în Moldova în 1574. Domnul de atunci, Ioan Vodă cel Viteaz (1572-1574), nefiind de acord cu dublarea tributului impus de Imperiul Otoman, a riscat mânia sultanului și, astfel, pierderea funcției sale. Acesta a decis o confruntare armată cu trupele trimise să-l alunge de pe tron. Cu toate acestea, s-a dovedit că conflictul nu era problema personală a lui Ioan; a luat forma unei răscoale la nivel național - voievodul a fost susținut în luptă atât de straturile superioare, cât și de cele*

inferioare ale societății moldovenești. Deși șansele de a-i învinge pe turci erau mici, trupele lui Ioan au câștigat o serie de victorii. O formațiune de cazaci sosiți în Moldova din țările de frontieră ale Commonwealth-ului polon-lituanian, sub conducerea nobilului Świerczowski, a jucat un rol important în evenimentele descrise. Ei au constituit una dintre cele mai valoroase (și poate chiar cele mai valoroase) formațiuni de luptă din armata lui Ioan. Aici apare și un alt element polonez. Și anume, o declarație formală de ajutorare a lui Ioan Vodă cel Viteaz a fost făcută de magnații de frontieră Olbracht Łaski și prințul Ostrogi. Deși aceasta era doar o promisiune, a provocat o furie considerabilă sultanului Selim al II-lea. Înfrângerea lui Ioan Vodă a fost decisă prin trădarea unuia dintre comandanți, deși disproporția militară dintre forțele aflate la dispoziția lui Ioan și potențialul Imperiului Otoman sugerează că această înfrângere era doar o chestiune de timp.

INTRODUCTION

In the 16th century, Ottoman sultans selected the hospodar of Moldavia. Each of them had to pay tribute to Constantinople. To become a hospodar of Moldova, the candidate had to persuade Sultan Selim II and his clerks that he would be better than the current hospodar of Moldavia. Usually, that was determined by the promise of higher tribute.

In 1574 hospodar of Moldova was Ioan Vodă cel Cumplit. He had good relations with the Ottomans until the hospodar of Wallachia, Alexandru al II-lea Mircea, argued that his brother Petru would be better than Ioan. He promised to the Ottoman clerks a higher tribute than Ioan. Additionally, it was said Ioan liked Polish people too much, which was not suitable for the Sublime Porte.

Persuaded the Turks sent an envoy (czausz) to Ioan demanding he either pay the same tribute as proposed by Alexander and Petru, or bid the throne in Jassy farewell¹. If the demand was too much for Ioan, he was to see the Sultan in person. However, since the visit would lead to his execution rather than a

¹ He came 21 February 1574 – the day of coronation to the king of Poland Henry de Valois. See Leonard Gorecki, *Opisanie wojny Iwona hospodara wołoskiego z Selimem II cesarzem tureckim, toczonej w roku 1574* [A description of the war of Ioan Hospodar of Wallachia with Selim II of the Ottoman Emperor, fought in 1574], ed. Władysław Syrokomla, St. Petersburg and Mogilev, 1855, p. 9.

Marcin Bielski also gives a record of this and other facts. However, in a briefer form. He does not give many facts at all. That is why the author of this article will usually refer to Gorecki; to Bielski when his description is better than Gorecki's. See Marcin Bielski, *Kronika Marcina Bielskiego* [Chronicle of Marcin Bielski], ed. Kazimierz Józef Turowski, Sanok, 1856, p. 1345 – 1358.

prosperous life in Turkey, he decided not to take advantage of the offer. Before answering, he presented the situation to Moldavian boyars. He told them the proposed amount was excessive for their country². If they decided to pay, Moldovans would face poverty and starvation. He also suggested that succumbing to Selim's demand could have far-reaching consequences in the future – the emboldened Sultan would only continue to increase the tribute. Ioan left the decision to the boyars since it was upon them that the new burden would fall. As an alternative to the Sultan's invitation to visit, Ioan offered war. Admittedly, the envoy announced that Ottoman troops would enter Moldova if Ioan did not appear in Constantinople, but the hospodar was not going there. Ioan's proposal was high stakes: gain independence from the Ottoman's and end the tribute. The other scenario was all too evident. It was offered to the boyars as an opportunity, and they were prepared to risk everything³.

