

THE MILITARY COMMUNICATION NETWORK IN THE PORȚILE DE FIER UNDER THE TEUTONIC ORDER, 1429–C. 1435

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Every competent military strategist and tactician knows that communications are vital to successful combat operations for command and control, as well as in support activities (such as intelligence dissemination, resource collection and resupply, etc.).¹ For example, within the military system in which I was trained, the United States Army, communications are regarded in the following way:

“Effective communications are essential to command and control. Information exchanged by two or more parties must be transmitted, received, and understood. Without it, units cannot maneuver effectively, and leaders cannot command and control their units, which may result in lives being lost on the battlefield. The user must understand the equipment and employ it effectively and within its means.”²

However, it is difficult to predict whether a well-planned system of communications can be transferred into a foreign theater of operations — even

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¹ The United States Department of Defense defines the basic concept of “command and control” as: “The exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission.” That is, it is the manner in which a commander gives orders to achieve a goal, so that his troops may comprehend and follow them. See: Department of Defense, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 43.

² Department of the Army, *The Warrior Ethos and Soldier Combat Skills*, FM 3–21.75 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2008), 11–1.

one that has been proven efficient through a century of routine practice — and perform as successfully there as it does within the original environment in which it developed organically due to unforeseen differences within the new military context.

For instance, the Teutonic Order, a medieval military order, had developed an increasingly complex and effective courier system within its “state” located in the lands of Prussia (called the *Ordensstaat*, now northern Poland) over the course of the fourteenth century, as it prosecuted a continuous crusade to convert and subjugate the Prussian people there.³ In 1426, the Order was presented with a proposition to send a military expedition into the Porțile de Fier to defend the southern frontier of the Kingdom of Hungary from advancing Ottoman forces.⁴ This expedition to the Porțile de Fier was a military undertaking, with an overall strategic goal and multiple tactical military objectives. We know that there was a courier system in place when the Teutonic Order took control of the twenty-two fortresses (sixteen to be garrisoned) guarding the northern bank of the Danube River in September 1429 until their abandonment of the project around 1435, because we still have communiqués sent to or from the officials of the expedition.⁵ These correspondences are located within two separate archives, the Teutonic Order’s correspondence archives (*Ordensbriefarchivs*) in Berlin, and the Hungarian National Archives (*Magyar Országos Levéltár*) in Budapest.⁶ A further two correspondences are currently missing, but we have

³ Rolf Fuhrmann, *Der Deutschorden von Akkon bis zum Baltikum. Die Armee 1198–1420* (Berlin: Zeughaus Verlag GmbH, 2017), 54.

⁴ The location of the Porțile de Fier is found currently on the Danube River where the Carpathian Mountains cross over it to meet the Balkans. As in the early fifteenth century, the Porțile de Fier is still a political borderland, today forming part of the boundary between Romania and Serbia. See: Map 1. Location of the Porțile de Fier within the Kingdom of Hungary.

⁵ According to document Staatsarchiv Königsberg (StA Königsberg), OBA, Kg. VII, 21 (dated by Costin Feneșan to around October or November 1429, and transcribed by Erich Joachim in 1912), the fortifications of *Severyn* (Drobeta-Turnu Severin), *Insyl Saan* (Insula Banului), *Goryn* (Insula Ada-Kaleh), *Orsua* (Orșova), *Peczsch* (Peștera Veterani), *Zynicze* (Tricule), *Staniloucz* (Izlas Repeziș), *Dranko* (Drencova), *Ybrasd* (Liborajdea), *Ander Peczsch* (Peștera Gaura cu Muscă), *Sand Ladislaen* (Coronini), *Possesin* (Pojejena), and *Rybes* (Râul Ribîș) on the River Danube, and *Myhalt* (Mehadia), *Halmas* (Dalboșeț), and *Ylied* (Ilidia) in the interior mountain passes. The remaining six fortresses are described as “wuste” or deserted. Erich Joachim, “König Sigmund und der Deutsche Ritterorden in Ungarn, 1429–1432: Mitteilung aus dem Staatsarchiv zu Königsberg,” *MIÖG*, 33 (1912): 108. Also: Costin Feneșan, *Cavalerii Teutoni în Banatul Severinului și la Dunărea de jos în prima jumătate a secolului al XV-lea* (Timișoara: Cosmopolitan Art, 2015), 187–188. See: Map 2. The Fortress Locations.

