

## Some Remarks on the Political History of Transylvania in the Years 1440-1443

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The aim of the present study is double. Firstly, we would like to summarize what we know about the political history of Transylvania in the critical period between the death of king Albert and the summer of 1443, with a special emphasis on the activity, political and military, of its voivodes. While the first of these dates is in no need of any explanation, the second seems arbitrary enough to necessitate some further justification. In fact, the history of the "long campaign" of 1443 and of the tragic expedition which led to the fatal battle of Varna has attracted much more attention so far than the events of the preceding years, and some important questions have been definitively answered in the meantime<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, we found that some rather obscure and highly problematic aspects of the history of Transylvania in the early 1440s have been neglected by recent research, and that they could be at least partially illuminated on the basis of the hitherto unused (though rather scarce) charter evidence. Our second aim was, especially as regards the political-military history of the years 1441-1442, to raise some problems that seemed to us still unsolved, and suggest some possible solutions, before all to generate a scholarly debate and elicit the contribution of other researchers facing the same problems. We tried to base our hypotheses on an extremely critical approach of our sources, for it soon became obvious for us that many of them have so far constituted an obstacle to our understanding and should consequently be rejected once and for all.

The death of king Albert on 27 October at Neszmély led to a tragic division within the ruling class of Hungary. His pregnant wife, Elisabeth, the daughter of the late emperor Sigismund, was determined to secure the Hungarian throne for her newborn if it turned out to be a son, while it is not altogether clear what her plans were for the case of her giving birth to a daughter. She could as a matter of fact count on the support of her cousin, Ulrich of Cilli, whose only chance to regain his power in Bohemia (where he had lost his office of *landesverweser* in the summer of 1439) and to reaffirm the family's positions in Slavonia (considerably weakened after count Hermann's death in 1435) was to help the queen with all his force. She could also count on László Garai, her other cousin, whose attitude was not as clearcut as that of Ulrich, however. Her party consisted of barons somehow related to the Cillier or to Garai and of those who hoped to restore the power once enjoyed by themselves or by their ancestors under Sigismund through the service of the queen (Szécsi, Kanizsai, Frangepán, Tamási families, one branch of the Rozgonyi family, etc). Opposed to them were the

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Pál Engel, *A szegedi eskü és a váradi béke. Adatok az 1443. eseménytörténetéhez*, in *Mályusz Elemér emlékkönyv*, ed. by Éva H. Balázs, Erik Fügedi, F. Maksay, Budapest, 1984.

barons who had risen to power in the last years of Sigismund's reign and who controlled the most important governmental offices of the kingdom: members of the Perényi, Pálóci, Csáki, Hédervári, Marcali, Tallóci families. Since most of the latter were military men who had spent much of their life in fighting against the Ottomans and other enemies of the kingdom, we have no reason to dismiss altogether their chief argument on behalf of Wladislaw of Poland's candidature, namely that the country needed a man and not an infant if it was to resist successfully to the Ottomans. Yet it is evident that what was at stake for them was the maintenance of their former authority, especially because most of the castles they controlled were conditional on their offices and consequently directly linked to the royal favour. Accordingly, they decided to elect a foreign ruler who would then marry Elisabeth and take care of her children<sup>2</sup>.

Since not only the staunchest partisans of Wladislaw but also László Garai urged her to marry the young king of Poland<sup>3</sup>, Elisabeth finally acquiesced in the marriage in January 1440, though it is impossible to tell if she had already made up her mind to take up arms if Wladislaw really accepted the Hungarian throne or she only changed her decision after the birth of her son in February 1440. In any case the Hungarian envoys who were sent by the kingdom's *universitas* to elect Wladislaw as their king claimed to have secured the queen's consent beforehand, and so did the Polish king, who later kept on repeating that he had been invited to the Hungarian throne upon agreement with the queen.

The birth of Ladislaus Posthumus in February 1440 toughened the queen's will to defend her newborn son's heritage. She tried to dissuade the Hungarian magnates from electing Wladislaw, and after their refusal she began to prepare the coronation of her newborn son with the Holy Crown which had already been stolen from the castle of Visegrád by her faithful lady-in-waiting, Helena Kottanerin. Since Wladislaw, after an initial period of hesitation, decided to accept the challenge and take the Hungarian throne, it soon became evident that civil war would necessarily break out, and both parties prepared themselves for the fight.

On the eve of open conflict it was of crucial importance for the contending parties what attitude the third most important office-holder of the kingdom, and the one with the greatest territorial authority, namely the voivode of Transylvania would take. It is well-known that the voivode was the uncontested master of his province both judicially and administratively: he was the supreme judge, could appoint the counts of the seven Transylvanian counties at will, and also led the military forces under his authority in person<sup>4</sup>. Although the estates belonging to his honor had been considerably weakened by king Sigismund's grants, they

<sup>2</sup> The best narrative is still József Teleki, *A Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, I-VI/1, X-XII, Pest, 1852-1863, vol. I, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *A korona elrablása, Kottaner Jánosné emlékirata, 1439-1440*, translated and ed. by Károly Mollay, Budapest, 1979, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> On the voivode's authority see, for example, Elemér Mályusz, *Az erdélyi magyar társadalom a középkorban* (hereafter referred to as: *Az erdélyi magyar társadalom*), Budapest, 1988, pp. 5-9.

nevertheless continued to form an impressive mass scattered throughout the province<sup>5</sup>. Yet the power of the voivode was far from absolute in Transylvania: it comprised neither the Saxons nor the Szeklers. The latter were governed by a count of their own, whose office, based on a honor comparable to that of the voivode<sup>6</sup>, was equally important militarily. Nor was the voivode authorised to dispose freely of the financial revenues of his province: the various taxes paid by the inhabitants of Transylvania went directly to the royal treasury, whence the voivode received a regular salary, at least in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup>. The administration of one of the most important royal revenues, that stemming from the monopoly of salt, was likewise outside the voivode's authority: in the period currently under investigation the chambers of salt, among them those of Transylvania, were in the hands of the famous Matkó Tallóci, one of Sigismund's favourite barons and the young Wladislaw's main supporter in Hungary<sup>8</sup>.

The ruling voivode of Transylvania, Dezső Losonci, belonged to one of the richest families not only of Transylvania but also of the whole kingdom, though the family had already split into several branches by the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Dezső's father, Miklós, was count of the Szeklers between 1382 and 1385, while his uncle, the elder László, was himself voivode of Transylvania from 1376 to 1385 and then again for almost eight years from 1386 on<sup>9</sup>. The family's involvement in the revolt against king Sigismund in 1403 led to their disgrace, and no important governmental office was conferred upon any of them before the accession of king Albert.

Queen Elisabeth was perfectly aware of the importance of the voivode's fidelity, and tried to strengthen it by different grants in the first months of 1440. She gave him the *census* due from the the city of Braşov as a subsidy sometime before 11 March 1440<sup>10</sup>. He also received four possessions belonging to the town of Bistriţa for the 11830 florins that the queen owed to him *ratione salarii sui*<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, Elisabeth tried to oblige the bishop of Transylvania and some of the

<sup>5</sup> The castles belonging to the voivode's honor in 1440: Deva, Haţeg (Hátzeg), Cetatea de Baltă (Küküllővár), Lotrioara (Latorvár), Lita (Léta), Tâlmăciu (Talmács), Turnu Roşu (Vöröstorony). Cf. Pál Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301-1457* (hereafter referred to as: *Archontológia*), I, Budapest, 1996, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> The comital honor consisted of the following castles in 1440: Gurghiu (Görgény), Hălchiu (Höltövény), Királykö, Bran (Töröcsvár). *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> E. Mályusz, *Az erdélyi magyar társadalom* (see note 4), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> On the career of this family see Elemér Mályusz, *A négy Tallóci fivér*, in *Történelmi Szemle*, 1980, p. 543.

<sup>9</sup> P. Engel, *Archontológia* (see note 5), II, p. 148.

<sup>10</sup> The Hungarian National Archives, Budapest, DF (Diplomatic Photocopy) 246.901 (the original in Archives of the city of Braşov). The queen writes to voivode Dezső on 11 March 1440: "*Quamvis alias nos dacium seu censum e medio civitatis nostre Brassoviensis maiestati nostre ... provenire debentem vobis in subsidium dandum esse deputavimus*, upon the request of the burghers she decided to restore half of their tax to them *pro sustentacione et conservacione eiusdem civitatis*".