In this paper, we will present events of the year 1574, and attempt to answer whether Ioan had a real chance at gaining independence or if it was a cry of despair or if it was an attempt to get valuable spoils in neighbouring Wallachia.

The basic source of information about the events described in this text is Leonard Gorecki's *Opisanie wojny Iwona hospodara wołoskiego z Selimem II cesarzem tureckim, toczonej w roku 1574*. Marcin Bielski also devoted some space in his chronicle to the Moldavian uprising. Another Polish chronicler Reinhold Heidenstein just mentions the events in Moldavia⁴. In the 17th century, Jędrzej Maksymilian Fredro wrote about them⁵. When it comes to studies, no separate Polish book deals with them.

NEWCOMERS FROM POLAND

The Sultan's messenger was unceremoniously dismissed without any of the customary gifts, although the hospodar managed a few words. He stated that

² Although Gorecki writes Alexandru proposed tribute of 120 thousand red zlotys which would be two times more than Ioan was paying, really after his death it increased from 40 to 50 thousand florins. See Leonard Gorecki, *Ibidem*, p. 9.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 9-11.

⁴ See Reinhold Heidenstein, *Dzieje Polski od śmierci Zygmunta Augusta do roku 1594* [The history of Poland from the death of Zygmunt August to 1594], vol. 1, ed. Michał Gliszczyński, Włodzimierz Spasowicz, St. Petersburg, 1857, p. 160.

⁵ See Jędrzej Maksymilian Fredro, *Dzieje narodu polskiego pod Henrykiem Walezyszem królem polskim a potem francuzkim* [The history of the Polish nation under Henry Valesius, the Polish king and then the French king], ed. Władysław Syrokomla, Petersburg and Mohylew 1855, p. 94-124.

despite his desire to serve as a loyal vassal, he could not fulfil the Sultan's wishes⁶.

Preparations for the war began. Ioan gathered a fair-sized army, but there was one problem. The majority of his troops were farmers not connected professionally with military life and their guns were also of poor quality, so Ioan sent a message to Poland. Referring to the alliance between the two countries (Poland was to play the role of the protector of Moldavia in it), Polish King Henri de Valois was asked for reinforcements. But he refused. He had no intention of spoiling their good relations with the Sultan. Fearful that a direct occupation by the Ottoman's would threaten Polish security, Valois did not even agree to the minimum plan—allowing Polish volunteer to join and advertising for them⁷. However, some Polish adventurers went to Moldavia on their own.

Having learned that a small Cossack unit was seeking spoils around the mouth of the Dnieper, the hospodar invited them to join his army. Initially fearful of a trick, once Ioan appealed directly to the Cossacks he convinced them to join with the offer of regular pay. This deal seemed all the more tempting given the poor finds on their latest venture for spoils⁸.

The Cossack elders accepted the hospodar's proposal; reconnaissance was sent to capture "tongues" – individuals who could provide information on Ottoman plans⁹. At the head of the one thousand two hundred strong Cossack stood the Polish nobleman Jan Świerczowski – it was still a period when it was not dishonourable for a nobleman to have Cossacks as companions during an expedition. They were a valued combat force, and it was only in later decades that their reputation declined ("bad press", bandits, scooters and drunkards to be guarded so as not cause trouble).

A troop from Poland arrived in Moldavia in the second half of March 1574. Ioan received new soldiers with a lavish feast, expensive presents and food for their horses. However, Świerczowski said they did not come for the money but to fight the enemy of Christianity¹⁰. The expedition was recruited from residents of the Braclaw and Bar district offices (starostwa). In addition to Cossacks, townspeople and representatives of the Podlasie nobility joined. Świerczowski himself supposedly had Masovian roots¹¹.

⁶ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 11-12.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 12-13.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 14-16.

¹¹ Mikhaylo Khrushchevski, *Istoriya Ukrainy – Rusi* [The History of Ukraine – Russia], vol. 7, New York, 1956, p. 147-148.