⁶ The three documents that are found in the *Ordensbriefarchivs* in Berlin are designated as: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA PrKB), XX. HA, (Ordensbriefsarchiv) OBA, Nr. 27837, Nr. 27838, and Nr. 5999. Those six found in the Magyar Országos Levéltár are:

transcriptions of them from 1912 when the *Ordensbriefarchivs* were housed in then Königsberg, Prussia (now called Kaliningrad, Russia).⁷

The Question

The focus of this article is an analysis of the courier system of the Porțile de Fier imported by the Teutonic Order's expeditionary force from 1429 to c. 1435. It is important to examine this system because, as stated above, communication systems are vital for military operations. Consequently, the number of documents connected to the expedition itself — which total twenty-eight that exclusively deal with the plans, reports, and various activities of the expedition — are quite numerous for both the period and the region. This creates a decent pool of documentary resources with which to work.

Therefore, the relative abundance of these primary sources become functionally advantageous in partially assessing the military effectiveness of the expedition and the chain of castles (which is the objective of my doctoral work) within the constraints of two historical factors: the brevity of their stay in the Porțile de Fier (about six years), and the complete failure of their mission to defend the Hungarian frontier in 1432.⁸ Briefly, beginning in January of that year, a large Ottoman army attempted an invasion of the Kingdom of Hungary, first assembling at the Danube River across from Kovin, Serbia (in the Južnabanatski district of Serbia). This is located approximately forty kilometers west of the Porțile de Fier along the Danube. The army immediately moved a further sixty kilometers westward to the fortress of Belgrade, where Sultan Murad II (1403 or 1404–1451) had taken personal control of it by May. Lack of success due to the strength of that castle compelled them to seek another infiltration point to cross the river into Hungary.⁹ They instantly found one in

Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltára Budapest, DL 43.822, DL 54.714, DL 54.719, DL 65.403, DL 65.627, and DL 54.798.

⁷ These two documents were designated StA Königsberg, HM Registeramt, 13, and StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21 and transcribed in: Joachim, “König Sigmund,” 108, 118–119.

⁸ My publications on this topic include: Jason Snider, “A Military Analysis of the Iron Gates Castle Chain Entrusted to the Teutonic Order (1429–c. 1436),” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU*, 26 (2020), 161–176; Jason Snider, József Laszlovszky, “Szentlászlóvár: A Német Lovagrend egy fontos erőssége a Zsigmond-korban,” *Várak, kastélyok, templomok* (December 2019), 32–35; Jason Snider, “Digital Geographies and Virtual Landscape Archaeology: Reconstructing the Iron Gates Castle System Under the Miasma of COVID–19,” *Hungarian Archaeology*, vol. 10, no. 2, (2021), 47–55, <https://doi.org/10.36338/ha.2021.2.3>; and Jason Snider, “A Key Document of Hungary's Danube Frontier from 1429 Revisited,” *Közlemények Hadtörténelmi* 135, no. 4 (2022): 633–55.

⁹ Mark Whelan, *Sigismund of Luxemburg and the Imperial Response to the Ottoman Turkish Threat, c. 1396–1437*, PhD diss., University of London (2014), 56–57.

the Porțile de Fier in June and raided up to three hundred kilometers in the Transylvanian interior — almost as far as Târgoviște.¹⁰ Finally, in December, word reached the Grandmaster of the Teutonic Order, Paul von Rußdorf (r. 1422 to 1441), that three of the expedition's fortresses had been destroyed during the summer attack by the Ottoman forces.¹¹

Questions arise from the series of events during this fateful year: Why did the defensive chain of fortifications fail in the Porțile de Fier when the same Ottoman Army could not succeed at the single fortress at Belgrade? Could the expedition's system of communications have factored at all into the collapse? What was the difference between the communication system there and the one used by the Order in the Ordensstaat of Prussia? The first question is too large for the scope of this article, but I have asked it here because it reflects the inherent importance of the second. The third question was asked because it establishes my methodology for this publication.