<sup>11</sup> We only know it from Wladislaw's confirmation of 1441. Cf. *Oklevéltár a Tomaj nemzetségbeli Losonczy Bánffy család történetéhez* (hereafter referred to as *Bánffy*), ed. by Elemér Varjú, I, Budapest, 1908, p. 643.

more important provincial nobility<sup>12</sup>. These measures clearly show that the queen was determined to secure a strong foothold in Transylvania on the eve of the war, and regarded the voivode as one of her main partisans within the tiny group of powerful aristocrats upon whose support she could reasonably count.

When, in the last days of March 1440, two of the Hungarians envoys, Matkó Tallóci and Imre Marcali arrived to the queen, than staying at Komárom, with the news of Wladislaw's election, Elisabeth, probably upon the advice of Ulrich of Cilli, decided to arrest the two barons and confiscate their properties and probably their honors two<sup>13</sup>. This act of unjustified harshness seriously damaged the queen's position and seems to have alienated many of the barons who had not thrown in their lot with any of the contending parties yet<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, it seems to have had important consequences in Transylvania and the neighbouring countries as well.

We have already seen that the chambers of salt had been in the hands of Matkó Tallóci since the last years of Sigismund's reign<sup>15</sup>. In view of the crucial economic importance of salt it is by no means surprising that the queen tried to get possession of them and prevent their being exploited by her enemies in Wladislaw's favour. On 9 April 1440 the bishop of Oradea, a kinsman of Tallóci himself, asked László Jakcs of Kusaly to occupy his bishopric, castles and the

<sup>12</sup> On 14 February 1440 she mortgages three possessions belonging to the town of Bistrița in the county of Dăbâca to her *fidelis*, Gergely Bethleni for the 2000 florins for which the emperor Sigismund and king Albert remained in debt to him. *A Zichy és Vásonkeői gróf Zichy-család idősb ágának okmánytára* (hereafter referred to as *Zichy*), ed. by Ernő Kammerer, Budapest, 1899, p. 4. It is interesting that Bethleni was at this time vice-castellan of Buda, and as such a *familiaris* of palatine Hédervári, one of the main supporters of Wladislaw's candidature. cf. Engel, *Archontológia* (see note 5), p. 288. On 19 April Elisabeth grants three possessions in the county of Alba to the bishop of Transsylvania, György Lépes, and his kinsmen for their faithful services, see DF 277.487. On the same day she confers the royal rights that pertain to the two possessions of Bucerdea Grănoasă (Buzásbocsárd) and Heria (Hári) in the county of Alba and to the possession of Uglieș (Ölyves) in that of Cluj upon her chancellor, Peter Kecseti, as well as upon Dénes Farnasi, castellan of Cetatea de Baltă (Küküllővár), a stronghold belonging to the voivode's honor, see DF 277.488. In May Farnasi received further estates in the counties of Cluj and Dăbâca, this time together with the voivode himself. *Bánffy* (see note 11), p. 635.

<sup>13</sup> On 4 April 1440 István Rozgonyi, count of Pressburg, complains to the burghers of Pressburg that they failed to inform him "*quod domina nostra regina barones illos, qui juxta sue serenitatis mandatum et bonam voluntatem...in eleccione regis Polonie ... erga suam serenitatem in legacionibus sunt reversi, omnino jussit spoliari, demumque fecit detineri, quos et detentos pro presenti gravissimis suis tenet in vinculis...*" DF 239.755. Cf. Johannes Dlugoss, *Historia Polonica*, liber XII, cited by Stephanus Katona, *Historia critica regum Hungarie*, vol. XIII, Pest, 1790, p. 47: "*Exauditis igitur prefatis ... ambasiatoribus, eos statim cum omnibus rebus et familia captivati*" (*sc. regina*).

<sup>14</sup> At least this is what can be inferred from the aforementioned letter of István Rozgonyi: "*Licet tamen ipsa regina cuius maligni fecerit id consilio, certe ipsius sue serenitati signanterque filio suo, et domino nostro, magnum intulit oprobrium...*". DF 239.755.

<sup>15</sup> On 16 March 1440 he titles himself "*universarum camararum salium regalium comes*". The Hungarian National Archives, Dl. (Diplomatics Archives) 55.199.

chambers of salt, because Tallóci had been arrested by the queen<sup>16</sup>. The next day (10 April) László Jakcs wrote to Matkó's agent at Dej, the Italian Papa, and informed him that the chambers would be confiscated during the week (*in ista septimana camere de manibus vestris occupabuntur*), and asked him to send all the salt that he had at Dej by water to Udvarhely, because it would be immediately seized if found anywhere else (*ubicunque alias possunt invenire, eo facto auferrent*)<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, the *camerarius* should try to defend the chambers as long as possible, so runs the letter, in order to be able to recruit mercenaries (for the king), lest the enemy should have the possibility to do the same (for the queen) (*magis autem cum salibus pretactis, si necesse fuerit, nos inveniamus exercitum et fortitudinem, alioquin nostri inimici habebunt forsane exinde fortitudinem*).

Although László Jakcs did not state it explicitly who the enemy was, it is evident that it could be no one but the voivode himself, Dezső Losonci, who seems to have acted upon the queen's order. That is what explains the fact that László Jakcs wanted the salt to be transported to *Udvarhely*, which is surely today's Someş-Odorhei (Szamosudvarhely), in the vicinity of László's castle of Hodod and, what is more important, outside the authority of the voivode of Transylvania<sup>18</sup>. That it was indeed so is attested by a charter of king Wladislaw himself, in which, almost a year later, he ordered the newly appointed voivodes of Transylvania, János Hunyadi and Miklós Újlaki, to make an inquiry about the damages that had been caused to the Italian *camerarii* of Dej by Dezső Losonci and his kinsmen<sup>19</sup>. From this charter we learn that some time before (*pridem*), when the former voivode was in the middle of his revolt against the king, he occupied the chamber of Dej and held it for some time, and used the salt for whatever purposes he wanted to.

In view of this it is surprising to read the voivode's own letter, written on 19 June to Matkó Tallóci himself, from which an entirely different picture emerges. He informs Matkó that he (the voivode) defended the chambers of salt and Matkó's *familiares* as best he could, and his efforts were so successful that no damage had so far been done to them<sup>20</sup>. But, unfortunately, so many people died because of the pestilence, that no salt could be cut, nor was it possible to transport

<sup>16</sup> The letter of László Jakcs to the Italian Papa, *camerarius* at Dej, Dl. 55.202. "...hesterna die dominus frater Johannes episcopus Waradiensis nobis informare curavit, quomodo dominus Mathko banus, frater noster carissimus et dominus vester, per dominam nostram reginam esset captus et detentus; dominus siquidem episcopus petit nos, ut episcopatum suum et castra sua et cameras salium ad manus nostras accipiamus et teneamus..."

<sup>17</sup> László Jakcs was prudent enough to ask for a written voucher of the salt lest he should have problems in the future.

<sup>18</sup> *Udvarhely* was in the possession of the Jakcs family, cf. Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történeti földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, I-III, V, Budapest, 1890-1913, I, p. 592.

<sup>19</sup> Bányffy (see note 11), I, pp. 639-640.

<sup>20</sup> Dl. 55.213: "...in singulis factis camararum salium, et eiam familiarium vestrorum, eo melius valuimus, in defensione eorundem sed et in aliis factis vestre fraternitatis...laboravimus, et usque hec tempora tam camare salium, quam familiares vestre fraternitatis ab omnibus impetitoribus illese et pacifice permanserunt..."

it by water thanks to the flood<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, Matkó should reward the Italians generously, because they had served him faithfully in the middle of these difficulties.

The reason of this apparent contradiction seems to reside in the rapidly deteriorating situation of queen Elisabeth and in the parallel improvement of Wladislaw's chances. By June 1440 the events had taken a clearly unfavourable turn from the voivode's point of view. The queen's partisans proved unable to prevent the Polish king from reaching Buda, where he was solemnly received by palatine Hédervári. The fall of Buda definitively isolated the voivode from the rest of the queen's partisans, and he could no more hope for help from that direction. Moreover, Elisabeth's chief supporter, Ulrich of Cilli fell into the king's captivity and remained there for the rest of the year. Worst of all for Losonci, Matkó Tallóci soon escaped from his detention, quickly recovered his honors and joined again Wladislaw's camp. The voivode seems therefore to have tried to explain away his attack against the chambers of salt and emerge as the protector of Matkó's agents in Transylvania. His efforts yielded no result, however, for, as we have already seen, the Italian *camerarii* later lodged a complaint against him at the royal court and he was forced to give them entire satisfaction. Yet by that time he had already lost his office of voivode of Transylvania.