Now Ioan could start the war. According to Gorecki, during the council that took place immediately after the mentioned reception of the Ottoman messenger, Ioan “swore that not only would he not lay down his weapon, but that he would expel the Turkish troops from Wallachia [here it means Moldavia] and devastate their own state, thereby obtaining the conditions of an honest peace.”¹² The boyars “declared that their wives, children should gather with whatever possessions and expensive equipment they have at the Hotin [Chocim] fortress and equip their own army with a penny for Ioan. While waiting for the enemy at the Danube, they took an oath that they would stand to the last.”¹³

TOTAL WAR

But before that happened, there were clashes with troops who came to Moldavia in March to defend Selim’s interests. He assigned the task of dethroning Ioan to Alexandru, hospodar of Wallachia, who initiated the whole affair. After crossing the Milcov River, intervention forces set up a camp, but its fortification was neglected. Świerczowski’s Cossacks and six thousand Moldavians commanded by Dumbravă set off towards the camp, followed by heavier units led by Ioan. Before Cossacks and Dumbravă’s branch reached the main enemy forces, they encountered and defeated their front guard. The prisoners said that the foe’s army consisted of about seven thousand Wallachians, three thousand Turks and three hundred Hungarians. Saddle-horses of Alexandru’s soldiers were feeding far away, when the attack started. The surprise was complete. Near the town of Focșani, the Wallachian hospodar’s army was surrounded and defeated¹⁴.

However, it should be said that Ioan had considerable strength. It is estimated that he had about twenty thousand soldiers¹⁵. In addition, his subordinates had exceptionally high morale. Both the boyars with their private troops and peasants arrived to face the invaders¹⁶.

Hospodar Alexandru and his brother Petru, a challenger to the Moldavian throne, avoided death. They crossed Lake Cahul and took refuge in the fortress of Brăila. Meanwhile, Ioan distributed the wealth he found at the enemy’s camp among

¹² Leonard Gorecki, *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 17-18; Zdzisław Spieralski, *Awantury mołdawskie* [Moldavian Brawls], Warsaw, 1967, p. 135; Marek Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość polska XVI wieku* [Wars and Polish military in the 16th century], vol. 2, Zabrze - Tarnowskie Góry, 2012, p. 288.

¹⁵ Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

¹⁶ Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

the bird-pecked corpses. Having seen neither Alexandru nor Petru among the dead, hospodar Ioan began pursuing them after four days of rest. He entered Wallachia in April, conquering castles and fortresses, while treating its inhabitants with the utmost brutality. The capital of Wallachia - Bucharest (București) was also conquered. There Ioan installed a hospodar named Vintilă¹⁷.

Having located Petru and Alexandru's whereabouts, Ioan headed with the army in their direction. Having reached Brăila, he set up camp at a safe distance from the fortress walls beyond the reach of its artillery. Because the fortresses was heavily manned and strategically located, Ioan sought to avoid a direct assault, instead requesting of the fortress commanders that they only wanted „two Moldavian fugitives”¹⁸. If his request was not met, he would use force¹⁹.

The fortress's Ottoman commander sent four inhabitants of Brăila (Turks) to Ioan with a reply. Their message was that the hospodar's demand would not be met and, moreover, he himself was the sultan's subject. In addition, messengers were equipped with props: ten giant cannonballs, as many smaller ones, and two arrows. The message: either Ioan's forces leave or be treated to “delicacies” like those brought by the messengers²⁰.

In response Ioan ordered the messenger's ears and noses cut off, and to hang them upside down where they could be seen from the fortress. Next, he ordered an assault on the neighbouring city, Brăila. The inhabitants were slain and their homes set alight. Being one of the wealthiest cities in the area, Ioan soldiers found quantities of gold, silver, money and pearls²¹.

At that point, only the castle remained as a holdout. But Świerczowski had convinced Ioan to abandon the siege and go towards Tighina (Bendery) – a city in the Ottomans' area. Once conquered, there too, were cruel murders of the city's inhabitants. Cossacks reinforced with Moldavian troops quickly crushed a detachment of Turks sent from Kilia to Brăila. The remnants of that force took refuge in Tighina, which could be the reason why it was attacked. The castle was not taken²². Next Turkish troops came from Cetatea Albă (Akerman/Białogród).