It is as follows: I will attempt to compare the elements of the expedition's courier system that can be gleaned from its correspondences with the one developed in the Prussian Ordensstaat. This will include organization, procedures, and equipment, as well as examine any information contained within these particular documents which may shed some light on any military failures of the expedition. Before this however, I must begin by briefly describing the Teutonic Order, as well as the basic details of the proposal presented to them for the expedition to the Porțile de Fier.

The Order

The Teutonic Order began as a hospitaller style military order (in the manner of the Knights Hospitaller) in 1191 in *Acre* (Acra, in today's Israel) during the latter part of the Third Crusade (1189–1192).¹² Their ethos was to care for sick and injured German speaking crusaders and pilgrims in the Levant until their character was changed to become a fighting military order — closer to the Knights Templar — in 1198.¹³ It is from this point that they began their centuries-long progression of acquiring castles and estates, first in the Holy Land, but then for a short period in *Burzenland* (Țara Bârsei) through a deal made with the Hungarian King, Andrew II between 1211 and 1225.¹⁴ This eventually led

¹⁰ GStAPrKB, XX.HA, OBA, Nr. 6138, cited in Feneșan, *Cavalerii Teutoni*, 247–249.

¹¹ GStAPrKB, XX.HA, OBA, Nr. 6276, cited in Feneșan, *Cavalerii Teutoni*, 255–256.

¹² Jürgen Sarnowsky, *Der Deutsche Orden* (München: C.H. Beck, 2012), 12–13.

¹³ William Urban, *The Teutonic Knight: A Military History* (London: Frontline Books, 2011), 31.

¹⁴ Zsolt Hunyadi, “The Teutonic Order in Burzenland (1211–1225): New Re-considerations,” *L'Ordine Teutonico tra Mediterraneo e Baltico. Incontri e scontri tra religioni, popoli e culture* =

to the establishment of their own religious state in Prussia in 1225, as well as in Latvia and Estonia in 1237, with their greatest extent coming at the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹⁵

A Teutonic Knight held the same dual qualities of both a monk and a crusader like his Templar counterpart. This was defined by the distinct Rule that he swore obedience to upon his admission to the Order, dividing his time to both venerating the Divinity and training for battle.¹⁶ Fighting members were divided into categories, differentiated by their social status and the degree to which they took the vow to the order. Those who were knighted and took the full vow of chastity and obedience became *Brüdern* (Brothers), those who had been knighted, but did not take the vow were called *Halbbrüdern* (Half-brothers). Those not knighted but taking the vow became *Sarjantbrüdern* (Sergeant-brother).¹⁷ By the time that the proposal to defend the Portile de Fier was made in 1426, the Teutonic Knights had been crusading as a cohesive force for over two hundred years — gaining a military reputation that went along with their experience.

The Offer

King Sigismund of Luxembourg (1368–437) had been facing the Ottoman threat for the Kingdom of Hungary since leading the Crusade of Nicopolis in 1396. His failure there convinced him that danger would continue advancing, and that he would have to continuously create new and innovative ways to defend the southern frontier of his domain. He immediately began by requiring local nobles on the border to arm one in twenty peasants underneath them, among other new policies.¹⁸ He would later try active campaigns in the region against the Ottomans through either his own command, or more often through the very capable talents of his favored general Filippo Buondelmonti degli Scolari (1369–1426), better known as *Pippo Spano*.¹⁹

Der Deutsche Orden zwischen Mittelmeerraum und Baltikum. Begegnungen und Konfrontationen zwischen Religionen, Volker[n] und Kulturen. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Bari-Lecce-Brindisi, 14–16 settembre 2006), eds. H. Houben, K. Toomaspoeg (Galatina: Congedo Editore, 2008), 4.

¹⁵ William Urban, *Tannenberg and after: Lithuania, Poland, and the Teutonic Order in search of immortality* (Chicago: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, 2003), viii.

¹⁶ Hennig, *Die Statuten des deutschen Ordens. Nach dem Original-Exemplar, mit sinnerläuternden Anmerkungen, einigen historisch-diplomatischen Beylagen, und einem vollständigen historisch-etymologischen Glossarium* (Halle a. d. Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1890), 215.

¹⁷ Fuhrmann, *Der Deutschorden*, 7, 22–23.

¹⁸ Mark Whelan, “Catastrophe or Consolidation? Sigismund’s Response to Defeat after the Crusade of Nicopolis,” in *Between Worlds: The Age of the Jagiellonians*, eds. F. N. Ardelean, C. Nicholson, J. Preiser-Kapeller (New York, 2013), 215–216.