On 29 June the Hungarian estates solemnly invalidated the infant Ladislaus's coronation and confirmed once again Wladislaw's election. Although voivode Dezső's positions in Transylvania were not menaced for the time being, he did not dare to appear at Buda, despite Wladislaw's general safe conduct<sup>22</sup>. After his coronation on 17 July at Székesfehérvár Wladislaw seems to have partially reorganised his government; at least he tried to put his faithful followers in the place of those who had deserted to the queen. The reorganisation could not fail to effect Transylvania, of course: Wladislaw appointed Mihály and László Jakcs as the new voivodes of Transylvania<sup>23</sup>. Mihály had been count of the Szeklers between 1427 and 1438<sup>24</sup>, so it could not be said that he had no governmental experience in the province; yet the family had no extensive possessions in the Transylvanian counties<sup>25</sup>, and even their only castle, Hodod, was outside Transylvania.

Indeed, it is more than questionable that the new voivodes could effectively take possession of their office and occupy the castles that pertained to it. Although our evidence is extremely scarce, none of the newly appointed

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*Ibidem*. We publish this interesting letter, together with that written by László Jakcs, in the appendix of the present study.

He was not among the barons who sealed the charter of 29 June. Cf. Elemér Mályusz, *A magyar udj állam Hunyadi korában*, Budapest, 1958, p. 31, n. 128. Nor was he present at the coronation of infant Ladislaus, for on 14 May, the day before the ceremony, he issued a charter in his Transylvanian castle of Ciceu (Csicsó), cf. *DI*. 36.898.

Angel. *Archontológia* (see note 5), I, p. 14.

*Ibidem*, p. 194.

linki. *op. cit.* (see note 18), V, 1913, *passim*.

voivodes can be shown to have turned up in Transylvania and assumed his duties there<sup>26</sup>. Quite to the contrary, one of them, namely Mihály, is clearly attested in the king's entourage in the court of Buda on 20 October 1440<sup>27</sup>. Wladislaw's position was not stable enough to be able to give military help to his own men and deprive Losonci of his authority in Transylvania. Elisabeth's German and Bohemian mercenaries laid siege to the castle of Pressburg, defended by Wladislaw's faithful partisan, István Rozgonyi, while the queen's other followers ravaged the regions west of the Danube. In view of this situation it is not surprising that Losonci continued to function as voivode of Transylvania throughout the rest of the year 1440<sup>28</sup>.

The situation only changed in the early days of 1441, when Wladislaw's army defeated Elisabeth's partisans near Báticasék<sup>29</sup>. After the battle the queen definitively withdrew to the northwestern corner of the kingdom, setting up her residence in the city of Pressburg, and she was no more able to put up any resistance outside the territory directly controlled by her formidable condottiere, Jan Giskra. Wladislaw himself took the field in person and, having forced archbishop Szécsi's brother, Tamás, to a truce, reconquered the Transdanubian castles which had been occupied by Elisabeth's barons in the first half of 1440. The king's victories seem to have prompted voivode Dezső to seek a rapprochement with Wladislaw; at least this is what can be inferred from a charter dated to 13 January 1441, in which Losonci orders the burghers of Bistrița to send him the rest of their tax, because he will have to account for it *to his lord the king*<sup>30</sup>. Yet whatever the intentions of the former voivode were, Wladislaw had already decided to carry out a complete reorganisation of the kingdom's southern defensive system, an important element of which was of course Transylvania itself. Sometime during February 1441 the king conferred upon two of his partisans, János Hunyadi and Miklós Újlaki, heroes of the battle of Báticasék, a hitherto unprecedented amount of administrative authority. They became together voivodes of Transylvania, counts of the Szeklers, counts of Timiș and a series of other counties, and at the same time retained their former offices (Hunyadi remained banus of Severin, Újlaki that of Macsó)<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> The best way to make sure whether the new office-holders could get possession of the voivode's honor would be to identify their *familiares* as castellans of the strongholds belonging to the honor. Unfortunately, our evidence from these years is so fragmented that no such investigation is possible. See P. Engel, *Archontológia* (see note 5), II, under the individual castles.

<sup>27</sup> *Zbiór dokumentów malopolskich*, II., Wrocław, 1968, No. 569.

<sup>28</sup> *A kolozsmonostori konvent jegyzőkönyvei (1289-1556)*, published by Zsigmond Jakó, I-II., Budapest, 1990, I, p. 257, nos. 274, 275.

<sup>29</sup> On this battle and its role in the career of János Hunyadi see Pál Engel, *János Hunyadi: The Decisive Years of his Career, 1440-1444*, in *From Rákóczi to Hunyadi. War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. by J. M. Bak and Béla K. Király, Columbia University Press, 1982, p. 117 and 123, no. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Bánffy (see note 11) II, pp. 637-638: "...quia rationem domino nostro regi nobis superinde exhibere oportet."

<sup>31</sup> See Engel, *Archontológia* (see note 5), *passim*, where all the relevant information can be found.

Not both of them went to take over their honors immediately after their appointment, however. Újlaki remained with the king and fought alongside him in the Transdanubian campaign<sup>32</sup>. As for Hunyadi, he seems to have arrived to Transylvania in the beginning of April<sup>33</sup>, and began his activity there by holding an assembly for the local nobility at Cluj<sup>34</sup>. He found himself in a much favourable situation than his immediate predecessors: besides having extensive possessions and also a considerable number of *familiares* in Transylvania<sup>35</sup>, he also seems to have received a special royal permission to make perpetual grants, a prerogative normally reserved for the king himself<sup>36</sup>. He could also dispose of the revenues accruing from the royal monopoly of salt and, at least in 1443, of the tax paid by the Romanians<sup>37</sup>. In view of his overwhelming authority it is not surprising that Dezső Losonci acquiesced in his defeat and decided to make peace with the king. In the second half of May 1441 he appeared in the presence of the king and his barons in the court of Buda and swore an oath of fidelity to Wladislaw. In return for the ex-voivode's submission the king confirmed queen Elisabeth's grant of some villages that were due to Losonci as a compensation for his previous services<sup>38</sup>.

By June 1441 Hunyadi had pacified Transylvania so successfully that he could safely leave the province. On 9 June we meet him at Timișoara<sup>39</sup>, presumably on his way to take over the castle of Belgrade. On his subsequent campaign against the bey of Smederevo practically our only source is the charter of king Wladislaw, issued on 8 October, which makes the reconstruction of events fairly difficult<sup>40</sup>. The king's charter says that it was *hiis diebus noviter transactis* that Hunyadi, together with his fellow-voivode, Miklós Újlaki, was sent to occupy the castle of Belgrade. Unfortunately, we have no evidence at all to retrace the itinerary of the two voivodes before 16 October 1441; all that we know is that

<sup>32</sup> 14 March 1441: *Sopron vármegye története. Oklevéltár*, II, ed. by Imre Nagy, Sopron, 1891, no. 173, 25 March: DF 238.204 (*Relacio Nicolai de Wylak wayvode Transsilvani*); 30 March: DF 279.632 (the same note by the chancery).

<sup>33</sup> He is first attested in the province on 8 April 1441, cf. Zimmermann-Werner, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (hereafter referred to as: *Urkundenbuch*), V, no 2413.

<sup>34</sup> Dl. 62.821, 10 April 1441: "...cum nos feria secunda proxima post dominicam Ramispalmarum unacum nonnullis nobilibus et proceribus huius regni in civitate Cluswar pro disponendis quibusdam arduis negociis fuissemus constituti..."

<sup>35</sup> On his *familia* see Lajos Elekes, *Hunyadi*, Budapest, 1952, pp. 135-138.

<sup>36</sup> At least this is how we tend to interpret the statement of Hunyadi himself in a charter issued on 14 May 1441, according to which the voivode gave some estates to one of his own retainers *serenissimi domini nostri regis in persona auctoritateque eiusdem nobis concessa*" (Dl. 37.600); it was also natural that Hunyadi was given free hand to restore peace and order in his distant province without having to consult his king all the time. Cf. L. Elekes, *op. cit.* (see note 35), p. 137.

Dl. 74.078

<sup>38</sup> DF 253.704. We publish this charter in the appendix of the present study. See also Zimmermann-Werner, *Urkundenbuch* (see note 33), V, no. 2400, wrongly dated to 3 February.