¹⁷ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 18; Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 135; Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 289; *Vademecum bałkanisty. Lata 500-2007* [Balkanist Vademecum. 500 – 2007], ed. Ilona Czamańska, Zdzisław Pentek, Poznań, 2009, p. 271.

¹⁸ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 20-21; Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 289. Spieralski writes that the relief came from both Kilia and Cetatea Albă. See Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

Świerczowski pushed them to the steppes of Bugeac. The Cossacks proceeded to attack and burn this city, where they found plenty of riches²³.

BETRAYAL

While in May, the busy troops of Ioan destroyed the leading edge of the Ottoman-Tatar-Wallachian armies, by June the Turks had gathered behind the Danube more serious forces (estimated at twenty to thirty thousand) to decisively crush the rebellion. They were additionally equipped with heavy artillery and siege equipment²⁴.

After summoning the Hotin pârcălab (i.e. the commander of the Hotin fortress) of Ieremia Golia „Cernăuțeanul” (i.e. “of Chernivtsi”), Ioan sent him to make sure that the invading units did not cross the Danube. He ordered his army to cross to the Turkish bank of the river and capture the Galați fortress located there. If the Turks would like to complete the crossing, they will do it here. Ieremia Golia „Cernăuțeanul” (Czarnowicz) was a man in whom Ioan had full confidence²⁵.

However, it turned out that the Turks found the key to Ieremia’s heart. First, they offered him thirty thousand red Hungarian zlotys, if he visited their camp and hear out their offer. There the Wallachian voivode, speaking on behalf of the Turks, laid out Cernăuțeanul’s options in stark terms. Ioan could not win the war with the Sultan. His defeat was only a matter of time. Thus, the only question remaining was whether Cernăuțeanul wanted to stay with Ioan and share his fate, or take the side of the Turks and have a future in bright colours²⁶.

Cernăuțeanul decided to let the Turkish-Wallachian troops pass. It was also important that the whole operation took place “quietly” to not alert the opponent too soon. When the crossing was over, Cernăuțeanul was instructed to inform Ioan. As justification, he stated that the enemy was too numerous to stop. He recommended a quick hit with the whole army and smashing the opponent²⁷.

At that time, Ioan besieged Tighina castle. He convened a meeting whose purpose was to decide whether to continue the siege or break it and do what Cernăuțeanul advised. It was decided to follow the advice of the pârcălab. Meanwhile, the Turks, having crossed the Danube exactly where Ioan had anticipated,

²³ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 21; Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

²⁴ Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 289-290.

²⁵ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 30-31.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

camped north of Lake Cahul. On June 9, the Moldavian army approached at a distance of about twenty-two kilometres. Ioan, following Świerczowski's advice, sent him with the Cossacks and six thousand Moldavian troops under the command of Jeremiah to obtain a "tongue"²⁸.

The Cossacks found a Turkish front guard, which turned out to be quite numerous. Considering that the main forces had to be proportionally more significant, it turned out that the enemy troops were much more numerous than expected – Cernăuțeanul gave incorrect information. This cast a massive shadow on the credibility of the man whom Ioan trusted almost wholly. Wanting to be 100% sure, the hospodar decided to perform a reconnaissance in person. However, from the hill, which was theoretically a convenient observation point, nothing interesting could be spotted²⁹.

Ioan made a mistake. He misjudged the situation, not being convinced that the opponent had the advantage. Contrary to Świerczowski's opinion, he divided his army into thirty troops - separately cavalry, infantry separately, placing two guns in front of each of them³⁰. According to Gorecki, the most valuable formation in his army were the Polish Cossacks. The infantry consisted mainly of villagers armed with "scythes, crooked bows, Turkish swords and sticks"³¹. Immediately before the battle, he climbed the hill again; this time, the enemy army appeared to him in full glory. Confident of Cernăuțeanul's betrayal, Ioan summoned him, but he did not arrive. Ieremia sent a message that he could not come because he was preparing to launch an attack. But it was a sham attack – when he was on the battlefield, he just gave up³².