¹⁹ Whelan, *Sigismund of Luxembourg*, 168–174.

However, upon Scolari's death in December 1426, Sigismund was left with a great problem, as he had come to rely on his generalissimo more and more, not only against Ottoman encroachment, but also in Bohemia against the Hussites. Luckily, he had another close associate with ties to a powerful military organization: Nicolaus von Redwitz (fl. 1422-c. 1435). Redwitz had been an ambassador to the royal court for the Teutonic Order since 1422, eventually gaining the trust of the king, and becoming a member of Sigismund's Privy Council in 1427.²⁰

The offer to the Teutonic Order became an agreement between three men, each representing a different political entity meant to provide specific resources in order to share in the success of the plan. First, Sigismund was the sovereign who represented the interests of the Hungarian Crown. He would provide the castles and the majority of the monetary resources to sustain the expedition. This includes all of the fishing rights on the Danube between today's Drobeta-Turnu Severin and the confluence of the Ribiş river.²¹ He would also provide them with the rights to the mints of Sibiu and Braşov, the rights to the silver mines of the region; the rights of the salt mines of Szegeed (in Csongrád-Csanád county, Hungary), Lipova, Timişoara and Kovin (in the Južnobanatski district of Serbia); rights to the millet crops grown around Szegeed and Szolnok (in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, Hungary); the rights to the tax money on the *Cuman* and *Jasz* peoples in the kingdom, the tax on cattle in Transylvania; and the income of the wine tithe for the Archbishopric of Kalocsa (in Bács-Kiskun County, Hungary).²²

Grandmaster Rußdorf represented the organization of the Teutonic Order. He would be providing the manpower to lead the mercenary troops in the Porţile de Fier. He would agree to allow specific brothers to leave the Ordensstaat in a time of military crisis, to go on a foreign expedition one thousand kilometers away to face an enemy that the Order was not currently in conflict with.²³

The third man was Redwitz, the ambassador who was now made the Ban of Severin, and Count of Sibiu.²⁴ He was intended to represent the local political

²⁰ László Pósan, "Nicolaus von Redewitz – ein Diplomat und Informant des Deutschen Ordens am Hof von Sigismund von Luxemburg," *Ordines Militares Colloquia Torunensia Historica. Yearbook for the Study of the Military Orders*, 26 (Nov. 2021): 113, 119.

²¹ Joachim, "König Sigmund," 112, cited in Whelan, *Sigismund of Luxembourg*, 175.

²² Whelan, *Sigismund of Luxembourg*, 180.

²³ At the time of the expedition, the Teutonic Order was at war with the Kingdom of Poland and were entangled in Sigismund's ongoing crusades against the Hussites. See: Michael Burleigh, *Prussian society and the German order: an aristocratic corporation in crisis c. 1410–1466* (New York, 1984), 86–87, and Urban, *Tannenberg and After*, 336–337, and Pósan, *Nicolaus von Redewitz*, 22.

²⁴ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára Budapest, DL 54. 714, cited in Feneşan, *Cavalerii Teutoni*, 212–213.

powers in the region as Ban, but in reality, he was trapped among the growing apathy of his two superiors (Sigismund as his political overlord, and Rußdorf as his grandmaster) and the barely hidden hostility of the local nobility.

The Template- the Courier System of the Ordensstaat

As a large theocratic “state” encompassing a domain of approximately one hundred eighty thousand square kilometers at its height, the Ordensstaat in Prussia wielded political power throughout the Baltic region during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, as a religious territory led by a government based well within the monastic structure and traditions of the Western Christian Church, as well as an ally of Holy Roman Emperors throughout this period, it could also boast an impressive influence internationally. As the importance of the Ordensstaat grew, the need for an efficient and well-organized communication system developed in tandem.²⁵

Domestically, a grandmaster’s rule was a very itinerate one. He was required to constantly travel between the castles of the Order, which grew in number to about two hundred as the size of the territory reached its height in 1410. This served a number of purposes requisite for a military organization, this would include inspecting the standards of discipline and morale of the men within each individual garrison, as well as ensuring that the military and economic resources entrusted to each castle was being maintained and used efficiently.²⁶ As his progress made its way along the circuit of locations to be visited, the need to keep him in full control of the entire state and military organization necessitated an efficient courier system that could not only locate him when the need arose, but also could maintain a constant stream of communications that reached every corner of the territory.