<sup>39</sup> Dl. 55.237.

<sup>40</sup> L. Thallóczy – A. Áldássy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198-126*, Budapest, 1907, p. 140.



from 8 to 12 September Újlaki stayed at Buda<sup>41</sup>. Since the royal charter is explicit in saying that Hunyadi's action against the bey took place while Újlaki was staying in the castle<sup>42</sup>, we should place it either before or after 12 September. The second solution is slightly more probable, for on 16 October the two voivodes are still in arms in the county of Timiș<sup>43</sup>.

In their letter sent from Unip (Temesújnép) on 16 October 1441, Hunyadi and Újlaki inform the city of Brașov about their intention to go there sixteen or seventeen days later, for they were commissioned by the king and the whole kingdom to negotiate with the voivode of Wallachia<sup>44</sup>. We know nothing about this legation, but it is by no means improbable that the two voivodes were commissioned by the king to negotiate an alliance with the neighbouring Wallachian principality in view of the expected Ottoman attack<sup>45</sup>. This would also explain why both voivodes disappear from our eyes and do not emerge again before the first days of the year 1442.

The events of the first half of the year 1442 are still far from definitively clarified despite the considerable literature they generated. The reason of this obscurity should be looked for in the scarcity of the evidence which, moreover, includes some pieces of highly questionable authenticity. To put things in order it would be necessary to collect all the available sources, determine their historical value and then use only those among them (with a strong preference for original charters), whose authenticity proves beyond doubt. Although it is obvious that this work cannot be done within the framework of this study, we will nevertheless raise some problems that seem to us worthy of further, more thorough, investigation.

According to the ruling scholarly opinion, in the spring of 1442 Mezyd bey invaded Transylvania at the head of some 16.000 troops, defeated the Transylvanian army led by János Hunyadi and bishop György Lépes somewhere near Alba Iulia, but was routed by the voivode five days later while withdrawing from the province<sup>46</sup>. Then Hunyadi, profiting from his unexpected victory,

<sup>41</sup> 8 September: *Hazai Okmánytár*, I-VIII. Győr, Budapest, 1865-1891, II, no. 220. 12 September: *Zichy* (see note 12), IX, no. 33.

<sup>42</sup> Thallóczy-Áldássy, *loc. cit.* (see note 40) "...ipsisque utroque waywoda in antelato castro constitutis..."

<sup>43</sup> Zimmermann-Werner, *Urkundenbuch* (see note 33), V, no. 2426. Újlaki's reference to *exercitum generalem nuper contra Turcos promulgatum* in his charter of 8 September clearly refers to the general mobilisation which took place in the summer of 1440. See DI. 13.574 (4 August 1440).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem.*: "...ad annotatum vaivodam Transalpinum in plurificatis legacionibus ipsius domini nostri regis, praelatorum etiam et baronum ac totius regni suae serenitatis ire deputati...sumus accessuri pariter et accessuri..."

<sup>45</sup> On this attack see *infra*.

<sup>46</sup> See Ferenc Szakály, *A török-magyar küzdelem szakaszai a mohácsi csata előtt (1365-1526)*, in *Mohács. Tanulmányok a mohácsi csata 450. évfordulója alkalmából*, ed. by Lajos Rúzsás and Ferenc Szakály, Budapest, 1986, p. 32. The most detailed narratives are: Ottokár Székely, *Hunyadi János első török hadjáratai (1441-1444)*, in *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 1921, pp. 2-64 and L. Elekes, *op. cit.* (see note 35), pp. 148-170.

marched into Wallachia, dethroned the pro-Ottoman voivode and restored the Hungarian influence in the Wallachian principality.

It has been well known for a long time that the Ottoman attack did not come unexpectedly: king Wladislaw had been alerted several months before by the Ragusans<sup>47</sup>. In view of this the Hungarian chronicler's statement, generally accepted by the historians, according to which the voivode arrived in Transylvania shortly before the invasion, seems rather surprising<sup>48</sup>. It would have been natural for Hunyadi to stay in his province and prepare his army for the defence and recruit mercenaries, which was indeed the case before his later campaigns<sup>49</sup>. We would of course be in a much better situation if we could reconstruct the voivode's itinerary in the critical months; unfortunately, we have no evidence at all about his movements between 8 January, when he stays at Csanád, and 8 April<sup>50</sup>, when his presence is attested at Turda; then follows another gap before the voivode turns up again in Braşov on 25 May<sup>51</sup>. Yet, as his presence, unlike that of his co-voivode, Miklós Újlaki, is not attested in king Wladislaw's campaign against the city of Pressburg, which took place precisely in the first months of 1442, we have no reason to suppose that he was withheld in the king's service and consequently could not return to Transylvania on time. The only possible solution is that Hunyadi thought that the great Ottoman attack would once again be directed against Belgrade and consequently prepared himself to thwart it somewhere near the city. This hypothesis, though as yet impossible to prove, would account for the voivode's absence from his province and for his late arrival there after the Ottoman troops had successfully entered Transylvania<sup>52</sup>.

It is also difficult to explain how the Ottoman troops were able to invade Transylvania "unexpectedly" despite the fact that not only a whole system of border defence but also spies had been in operation since at least 1433<sup>53</sup>. This defensive system must have been but strengthened in view of the fact that no warning could be hoped for from the pro-Ottoman voivode of Wallachia. The Hungarian authorities must also have learnt from the tragic consequences of the

<sup>47</sup> *Diplomatarium relationum reipublicae Ragusanae cum regno Hungariae*, Budapest, 1887, pp. 437-439.

<sup>48</sup> "*Hanc funestam eiusdem exercitus Thurcorum ante eruptionem paucis diebus Johannes wayvoda in ipsam Transsilvaniam partes venerat...*" Johannes de Thurocz: *Chronica Hungarorum*. I. Textus. Edd. Elisabeth Galántai, Julius Kristó, Budapest, 1985, p. 244.

<sup>49</sup> None of the historians dealing with this problem ever tried to find an explanation for the voivode's seemingly incomprehensible absence from his post on the eve of the attack. See L. Elekes, *op. cit.* (see note 35), p. 149 and O. Székely, *op. cit.* (see note 46), p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> DF 253.595. We will later return to this highly interesting charter.

<sup>51</sup> On 3 January 1442 he is at Torda, Zimmermann-Werner, *Urkundenbuch* (see note 33), V, no. 2431. On 8 January we see him at Csanád: DI. 55.242. Then he disappears and does not emerge again before 8 May and then again on 25 May when he stays at Braşov: DF 246.905.

<sup>52</sup> The Ottomans may have deliberately spread the rumour of a general attack against Hungary and then profit from the voivode's absence to attack his unprotected Transylvania.

<sup>53</sup> O. Székely, *op. cit.* (see note 46), p. 6.

great Ottoman attack of 1438<sup>54</sup>. Yet if we accept the hypothesis that the voivode was camping with his troops outside Transylvania, it becomes understandable that the defensive forces stationed in the passes of the Carpathes were unable to stop the invading Ottoman army.

What happened after the Ottomans had successfully broken through one of the passes has generally been explained by combining the evidence furnished by contemporary and later chroniclers and the testimony of a handful of charters. Yet it seems to me that undeserved credit has so far been attributed to some of the narrative sources and also to charters whose original never emerged and the content of which clearly contradict the information to be gained from indisputably authentic documents<sup>55</sup>. It is obvious that any reconstruction of the events should before all be based on the analysis of still existing charters of undisputed authenticity, and only after we succeeded in fixing some of the "cornerstones" of our narrative are we allowed to complete the picture with the information filtered from the chronicles.

We firmly believe that one of these "cornerstones" is constituted by the battle of *Vaskapu*. We still have at least three original charters which mention Hunyadi's victory at a place called *Vaskapu* in Transylvania<sup>56</sup>. As early as 1921 Ottokár Székely identified this place with the *Vaskapu* between Hațeg and Caransebeș<sup>57</sup>, and we have no reason to question his proposition<sup>58</sup>. *Vaskapu* in the county of Hunedoara is the only place in Transylvania which corresponds to the

<sup>54</sup> On this attack see F. Szakály, *op. cit.* (see note 46), p. 31.

<sup>55</sup> The most outstanding example is that of L. Elekes, *op. cit.* (see note 35), who simply discredits the affirmations of still existing original charters in favour of "documents" which were never examined by any scholar and whose existence is more than dubious.