This event lowered the morale of the other Moldavians, especially given that the Turks used Cernauteanul's horsemen as a shield in their attack. However, Ioan was unmoved. He ordered to strike, but instead of moving forward, the Moldavian army began to retreat. The angry hospodar did not lose his cool, but ordered the artillery to open fire³³.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 31-33; Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 290. Cossacks did not believe Cernăuțeanul. Moldovan peasantry did not believe the boyars at all. But they believed Cossacks. See Marcin Bielski, *op. cit.*, p. 1352-1353.

²⁹ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 33. There was only one hill in the area. See Marcin Bielski, *op. cit.*, p. 1353.

³⁰ Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 290-291. Information that each detachment was assigned exactly two guns is from Bielski. See Marcin Bielski, *op. cit.*, p. 1353.

³¹ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 33-34.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 34; Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

The Cossacks with great courage attacked the enemy flanks. There were also enough brave warriors among the Moldavians to break through, what began a Turkish retreat. Realizing, though, that the Moldavian forces would soon find themselves in range of hidden Turkish canons, Świerczowski called a halt to the pursuit. Thus, the Moldavians and Cossacks were able to resist a Turkish counter-attack and safely return to their camp³⁴.

There, Ioan set up his soldiers near canons, arches and spears were prepared. However, the Turks attacked with great enthusiasm breaking the defenders' ranks. Despite this, Moldovans moved forward. A bloody battle ensued, in which the various combating sides were so mixed that the artillery became useless. Ioan ordered his troops behind the cannon line, which was done. So, the Turks withdrew, and there was, as if based on an agreement concluded by both parties, a break in battle³⁵.

THE LAST CHORD

A sudden and violent storm paused the fighting and ultimately had a fatal effect on the Moldavians because the rain-soaked guns became unusable. When the fight began again, the newly reinforced Turks forced the Moldovans to retreat, despite fighting bravely³⁶.

Ioan still had a lot of infantry and about 250 Cossacks. The hospodar was not afraid of death but, Świerczowski advised retreating to a safe place, which was done. Initially, they tried to take the guns with them. However, as they would slow the march significantly, it was decided to spoil (to be useless to the Turks) and abandon them³⁷.

Having reached a recently burned village Ioan set up a fortified camp with the earthwork. On June 10, 1574, the Turks arrived there at sunset and surrounded the Moldavians with a tight cordon. The surrounding villages were burned that same night. The fire lit the area so that nobody in the dark could escape or sally from the besieged camp³⁸.

The next day at dawn, mutual shooting began – the defenders had several

³⁴ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 34-35.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 35-36.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 37-38.

guns at their disposal³⁹. A three-day exchange of fire produced no movement on either side. With no relief in sight for the Moldovans, the Turks suggested that Ioan surrender since defeat was only a matter of time. Having consulted with his soldiers, Ioan was eager to negotiate. Interestingly, as Gorecki writes, the Cossacks preferred death to surrender. In their opinion, the Turkish assurances to Christians were worthless. Surrendering simply meant a more tortuous humiliating death. Moldavians were more eager to bargain, although ready to sacrifice⁴⁰.

While Ioan still had considerable strength his fortifications did not have access to water and thirst became more severe. He was ready to give up to save his troops⁴¹. Summoning the Turks, Ioan announced the terms of his possible surrender. They were to let the Cossacks leave; he was to be taken intact to the Sultan. As for the Moldavians in the camp, we have two divergent versions. Marcin Bielski writes that Ioan did not raise this issue at all - as the Sultan's "inventory", they could be sure that nothing would happen to them. Murdering them meant impoverishment the Padishah. Gorecki's version was similar except that Ioan strongly advocated for the Moldavians troops, from which one can conclude that their safety was his third condition⁴².