This need also extended to every official and commander of a *Komturei* (the smallest organizational unit of the Order that was garrisoned at a castle or fortification) within the Teutonic Order. In times of war, commands and instructions needed to be dispatched in a timely manner, and intelligence needed to be swiftly shared with commanders in the field to help in victory — or at least lessen the losses in the case of defeats.²⁷ It was also necessary to maintain communications to coordinate attacks between separate forces.

²⁵ Herbert Kraus, and Erich Weise, *Two Expertises Relating to the Archives of the Teutonic Order and the Ancient Prussian Duchy* (Göttingen: [s.n.], 1949), 10.

²⁶ Urban, *The Teutonic Knight*, 36.

²⁷ A scattered force at the Battle of Ērģeme (August 2, 1560) caused a dangerous situation for the Teutonic Knights left in Latvia (Livonia), and a complete route was at least partially saved because of the efficiency of the courier system that maintained its connections between units. See: Urban, *The Teutonic Knight*, 418.

The System's Apparatus

The expansion of the courier system began in the rule of Grandmaster Winrich von Kniprode (1310–1382). It was directly tied to Kniprode's efforts to further centralize power in the office of the Grandmaster through improvements in the Order's administrative organization.²⁸ Castles would become postal stations, and the creation of new fortifications meant that new, well-developed roads needed to be built in order to connect them to the communications network. Special equipment now needed to be maintained at each new station, and rooms or even buildings needed to be reserved to accommodate the equipment and couriers that used it.²⁹ Documents at the castle at *Thorn* (Toruń, Poland) for the year 1400 describe that the equipment of the order's messenger station there included eight silver badges [i.e., postal badges], a speed-carriage, a riding saddle, a bridle saddle, two bridles and two reins.³⁰

According to Peter Thielen, terms like *Briefschweiken* (Postal horses), *Briefjungen* (Postmen), *Kuriere* (Couriers) and *Läufer* (Runners) appear throughout the official documents belonging to individual castles all over the Ordensstaat.³¹ *Briefjungen*, for their service, were given a small landholding totaling about three to five *hufen* (about half a kilometer squared), on which they were exempt from all taxes. However, they were expected to go on duty at any time of day. The horses, *Schweiken*, were a specific breed of utility horse used by the Order for many different labors but were well suited to postal work due to their stockiness, strength, and adaptability.³² However, the majority of correspondences were carried on foot, and horses were to be used in cases where extreme speed necessitated it.³³

What is most impressive about Order's system is the way that they use dorsal notes on the exterior of their correspondences. These were notations of the arrival and departure times for every castle station where the courier stopped along the postal route, making it very easy for officials to monitor the efficiency

²⁸ Marian Arszynski *et alii*, *The Teutonic Order in Prussia and Livonia. The Political and Ecclesiastical Structures 13th- 16th C.*, eds. Roman Czaja, Andrzej Radziminski (Torun: Bohlau Verlag, 2015), 22–23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁰ Deutsche Post, *Archiv für Post und Telegraphie: Beiheft zum Amtsblatt des Reichs-Postamts* (Berlin: Postzeitungsamt, 1897), 648.

³¹ Peter Gerrit Thielen, *Die verwaltung des ordensstaates preussen vornehmlich im 15. Jahrhundert* (Koln: Bohlau Verlag, 1965), 117.

³² Fritz Rünger, *Herkunft, Rassezugehörigkeit, Züchtung und Haltung der Ritterpferde des Deutschen Ordens. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der ostpreußischen Pferdezüchtung und der deutschen Pferdezüchtung im Mittelalter* (Königsberg: 1924), 232–233.