<sup>56</sup> 14 April 1443: DF 255.163 (Archives of the Suky family, Cluj). The charter mentions the services of Benedek and Mihály Suki "*in certis conflictibus, quos prefatus Johannes wayvoda, dominus ipsorum, cum sevis Turcis, crucis Christi inimicis, de eisdem victorioso primo in partibus Transsilvanis prope locum Waskapw, secundo in partibus Transalpinis post sese de ingenti semper ipsorum Turcorum caterva triumphando, victorioso transegit...*" 12 October 1447: DI. 29.792: Hunyadi grants a possession belonging to the royal castle of Cetatea de Baltă (Küküllővár) to two burghers of Torda in return for their services "*in quamplurimum exercituum nostrorum contra sevos Turcos crucis Christi persecutores tam in Waskapw ac in Transalpinis partibus ... habitis victoriosis conflictibus ... motorum...*" 18 December 1462: King Matthias narrates the services which János Kendefi rendered when Hunyadi "*Turcis sevisissimis, qui partes Transsilvanas regni nostri solita flagicia ac hominum et rerum predam acturi subintrarant, in loco Vaskapu vocato strenuo congressu occurrisset...*" Károly Magyar, *Regesták Alsófehérmegye levéltárából, in Történelmi Tár*, 1907, pp. 94-95. We can also accept as authentic the charter mentioned by Károly Szabó, *A Kendefiek a XIV. és XV.-dik században*, in *Századok*, 1868, p. 29, dated 16 April 1443, in which king Wladislaw grants two villages in the county of Hunedoara to the Kendefi brothers, although the original charter seems to have been lost. The services mentioned here are identical to those related in DF 255.163. Cf. D. Csánki, *op. cit.* (see note 18), p. 191.

<sup>57</sup> O. Székely, *op. cit.* (see the note 46), p. 15.

<sup>58</sup> In a charter issued in 1456 Ladislaus Posthumus mentions "*pontem in loco Waskapw appellato, in comitatu de Hwnyad et metis seu confiniis parcium nostrarum Transsilvanarum existentem*". D. Csánki, *op. cit.* (see note 18), p. 191.

information gained from the charters, and which was well-known enough for contemporaries to mark the battlefield without further qualifications<sup>59</sup>. In fact, the only piece of evidence which seems to contradict the otherwise unanimous testimony of the charters was first mentioned in an article published in 1879 and then taken uncritically by later historians. According to the author, Károly Veszely, Hunyadi claims in this charter to have beaten the immense Ottoman army not far from Alba Iulia<sup>60</sup>. Yet this "transscript" (*transsumptum*), allegedly found in the archives of the Franciscans of Șumuleu (Csík) by Veszely, was never seen by anyone else in its original form, nor was it published in the first volume of the *Székely Oklevéltár*. We are convinced that we can safely disregard the evidence of this obscure document and leave out of consideration its completely isolated and highly improbable affirmation<sup>61</sup>. It is beyond doubt that the site of Hunyadi's victorious battle with the withdrawing Ottoman troops was the pass of Vaskapu in the county of Hunedoara<sup>62</sup>, and all that we know from other sources should be arranged around this "Archimedean point".

Our first task is of course to determine where and when was Hunyadi beaten, for it is no less evident that his first encounter with the Ottoman troops ended with his defeat. In fact, none of our charters gives any indication as to where the first battle took place, which is no matter for surprise, for the royal grants enumerating the meritorious deeds of the grantees obviously left their misfortunes unmentioned<sup>63</sup>. Consequently, the only charter which mentions both encounters

<sup>59</sup> We have seen that the sources clearly speak of a place (and not a village) called *Poarta de Fier* (Vaskapu) in Transylvania, so neither any of the villages called *Kapu* nor the famous *Porțile de Fier* (Vaskapu) near Orșova can be taken into consideration in determining the place of the battle.

<sup>60</sup> Károly Veszely, *Hol vezte meg Hunyadi János 1442-ben Mező béget*, in *Századok*, 1879, pp. 126-135.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, gives neither the date nor the latin text of his charter.

<sup>62</sup> Bonfini's statement, according to which the second battle took place before Mező bey reached the Transylvanian border (*antequam provincie fines attingat*), also confirms this opinion.

<sup>63</sup> Apparently there is one exception, a charter issued by Hunyadi on 15 April 1447 in favour of the Kendefi family, which, unfortunately cannot be accepted as a source of information. It was first mentioned by Károly Szabó, who claims to have seen the original, but what he cites from it clearly contradicts all the other evidence. According to K. Szabó, the governor related in this charter the services rendered to him by members of the Kendefi family at Belgrade, at Szent-Imre-kapu (sic), in Wallachia and elsewhere. It would be the only reference to the battle of Sântimbru (Szentimre) outside the chronicles, which clearly makes it suspect, and clearly hints at a later influence of either Thuróczy or Bonfini. Moreover, as we have mentioned above, it is very unlikely for a lost battle to be narrated among the meritorious services of the grantee. An abstract of this charter was later published by Károly Magyar after a 18<sup>th</sup>-century copy (!), from which we learn that the alleged services were done "*circa Nandor Albam et Sz. Imre kapu in transalpinis partibus...*" *Történelmi Tár*, 1907, p. 93. Even if we take into consideration all the alterations that normally characterise modern copies, it is obvious that this clumsy and isolated narration cannot derive from an authentic charter of Hunyadi. That it is indeed so is proved by the fact that we still have in original Hunyadi's grant of the same *opidum* Sântămărie-Orlea (Bódogasszonfalva) for the same family, dated 5 August 1447 – DI. 30.443, cf. K. Szabó, *op. cit.* (see note 54), p. 32 – in which no mention is made of either Sântimbru (Szentimre) or Szentimre-kapu. Therefore, the original of the first grant, if it existed at all, must have

tells no more than that the first clash, though ended with the Ottomans' victory, was a very bloody one, and both parties suffered great losses<sup>64</sup>. Our only possibility is therefore to turn to the chronicles for more information, though obviously a greater measure of prudence is needed here than with the charter evidence. Our main source is evidently Thuróczy here, because Bonfini does hardly more than paraphrase his older contemporary's narrative. According to Thuróczy's version, soon after Hunyadi had arrived to Alba Iulia with a tiny escort, he and bishop Lépes left the city with their troops but were surprised and defeated by the Ottomans *ad campum ville Sancti Emerici*<sup>65</sup>. The voivode managed to escape, but the bishop was killed. Scholars are unanimous in supposing that this *villa Sancti Emerici* is Sântimbru to the north-east from Alba Iulia. If we presume that Mezid bey entered Transylvania through the pass of Turnu Roşu<sup>66</sup>, a first encounter in the vicinity of Alba Iulia is by no means improbable and is entirely in keeping with the charter of Wladislaw which says that the second battle took place five days after the first one<sup>67</sup>: Mezid must have had no difficulty in reaching the pass of *Vaskapu* within five days. We can therefore accept Thuróczy's statement that the first encounter took place near the village of Sântimbru<sup>68</sup>, but the rest of his narrative, together with Bonfini's additions, can safely be rejected.

According to Thuróczy, after the lost battle Hunyadi collected as many armsbearers of his province as he could in a short time and followed the withdrawing Ottomans, thirsty of vengeance. Bonfini adds to this that the voivode ordered the "bloody sword" to be circulated in Transylvania, recruited warriors from the villages and the towns, and commanded the Szeklers to take the field<sup>69</sup>. It was at the head of this hastily mustered army that he pursued the Ottomans and defeated them in a second battle before they could leave the province. Now, if we keep in mind how slow and difficult the mobilisation of the Transylvanian troops was before the battle of Mohács (under different circumstances, it is true), it is almost impossible to imagine how the voivode could have been able to raise an army that would then meet and beat the Ottomans five days later. Such a mobilisation, if we suppose that the Transylvanian troops were not in arms at the

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been a forgery based on the second, authentic grant and completed with the name of the battle taken from either Thuróczy and Bonfini.

<sup>64</sup> L. Thallóczy-A. Áldássy, *op. cit.* (see note 40), 141.

<sup>65</sup> Thuróczy, *op. cit.* (see note 47), pp. 244-245.

<sup>66</sup> In this sense see L. Elekes, *op. cit.* (see note 35), p. 148.