He demanded that each of the Ottoman commanders swear seven times that these conditions would be met, which the Turks did very eagerly. Then came a farewell to the soldiers serving under his command. He announced that if he survived, he would return to Moldavia. He gave away the gems and valuables he still had; Cossacks were rewarded in particular. Once in Ottoman captivity, he repeated that the Świerczowski's troop be allowed to return to their homeland with their horses and property, citing the promise made by the Turks. Finally, Ioan offered that any anger the Turks had at the Moldavians be taken out on him. The Turks obliged. Irritated by his haughty demeanour, one of them cut him by the sword in the face and the bosom. Janissaries cut off the head; then tied the body to two camels, who tore him apart. The head was stuck on a spear. But they also appreciated the bravery of Ioan, appealing to Allah to infuse them with his knightly spirit⁴³.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 37. Bielski writes that the defenders sallied several times. See Marcin Bielski, *op. cit.*, p. 1355.

⁴⁰ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 38-39.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 39-40; Marcin Bielski, *op. cit.*, p. 1356.

⁴³ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 39-41. On the way to the Turkish camp, Ioan was accompanied by a Pole named Osmolski, with whom he had a three-hour conversation. See Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 41. However, the role of this gentleman in the described

It turned out that the Cossacks' predictions were correct, as the conditions regarding the safe departure of Ioan's subordinates were likewise not met. The defeated troops were treacherously attacked as they confidently left camp, knowing nothing about the fate of their commander⁴⁴.

The Cossacks for their part, could not break through the thicket of Ottoman troops, so they returned to the camp where they fought for their lives⁴⁵. Some were killed, some were captured. Gorecki lists the names of the most eminent prisoners; Świerczowski was among them. The Cossacks were offered a new, prosperous life in Turkey if they converted to Islam and swore an oath of allegiance. They refused. After paying a ransom, the Cossacks returned to their homeland⁴⁶. Petru became the new hospodar of Moldavia, the 5th „Schiopul” (Engl. Lame).

POLISH MAGNATES' THREAD

Perhaps the fate of Ioan would have been different if he had received support from the Polish magnates. He had grounds to count on it. Two Eastern Borderlands magnates – Olbracht Łaski and Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski assured him about it in letters. They declared support in people, horses, food and ammunition. However, they sent nobody and nothing to Moldavia⁴⁷.

Nevertheless, at Padishah's court, there was a realistic expectation of Polish support. Even Royal help was taken into account. A French agent in Turkey wrote about it to his King (Charles IX) on June 4. But they thought the resulting involvement of Henri de Valois would not be a support for Ioan, but for Olbracht Łaski – because of the belief in Turkey that Henri de Valois promised him the throne of Moldavia⁴⁸. And there were reasons to think in this way – Łaski had

situation is not explained. Heidenstein writes about the tearing of the body of Ioan by camels too. See Reinhold Heidenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁴⁴ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 41; Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 292; Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁴⁵ Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 292; Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁴⁶ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Bielski writes that only twelve Cossacks were taken prisoners - the same ones whom Gorecki calls "the most eminent". See Marcin Bielski, *op. cit.*, p. 1357-1358.

⁴⁷ Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 136; Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁴⁸ Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 136; cf. François de Noailles Bishop Dax to Catherine de Medici, Istanbul, 8 May 1574, in: *Documente privitoare la istoria Românilor urmare la colecțiunea lui Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki* [Documents regarding the history of Romanians following collection of Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki], supl. 1., vol. 1, p. 1518-1780, ed. Grigore

ambitions to become Moldavian hospodar. He submitted his offer in Constantinople at the same time as Petru Șchiopul. But he was not chosen by the Sultan because he was considered a dangerous person not to be trusted. Also, his proposed tribute could have been less than Petru's.

Nevertheless, Łaski had several reasons to believe he would succeed: First, he had French support that was potentially decisive at the court in Constantinople. Additionally, the French agent Szomberg promised Łaski 100,000 thalers. It was a debt of gratitude for supporting the election of King Henri de Valois of Poland⁴⁹.

Ioan's family found asylum in Poland. This fact and the letters of the abovementioned magnates captured by the Sultan sent him into a rage. He demanded that all the guilty be punished – both those who really helped Ioan and those who just declared help. In a letter provided by envoy Ahmed, he put it as a condition of peace between Poland and the Ottomans. The Sultan demanded the return of the family of Ioan with all the people (including servants) who had taken refuge in Poland. He also wanted the return of any property they removed, part of which, he claimed, was money intended for tribute. The Sultan stressed his commitment to the Polish-Ottoman alliance, stating that if there was ever an attack on Poland, that state would meet with the Selim's anger. However, he underscored his disappointment that the Poles did not show the same loyalty. The Wallachian voivode reported to Sultan that in a critical situation for Ioan, Polish noblemen sent him two hundred people who plundered Cetatea Albă⁵⁰.