³³ Deutsche Post, *Archiv für Post*, 648.

of the route and the courier. In fact, postal carrier was required to present the letters to each commander himself, who in turn had to check them for any specially designated instructions for the next stage of the journey.³⁴ This feature has given scholars a valuable tool to evaluate the speed of the system, just as it did for the local commander. For example, in 1429 (the same year the expedition set out for the Porțile de Fier) a letter was sent from the castle at *Memel* (Klaipeda, Lithuania) at 9 pm on a Thursday, and arrived at the castle of *Elbing* (Elbląg, Poland) at 8 pm on Sunday — travelling a distance of two hundred forty kilometers (most likely on foot) in seventy-one hours.³⁵ Today, we have machines that mark dates and times of departure on letters that we send, but it seems a little surprising that this process was also applied in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in comparison. Now to compare the system of the Ordensstaat with the one in the Porțile de Fier.

Contrast and Analysis

Shortly following his arrival to the Porțile de Fier, Redwitz demonstrated military competence by almost immediately sending a status report to his military superior, Grandmaster Rußdorf, who is at his headquarters back in the Ordensstaat.³⁶ It lists the number and types of personnel stationed in each of the sixteen fortifications not determined to be abandoned. Also, relevant to the discussion of the courier system, two fortifications are designated in it as containing the *brieffuwrer* (couriers) for the expedition: Myhalt (containing 20) and Halmas (with 26).³⁷ This tells us a couple of things. First, the couriers do not seem to be distributed among all of the fortresses in the Porțile de Fier as they are in the Ordensstaat. Also, this seems to be over twice as many messengers concentrated in each of these two fortresses than the example given above for the Prussian castle of Thorn (Torun) which listed eight silver badges in its inventories. Further, both of these are interior fortresses that guard the internal mountain passes that begin at the defensive line on the Danube with the thirteen riverine castles and penetrate into the Transylvanian heartland. As there appears to be no redistribution later on, this seems to signal that Redwitz, or his commanders determined that most of the messages would be sent out of these locations, and that these two would be used more to link the entire defensive line with the outside world, rather than to connect the individual fortifications

³⁴ Fuhrmann, *Der Deutschorden*, 54.

³⁵ Stephen Turnbull, *Crusader Castles of the Teutonic Knights: The Red-Brick Castles of Prussia 1230–1466* (London: Osprey, 2014), 42

³⁶ This letter is dated by Feneşan to October or November 1429. See: Feneşan, *Cavalerii Teutoni*, 187–189.

³⁷ StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21.

to each other, communications-wise. I say this because no communications have been found in any archives that have been sent from one of these fortresses to another. It is very possible that this was accomplished instead through word-of-mouth communications because the average distance between these fortifications on the river is 12 kilometers. Whether oral communication was the case or not, this is a clear departure from the model in the Ordensstaat where written messages were tracked and carefully marked at every location along the way.

Also, no document lists or describes specialized equipment related to transmitting messages. Not even horses. The closest that we may come to a faint hint of their existence in the possessions of the expedition comes from another initial report sent from Redwitz to Rußdorf (also dated by Feneşan to October or November 1429). It is a revenue report derived from the fiefs attached to five interior estates (Myhalt, Halmas, Ylied, Caransebeş and Caraşova), which were identified to provide some resources that were necessary to support the expedition. Each is required to provide various amounts of fodder at differing times of the year, as well as hay and oats, but it is unclear if it is meant for the other animals (pigs, cows, sheep, chickens) that are listed in this report, or horses that are not listed in any document.³⁸

In terms of written communications dealing with the military affairs of the expedition, two examples have already been discussed: the status report and the revenue report.³⁹ A third has been dated by Feneşan to around the same time as the two already examined (again October or November 1429). This is an expense report also sent to Rußdorf, which itemizes the costs of garrisoning eight of the fortresses located on the Danube⁴⁰ This document lists the costs of infantrymen, archers/ gunners, and rowers for the river boats (*nazaden*) found at some of these fortresses. The significance of this letter is that it demonstrates that the troops garrisoning these places are in fact mercenaries, because if they were members of the Teutonic Order, no pay would need to be listed, as they do not work for wages.

Two letters taken together in this category show a breakdown in both leadership and communication during the time of crisis in the summer of 1432 when the Ottoman army attacked and infiltrated the expedition's defensive line. The first was sent on August 19 by Redwitz's deputy, Oswald Weyler, and was a request for safe passage for his messenger as he travels through foreign territories

³⁸ GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 27838.

³⁹ These are StA Königsberg, OBA, Kg. VII, 21, and GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 27838.