<sup>67</sup> We think that we have every reason to take the charter's affirmation literally: Hunyadi was present in the royal court when the charter was drafted, probably for the first time since the winter of 1441, so he seems to have been the primary source of information of the chancery. See Dl. 30.807 (Hunyadi stays at Buda on 15 April 1443).

<sup>68</sup> Outside the chronicles the only source which mentions Sântimbru as the place of the battle is the frequently cited epitaph of bishop Lépes. See O. Székely, *op. cit.* (see note 46), p. 10, note 3.

<sup>69</sup> Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*, ediderunt I. Főgel et B. Iványi et L. Juhász, tomus III, decas III, liber V, p. 108.

time of the Ottoman invasion, would have taken at least a month, which would have been more than enough for Mezősid to leave Transylvania with his booty. Moreover, Władysław's charter of 1443 is explicit in saying that the Ottomans suffered serious losses in the first encounter, which must have prompted them to leave Transylvania as quickly as possible. It is also highly improbable that after the second battle Hunyadi risked an incursion into Wallachia at the head of an army which had been set up in a hurry within a few days' time. It seems to me, then, that we should follow another path in reconstructing the course of events. Our hypothesis is as follows:

In the first months of 1442 Hunyadi was staying in our around Belgrade at the head of his Transylvanian and other troops, preparing himself to thwart the expected Ottoman attack. In his absence the defence of Transylvania may have been entrusted to the episcopal contingent (and perhaps the Szeklers, if we can believe Bonfini, which is far from sure). When he was informed that the invaders had unexpectedly entered Transylvania, the voivode rode at full tilt to Alba Iulia, possibly at the head of a small selection of soldiers, and ordered the bulk of his army to follow him. Having arrived to Transylvania, he may have decided not to wait for his army but try to surprise the Ottomans with his immediate following and the episcopal troops. In this he may have followed bishop Lépes's advice<sup>70</sup>, though a surprise attack of this kind would by no means be incompatible with Hunyadi's principles of warfare. But the first encounter, fought in the vicinity of Alba Iulia, turned out badly, and the bishop himself remained dead on the battlefield<sup>71</sup>. The victorious Ottomans, who also suffered considerable losses, withdrew towards the Transylvanian *Vaskapu* (Poarta de Fier a Transilvaniei), wanting to return home through the Danubian *Vaskapu* (Porțile de Fier). As for the voivode, he sent an envoy to his approaching army and ordered it to block the enemy's way at the pass between Hațeg and Caransebeș, while he reorganized the rest of the episcopal troops and followed in the heel of the Ottomans. Five days later Mezősid's army was surprised and defeated in the Transylvanian pass of *Poarta de Fier*, where even the Ottoman commander lost his life. The first battle is generally thought to have taken place on 18 March, an opinion that is based on the testimony of bishop Lépes's epitaph, complemented by the information of some other, foreign, sources<sup>72</sup>. It is with regard to this date that the second, victorious battle is placed on 23 March, in accordance with Władysław's frequently cited charter.

<sup>70</sup> A distant echo of this would then be Thuróczy's remark about the bishop as a man "*in rebus ... rite agendis vehemens*".

<sup>71</sup> We have no reason to doubt 18 March as the date of the battle. See the evidence collected by O. Székely, *op. cit.* (see the note 46), p. 10. On 12 May bishop Lépes is mentioned as killed "*per sevissimos Turcos hoc regnum devastantes*": Zs. Jakó, *op. cit.* (see note 28), p. 304.

<sup>72</sup> The sources are collected in O. Székely, *op. cit.* (see note 46), p. 10 and notes.

In fact, we have no reason to doubt the traditional dating of these events. Yet if we accept 18 and 23 March as marking the two encounters, we have to conclude that Hunyadi did not immediately follow the escaping Ottomans to Wallachia. For on 8 April we see him participating to the general assembly of the Transylvanian "nations" at Turda<sup>73</sup>. The timing of this assembly seems to indicate that it was convoked at least two weeks before, that is, shortly after the Ottoman invasion. The fact that the voivode simply attended to the assembly, and the only known charter was issued in the name of the vice-voivodes, appears to show that the assembly took place upon the initiative of the three "nations" themselves with a view to organise their defence in accordance with the so-called union of Kápolna<sup>74</sup>. We do not know what conclusions were made during the assembly, but we are surely not far from the truth when supposing that they concerned the voivode's subsequent Wallachian campaign and the inevitable Ottoman retaliatory attack. After the assembly Hunyadi unexpectedly entered Wallachia<sup>75</sup> at the head of his army (and not with a hastily mustered popular militia), dethroned the pro-Ottoman voivode and set up a pro-Hungarian regime there. He returned to Transylvania through the pass of Bran (Töröcsvár) at the end of May<sup>76</sup> and immediately began to prepare himself for the defence of his menaced province.

The subsequent Ottoman invasion, led by the beglerbey of Rumelia, Seaded-Din, is even less completely documented than the attack of Mezyd. Our sources are basically the same, the evidence of which has normally been complemented with the information drawn from Turkish and Serbian sources. It is evident that the invasion was not a surprise for the Hungarian authorities<sup>77</sup>, and that Hunyadi had plenty of time to organise the defence. Unfortunately, Hunyadi's itinerary is even

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*: "*Magnifico viro Laurencio de Hedervara regni Hungarie palatino domino eorum honorando Gregorius Bodo de Gywrgy et Nicolaus de Vizakna vicewayvode Transsilvanenses debita reverentiam cum honore. Vestra noverit magnificencia, quod magnifico Johanne de Hwnyad inter ceteros honores parcium Transsilvanarum wayvoda domino nostro metuendo presencialiter adherente, nobis unacum earundem parcium Transsilvanarum nobilibus ad congregacionem et convencionem eorundem nobilium ac Sicularum et Saxonum ipsarum parcium Transsilvanarum pro quibusdam necessariis earundem parcium Transsilvanarum expeditionibus perficiendis die dominica quasimodo geniti in anno domini 1442 preterita Torde factam convenientibus...*". Upon the Transylvanian assemblies see E. Mályusz, *Az erdélyi magyar társadalom* (see note 4), pp. 38-41.

<sup>75</sup> The wording of Wladislaw's charter – L. Thallóczy-A. Áldássy, *op. cit.* (see note 40), p. 141: "*...potitus itaque hac felici victoria prefatus noster wayvoda de hinc ad recuperationem Transalpinarum predictis Transsilvanis vicinarum partium intendere cepit...*" also supports the interpretation according to which Hunyadi's Wallachian expedition did not immediately followed the battle of *Poarta de Fier*.

<sup>76</sup> On 25 May 1442 he appears for the first time since 8 April at Braşov: Dl. 50.343, whence his itinerary can be followed with relative certainty. His steps are the following: 28 May: Caşolt [(Szász)hermány], Zimmermann-Werner, *Urkundenbuch* (see note 33), V, no. 2436 = DF 246905; 18 June: Beia [(Homoród)bene], *ibidem*, V, no. 2437; 15 July: Curciu [(Küküllő)Körös], Dl. 55.262; 23 July: Sânpaul (Szentpál), Dl. 74.076.

<sup>77</sup> O. Székely, *op. cit.* (see note 46), p. 19, n. 7.

more fragmented than in the preceding period, and no charter of his is known between 25 July 1442 and 6 January 1443. In view of this it is not surprising that we have nothing to add to what has so far been written on the attack of Sead-ed-Din and on his defeat at the hands of Hunyadi<sup>78</sup>. It is precisely from the silence of the charter evidence that we conclude that the voivode's attack against the Bulgarian city of Vidin took place immediately after the battle fought by the river Ialomița in the first days of September, without the voivode's returning to Transylvania<sup>79</sup>. One thing is certain, however: Hunyadi's co-voivode, Miklós Újlaki, was present in none of these expeditions<sup>80</sup>.

We are in a much more favourable situation as regards the fourth major clash with the Ottomans that took place before the so-called long campaign: Hunyadi's incursion into the northern parts of Serbia<sup>81</sup>. The main difference with respect to the previous conflicts is that Wladislaw's charter explicitly says that this time the two voivodes acted together. A charter once published by József Teleki, issued on 9 February by Hunyadi's viscount of Arad, Miklós Székely, which speaks about peasants going *ad presentem exercitum generalem*, clearly refers to this expedition to Serbia<sup>82</sup>. The itinerary of the two voivodes is entirely in accordance with this information: in January Hunyadi's presence is attested at Csanád and Szeged, while Újlaki appears on 20 February at Újlak (Ilok, Valkó county)<sup>83</sup>. Since on 27 March both voivodes appear in the court of Buda<sup>84</sup>, we can safely conclude that the Serbian campaign took place in the first half of March, Újlaki probably joining his fellow voivode at Szeged at the end of February<sup>85</sup>. By 25 April Hunyadi returned to Csanád, whence he went through Oradea to

<sup>78</sup> See the narratives of O. Székely, *op. cit.* (see note 46), pp. 18-26, and L. Elekes, *op. cit.* (see note 35), pp. 159-164.