Gorecki believed that the Tartar invasion that hit Poland in October 1575 was retaliation for the entry of Cossacks into Moldavia and was taken at the behest

Tocilescu, Alexandru Odobescu, București, 1886, No. LXVI, pp. 33-34; the same to Charles IX, Istanbul, 19 May 1574, *Ibidem*, no. LXVII, p. 34; the same to Henry of Valois, Istanbul, 30 May 1574, *Ibidem*, No. LXVIII, pp. 34-35; see. Ryszard Zieliński, Roman Źelewski, *Olbracht Łaski. Od Kieżmarku do Londynu* [Olbracht Łaski. From Kieżmark to London], Warsaw, 1982, p. 90-91.

⁴⁹ Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 134; Marek Plewczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

⁵⁰ Selim II's letter to Polish lords, Constantinople, 31 VII-9 VIII 1574, in: *Katalog rękopisów orientalnych ze zbiorów polskich* [Catalog of Oriental manuscripts from Polish collections], vol. 1, edited by Stefan Strelcyn, Marian Lewicki, Ananiasz Zajączkowski; part. 1., *Katalog dokumentów tureckich: dokumenty do dziejów Polski i krajów ościennych w latach 1455 – 1672* [Catalog of Turkish documents: documents on the history of Poland and neighboring countries in the years 1455 – 1672], ed. Zygmunt Abrahamowicz, Ananiasz Zajączkowski, Warsaw, 1959, p. 212-213; Zdzisław Spieralski, *op. cit.*, p. 136-137; Świętosław Orzelski, *Bezkrólewia ksiąg ośmioro* [Eight books about Interregnum], vol. 2, ed. Włodzimierz Spasowicz, St. Petersburg and Mogilev, 1856, p. 37-39.

of Selim's successor Murad III⁵¹. It also should be said Heidenstein reports that Ioan's wife was given to the Turks⁵².

CONCLUSIONS

It seems that the Moldavian uprising in 1574 had no chance of success. The power of the Ottoman Empire meant that, despite a series of defeats, it was able to deploy more armies that would one day break the resistance of Moldavians. Cernăuțeanul's betrayal only accelerated the course of events. Moreover, a similar situation happened just over a quarter of a century later, when Mihai Viteazul of Wallachia (Michael the Brave, 1593-1601), despite equally impressive victories, was not able to balance the military forces that his opponents had⁵³.

It is surprising the number of victories won by Ioan's army – we should remember that most of his soldiers were poorly armed, i.e. "amateurs". It is possible, therefore, that the determining factor was the presence of the battle-hardened Polish unit. So, could sending additional reinforcements by magnates declaring have helped tip the scale of victory? No, Moldavia was an economically valuable property for the Turks that they certainly would not have let it out of their hands. The case is also made by the fact that Olbracht Łaski, who was aspired to the title of hospodar, sought to obtain the position through "legal" means through the court of Constantinople.

The events of 1574 also had a far less glorious aspect: specifically, the murders and looting in neighbouring Wallachia. In retrospect, it is difficult to discern the motivations of individual participants of the events described in this article. However, it seems that there was some hope for victory by joining Ioan. For some, it was a cry of despair, for others, a means by which to get rich quick. Above all, however, it pushed these people into action during a specific historical situation. The root causes were more impulsive than considered. Deep reflection was not the deciding factor.

⁵¹ Leonard Gorecki, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵² Reinhold Heidenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 160. Gorecki and Bielski don't write about the Moldavian refugees at all. Orzelski does not confirm the information at Heidenstein's. None of them writes about the further fate of others persons as well as about the treasures and money taken from Moldavia.

⁵³ Another association that comes to mind of the author is World War II, during which German troops surpassing Soviets (in terms of armament, training and quality of command) but were finally unable to cope with far more numerous enemy divisions.

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