⁴⁰ These are *Stanilocz*, *Svinița*, *Pecz*, *Orşova*, *Severin*, *Gewren*, *Saan* and *Mehadia*. It must be noted that there are spelling variations between all three reports sent to Rußdorf from this time. GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 27837.

trying to find a missing commander, Redwitz, in either Buda or Vienna.⁴¹ The failure of leadership becomes apparent when a second letter dated August 5 provides the context. This was sent by Frank Tallóci (r. 1436–1439), count of Cenad, Cuvin and Caraș, and captain of the fortress of Belgrade (the one that had successfully fought off the Ottoman forces), to the vassals of Gheorghe Horváth in which Tallóci describes an on-going Ottoman siege at the expedition's fortress of Sand Ladislaen. The expedition's overall commander is missing in action while a major siege is underway. What is worse, Redwitz doesn't seem to have communicated his destination, as his deputy does not even know where he can be found. As a reminder, the Ottoman campaign began in the area in January, and this should have been a warning that all nearby forces should be on the alert for raids, if not full-scale invasion. This is a glaring departure from the communications model of the Ordensstaat, and demonstrates the largest deficiency found in the system under Redwitz's command in the Porțile de Fier.

Conclusion

The correspondence system in the Porțile de Fier did not resemble the system found in the Ordensstaat where the expedition originally set out from. Couriers do not seem to be placed in the same, evenly dispersed manner where every fortification was a station along a route, and where each location had its own group of messengers to be used by the individual commander. Also, there does not seem to be dedicated equipment related to the dissemination of correspondence — to possibly include horses, though this is not a major deviation from normal practice used in the Ordensstaat, as stated above, most communications there were carried on foot. It must also be pointed out that the correspondences from the Porțile de Fier do not contain the dorsal notes that efficiently mark the dispatches of the Ordensstaat. They are, however, enlightening as to the state of military affairs on the Porțile de Fier defensive line due to the information that can be gleaned from within them. A force composed almost exclusively of mercenaries (though commanded by officers from the Teutonic Order) presents multiple issues which could be examined in a future publication. They also suggest other problems that may have affected the degree of emergency during the attack of 1432 and the subsequent siege one of the fortresses, Sand Ladislaen, to include a breakdown in communications between Redwitz and his command staff. Given all of these observations, I believe it is clear that this communication system was inferior to the one in Prussia, though it is not as certain whether this would have been corrected had the expedition's time in the Porțile de Fier lasted longer.

⁴¹ GStAPrKB, XX. HA, OBA, Nr. 6196.

REȚEAUA DE COMUNICAȚII MILITARE LA PORȚILE DE FIER ÎN VREMEA ORDINULUI TEUTONIC, 1429–1435

Rezumat

Analiza privind eficiența unui sistem defensiv include cu necesitate examinarea sistemului său de comunicații întrucât acesta face legătura dintre aproape toate componentele operațiunilor, cum ar fi comanda și controlul, logistica, spionajul etc. În cazul Ordinului Teutonic din prima jumătate a secolului al XV-lea, acesta includea mesajele scrise și comunicațiile prin mesageri. Sistemul, pe care Ordinul îl instalase cu doar un secol înainte în organizația sa religioasă *Ordensstaat* din Prusia, a devenit mult mai sofisticat. Acest fapt a permis administrarea unui teritoriu care se întindea pe o mie opt sute de kilometri pătrați, la data maximei sale evoluții, în 1400, precum și să facă recrutări în afara granițelor sale și să poarte cruciade de amploare în regiunea baltică. Cu toate acestea, spre sfârșitul anilor 1420, o nouă oportunitate s-a creat la granița sudică a Regatului Ungariei, care a permis Ordinului Teutonic să vină cu logistica și experiența sa militară pentru a face față forțelor Imperiului Otoman în zona Porților de Fier. Comunicațiile au fost incluse în această competență dat fiind faptul că forma lor exista deja și funcționa cu succes. Articolul de față încearcă să analizeze sistemul comunicațional adus de forța expediționară a Ordinului Teutonic în această zonă de frontieră agitată, prin comparație cu sistemul existent deja la Porțile de Fier, la standardul stabilit în cadrul *Ordensstaat*. Acest țel va fi atins prin analiza corespondenței scrise de și către conducătorii forței de expediție, pe baza documentelor care s-au păstrat în diferite arhive din Europa centrală.