<sup>79</sup> See Wladislaw's charter in L. Thallóczy- Á. Áldássy, *op. cit.* (see note 40), p. 142, and his other charter published in the appendix of the present study.

<sup>80</sup> The known elements of his itinerary in 1442 are the following: 9 June: Buda (Dl. 92.933); 23 June: Bátorokó, Veszprém county (Dl. 13.683); 17 August: Buda (J. Teleki, *op. cit.*, X, p. 120); 23 September: Bátorokó (Dl. 44.335); 17 December: Győr (*Zichy*, IX, p. 46.).

<sup>81</sup> L. Thallóczy- Á. Áldássy, *op. cit.* (see note 40), p. 142: "...*deinde vice altera cum magnifico Nicolao conwayvoda suo invadunt partes Uzure et Rascie...*"

<sup>82</sup> J. Teleki, *op. cit.* (see note 2), X, p. 124.

<sup>83</sup> Dl. 55.243, 44.340, 55.244, 55.245, 13.706.

<sup>84</sup> Dl. 13.715.

<sup>85</sup> The two voivodes are together at Szeged on 2 March 1443: Zimmermann-Werner, *Urkundenbuch*, V, no. 2447. The charter published in *ibidem*, V, no. 2451, according to which Hunyadi would have stayed at Mediaș in Transylvania on 19 March 1443, seems in fact to have been issued on 9 July (*feria tertia ante festum <Translacionis> beati Benedicti abbatis*), though the charter mentions simply *festum Benedicti*; the voivode's statement that he is just going to launch his expedition and is thus demanding wagons and other weapons from the burghers of Brașov would make no sense in March 1443, whereas it is perfectly in its place in the beginning of July, when Hunyadi's presence is clearly attested at Mediaș. cf. *ibidem*, V, no. 2461.



Transylvania<sup>86</sup> and began to organise his first large-scale offensive expedition which is now known as the long campaign.

On the preceding pages we tried to summarize what we discovered about the political history of Transylvania, and, before all, about the activity of its voivodes, in the eventful years 1440-1443. It was our intention to present some hitherto unused material and propose new solutions to old problems, hoping that other historians, Romanians and Hungarians as well, will present the results of their own research and contribute to our common knowledge of this important period. We are perfectly aware that some of our hypotheses are highly questionable, but we believe that they will help, even if refuted by other historians, to open new ways in the research of late medieval Transylvania.

## APPENDIX:

### 1.

*1440 Aprilis 10 – Hodod*

*Ladislaus Jakch de Hodod Papae camerario de Dej de detentione domini Mathkonis bani nuntiat.*

*Litterae in charta scriptae sigilloque anularis, cuius vestigia extant, clausae. Archivum Hungariae Nationale, Dl. 55.202 (archivum familiae Kállay).*

Ladislaus Jakch de Hadad<sup>87</sup>

Nobilis vir nobis dilecte hesterna die dominus frater Johannes episcopus Waradiensis nobis informare curavit, quomodo dominus Mathko banus frater noster carissimus et dominus vester, per dominam nostram reginam esset captus et detentus dominus siquidem episcopus petit nos, ut episcopatum suum et castra sua et cameras solium ad manus nostras accipiamus et sibi teneamus, ergo videatis, quid facitis, quia in ista septimana camere de manibus vestris occupabuntur proinde quotcunque sales habetis expositos omnes penitus cicius quam potestis per fluvium ad Wdwarhel<sup>88</sup> dimittatis, ita quod de Wdwarhel non recedant, quia ubicumque alias possunt invenire, eo facto auferrent et unam vestram litteram cum eisdem nobis transmittatis, ut cum illa nos procuremus, respectu cuius alter aliquid accionis circa eosdem non habeat, vestram tamen porcionem nos in illis nolumus reservare, sed vos ipsam excipiatis sicut cum domino vestro convencionem

<sup>86</sup> Csanád: Dl. 55.255, 55.256; Oradea: Dl. 55.257 (5 May); Turda: Dl. 74.07 (10 May).

<sup>87</sup> Hodod (Hadad), RO, <j. Satu Mare>.

<sup>88</sup> Someş-Odorhei (Számosudvárhely), RO, <j. Sălaj>.

habuistis, ita humaniter agatis et ipsas cameras quantum longius potestis erga manus vestras teneatis, magis autem cum solibus pretactis, si necesse fuerit nos inveniamus exercitum et fortitudinem, alioquin nostri adversarii habebunt forsan exinde fortitudinem. Nos enim morte preventi a parte domini bani alienamur.

Datum in Hadad in dominica misericordie anno 1440.

*In dorso:* Nobili viro Pape camerario de Dees<sup>89</sup> nobis dilecto.

## 2.

1440 Iunii 19 – Reteag

*Desew de Losoncz vaivoda Transilvanus Mathkonem de Thallocz banum rogat, ut servitia Papi de Florentia recompenset.*

*Litterae in charta scriptae sigilloque rotundo, cuius vestigia extant, clausae. Archivum Hungariae Nationale, DL 55.213 (archivum familiae Kallay).*

Magnifice vir frater noster carissime.

Noverit ipsa vestra fraternitas in singulis factis camararum salium et eciam familiarum vestrorum eo melius valuimus in defensione eorundem, sed et in aliis factis vestre fraternitatis iuxta informacionem et requisicionem nobilis Peronis de Rosis camararii de Thorda<sup>90</sup> laboravimus et usque hec tempora tam camare salium, quam familiares vestre fraternitatis ab omnibus impetitoribus illese et pacifici permanserunt, nunc vero solum stat in arbitrio vestre fraternitatis, quomodo et sub qua dispositione ipsas cameras relinquitis.

Ecce enim accedet ad vestram fraternitatem nobilis Papi de Florentia, qui in singulis factis vestris unacum suis fratribus fideliter famulavit, set ex permissione divinitatis plaga pestilencia hominum in tantum regnavit, quod vix tertia pars hominum remansit, propter quod incisio salium sollicitari non potuit, signanter vero quod aqua intorrens extitit, in qua sales in navibus minime descendere potuerunt, rogantes tamen vestram fraternitatem perobnix, quatenus intuitu serviciorum ipsius Papi ac nostre fraternitatis servicia sua vestro gratuito dono recompensare dignemini.

Scriptum in Reteagh<sup>91</sup> dominica proxima ante festum nativitatis beati Johannis baptiste anno 1440.

<sup>89</sup> Dej (Dés), RO, <j. Cluj>.

<sup>90</sup> Turda (Torda), RO, <j. Cluj>.

<sup>91</sup> Reteag (Retteg), RO, <j. Bistrița-Năsăud>.

*Infra textum, sinistro:* Desew de Losoncz vayvoda Transsilvanus et comes de Zolnok.

*In dorso:* Magnifico Mathko de Thallocz, regnorum Corvacie, Dalmacie et tocius Sclavonie bano, fratri nostro carissimo.

3.

1441 Maii 16 – Buda

*Wladislaus Hungariae Poloniaeque rex Desew Losoncz vaivodae Transylvaniae post iuramentum prestitum plures possessiones in Transylvania donat.*

*Litterae in membrana scriptae et infra textum sigillo cuius vestigia extant, consignatae. Recto in angulo superiore dextro et sub sigillo: Relacio Mathkonis de Talloucz, regnorum Dalmacie, Croacie et tocius Sclavonie bani. Archivum Musei Transylvanensis, Collectio Musei Transylvanensis, no. 75 (35), (Cluj-Napoca). Ex copia photographica: Archivum Hungariae Nationale, DF 253.704.*

Nos Wladislaus Dei gracia Hungarie, Polonie, Dalmacie, Croacie etc. rex Lithuanieque princeps supremus et heres Russie memorie commendamus tenore presencium significantes quibus expedit universis, quod nos tum ex eo, quia fidelis noster magnificus Desew de Losoncz alias wayvoda Transsilvanus iam novissime de observanda nobis obediencia et omnimoda fidelitate corporali suo deposito juramento ac fide nos certum reddidit tumque pro eo, quia id devota mentis constancia et sinceritate grata inposterum cum summa fidelitatis constancia nostra proponit continuare obsequia, sicuti et quemadmodum alias serenissima princeps domina Elizabeth regina, tum pro fidelibus suis serviciis, sed et pro undecim milibus octingentis et triginta florenis auri, quibus dicto Desew ratione salarii sui debitorie obligata extitisse dicitur possessiones Lekencze<sup>92</sup>, Zenthgywrgh<sup>93</sup>, Vermes<sup>94</sup> et Thaach<sup>95</sup> in Doboka, que alias ad civitatem nostram Biztriciensem<sup>96</sup> pertinuisse dicuntur, item medietates possessionum Dyod hungaricalis<sup>97</sup>, Thwys<sup>98</sup>, Meghkerek<sup>99</sup>, Mendzenth<sup>100</sup>, Thynod<sup>101</sup>, Dyod wolahalalis<sup>102</sup>, Remethe<sup>103</sup>, Dyomal<sup>104</sup>,

<sup>92</sup> Lechința (Lekencze), RO, <j. Bistrița-Năsăud>.

<sup>93</sup> Sângeorz-băi (Szentgyörgy), RO, <j. Bistrița-Năsăud>.

<sup>94</sup> Vermeș (Vermes), RO, <j. Bistrița-Năsăud>.

<sup>95</sup> Teaca (Teke), RO, <j. Bistrița-Năsăud>.

<sup>96</sup> Bistrița (Beszterce), RO, <j. Bistrița-Năsăud>.

<sup>97</sup> Geoagiu de Sus (Felgyógy), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>98</sup> Teiuș (Tövis), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>99</sup> Meșcreac (Mégkerek), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>100</sup> Mesentea (Mindszent), RO, <j. Alba>.

Thybwrczpathaka<sup>105</sup>, Pacholka<sup>106</sup>, Kapwd<sup>107</sup>, Karachonfalw<sup>108</sup> et Olachchestwe<sup>109</sup> vocatarum in Albensi Transsilvano comitatibus existencium, que quondam Michaelis filii Ladislai de dicta Dyod prefuisse et per defectum seminis eiusdem dudum ad regiam devolute asseruntur maiestatem eidem Desew et suis heredibus serie litterarum suarum donacionalium superinde confectarum in perpetuum donasse et contulisse dicitur sic et eodem modo nos premissas possessiones necnon prenarratas medietates predictarum aliarum possessionum simulcum cunctis ipsarum utilitatibus et pertinentiis quibuslibet, terris scilicet arabilibus cultis et incultis, agris, pratis, silvis, nemoribus, montibus, vallibus, vineis et vinearum promontoriis, aquis, fluviis et aquarum decursibus, molendinis et locis molendinorum ac piscinis et piscaturis et generaliter quarumlibet utilitatum et pertinenciarum integritatibus, quovis nominis vocabulo vocitatis ad easdem rite et legitime pertinentibus et pertinere debentibus sub earum veris metis et antiquis, premissis sic uti nobis dicta sunt stantibus et se habentibus, dictam donacionem reginalem in hac parte ratam habentes eidem Desew waywode et suis heredibus ac posteritatibus universis nove nostre donacionis titulo et omni eo jure quo nostre rite incumbit collacioni, dedimus, donavimus et contulimus, ymmo damus, donamus et conferimus jure perpetuo et irrevocabiliter possidendas, tenendas pariter et habendas, salvo jure alieno, harum nostrarum vigore et testimonio litterarum mediante, quas in formam nostri privilegii redigi faciemus dum nobis in specie fuerint reportate.

Datum Bude feria tertia proxima ante festum beate Elene regine anno Domini millesimo quadringentesimo quadragesimo primo.

## 4.

1443 Aprilis 14 – Buda

*Wladislaus Hungariae Poloniaeque rex iobagionibus nobilium de Swk quinquagesimam partem de possessionibus eorum fisco regio proveniendam relaxat.*

<sup>101</sup> Tinăud (Tinód), RO, <j. Bihor>.

<sup>102</sup> Stremț (Gyógy), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>103</sup> Râmeț (Remete), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>104</sup> Geomal (Diómál), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>105</sup> Tibru (Tibor), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>106</sup> Pețelca (Paczalka), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>107</sup> Găbud (Gábod), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>108</sup> Crăciunelu de Jos (Alsokáracsonfalu), RO, <j. Alba>.

<sup>109</sup> Cistei (Oláhcsesztve), RO, <j. Alba>.

*Litterae in charta scriptae et infra textum sigillo cuius vestigia extant, consignatae. Recto in angulo superiore dextro et sub sigillo: Commissio propria domini regis. Et sub sigillo: Per manuscriptum suum (lectio incerta). Archivum Romaniae Nationale, Cluj-Napoca, Collectio Diplomatum Mediaevalium, Archivum familiae Suky, no. 116 (57). Copia photographica: Archivum Hungariae Nationale, DF 255.163.*

Nos Wladislaus Dei gracia Hungarie, Polonie, Dalmacie, Croacie etc. rex Lithuanieque princeps supremus et heres Russie memorie commendamus per presentes, quod nos tum ad humilime precis instanciam fidelis nostri magnifici Johannis de Hwnyad inter cetera parcium nostrarum Transsilvanarum wayvode, tum etenim requirentibus fidelitatibus et fidelium servicionum meritis fidelium nostrorum Benedicti et Michaelis filiorum quondam Johannis de Swk<sup>110</sup> per ipsos nobis ymmo verius toti Christianitati locis debitis et temporibus opportunis precipue vero in certis conflictibus, quos prefatus Johannes wayvoda dominus ipsorum cum sevis Turcis Crucis Christi inimicis de eisdem victoriose primo in partibus Transsilvanis prope locum Waskapw<sup>111</sup> secundo in partibus Transalpinis post sese de ingenti semper ipsorum Turcorum caterva triumphando victoriose transegit ac in combustione et destructione civitatis Bidiniensis<sup>112</sup> et certarum aliarum parcium regni Bulgarie necnon novissime in progressu eiusdem contra pretactos Turcos in regnum Rascie habito semper lateri prefati Johannis wayvode adherendo, exhibitis et impensis, quorum intuitu ipsis ad presens nostre liberalitatis munificenciam ostendere cupientes universos et quoslibet proventus quinquagesimales ex parte jobagionum eorum ac Petri de Swk, Georgii filii Ladislai, Johannis et Symonis filiorum Symonis de eadem Swk condivisionalium fratrum ipsorum Benedicti et Michaelis de possessionibus ipsorum Volahalibus videlicet Wolahsarmas<sup>113</sup>, Wolahkalyan<sup>114</sup>, Barea<sup>115</sup>, Kethelen<sup>116</sup> et Wolahsuk<sup>117</sup> vocatis in comitatu de Colos existentibus fisco regio provenire debentes perpetuo duximus relaxandos, ymmo relaxavimus presencium per vigorem.

Quocirca vobis fidelibus nostris exactoribus huiusmodi proventuum quinquagesimalium presentibus et futuris presentes visuris firmissime precipimus et mandamus, quatenus dictas possessiones annotatorum Benedicti, Michaelis,

<sup>110</sup> Jucu de Mijloc (Nemeszsuk), RO, <j. Cluj>.

<sup>111</sup> Poarta de Fier a Transilvaniei.

<sup>112</sup> Vidin, <Bulgaria>.

<sup>113</sup> Sarmășel (Kissármás), RO, <j. Mureș>.

<sup>114</sup> Căianu (Kiskályán), RO, <j. Cluj>.

<sup>115</sup> Bărați (Baré), RO, <j. Cluj>.

<sup>116</sup> Cătălina (Katalina), RO, <j. Cluj>.

<sup>117</sup> Jucu de Sus (Felsősuk), RO, <j. Cluj>.

Petri, Georgii, Johannis et Symonis Wolahsarmas, Wolahkalyan, Baree, Kethelen et Wolahsuk vocatas ac populos et jobagiones eorundem in eisdem commorantes vel moraturos nullo umquam tempore ad solvendum huiusmodi quinquagesimam artare vel racione non solucionis eiusdem impedire aut dampnificare presumatis graciae nostre sub obtentu, presentibus perlectis exhibenti restituti.

Datum Bude in dominica Ramispalmarum anno domini 1443.