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## ANTEMURALE CHRISTIANITATIS? ANTI-TURKISH PROPAGANDA AND THE TRUE GOAL OF JOHANNES OLBRACHT'S CRUSADE

**Katarzyna Niemczyk**

*Keywords:* Johannes Olbracht, Moldova, Battle of the Cosmin Forest, Stephan the Great, Ottoman Empire.

Since the fall of the Constantinople in 1453, the question of the Turkish threat was especially serious in Europe. This fear became even graver among Europeans after the conquest of the Killia and Akkerman by Turkey in 1484. Sultan Bayezid II regarded Kilia as a door to Moldova and Hungary, and Akkerman as a door to Poland and Russia (Acta 1914, 38-39). This conquest gave them the possibilities to control the Polish and Hungarian trade in the Black Sea area and deprived Moldova of the huge part of their income (Czamańska 1996, 153-154; Pietkiewicz 2002, 148-149; Pietkiewicz 2003, 86; Pilat 2010, 123-136; Pilat 2013, 191; Gorovei 2003, 496-515; Cristea 2004, 25-36). From that time, the fear in Europe of the Turkish invasion, as well as of the awareness of the necessity to defeat this enemy was great. The idea of the crusade against “unbelievers” became very popular among Europeans, and it was the Eastern Europe that was seen as the *Antemurale christianitatis* in the future war. The anti-Turkish ideology was growing very popular (Srodecki 2015, passim; Bak 2004, 118; Knoll 1974, 381-401; Weintraub 1979-1980, 921-922; Baczkowski 2002, 51-57). Among the thinkers preaching this ideology were many well-known Renaissance humanists, Callimachus and Erasmus of Rotterdam at their head (Materiały 1966, no 4-7; Nagy 2013, 9-28; Nanajvš 2013, 31-96). In 1474 Callimachus – the man who was convinced about the necessity of the war against Turkey – assumed the position of the teacher for the sons of the Polish king Casimir Jagiellon, especially for Ferdinand and Johannes Olbracht (Callimachi 1962, 34; Skoczek 1956, 20; Garbacik 1948, 33, 38; Garbacik 1964, 495; Krukowski 1980, 10; Niemczyk 2016a, 199). The second one, Johannes, was his favorite student. According to the common opinion – Johannes’s

personality and worldview took shape under his teacher’s dominant influence and his *idée fixe* of making a war against Turkey became very close to him. This is the thesis that was popularized by several Polish Early Modern chronicles, that have been written by Bernard Wapowski, Marcin Kromer and Joachim Bielski (Miechowita 1, passim; Miechowita 2, passim; Wapowski 1874, 22-23; Bielski 1597, 482; Kromer 1857, 1326-1327; Lukas 1879, 4-6)<sup>1</sup>. These chronicles were based on the second version of the Miechowita’s chronicle, which was a censored version re-published by Johannes Łaski. Is it true? Or should we rather regard the anti-Turkish ideology only as a justification of the personal politics of Johannes Olbracht? There were many humanists, who ensured their readers about Olbracht’s hostile attitude towards Turkey. These were the humanists among whom the ideology of “*antemurale christianitatis*” was extremely popular and among whom the idea of the crusade against Turkey was often used as a pretext to explain other political goals and justify war expeditions (Smółucha 1999, 60; Papée 2006, 58, 61; Ulmann 1884, 208). Also, for the Polish king such a pretext, crusade against Turkey was, extremely convenient in the existing political situation. At that time, when a threat from the South-East was very serious for all the Christian Europe, a decision on organizing the crusade against Turkey must have been supported by Europeans. This problem of the role of the “Antemurale Christianitatis” ideology in the late medieval period was thoroughly researched

<sup>1</sup> The first version of the Chronicle, see: Maciej z Miechowa, *Chronica Polonorum*, Kraków 1519 and the changed version: J. Pistorius, *Polonicae Historiae Corpus hoc est, Polonicarum rerum Latini recentiores et veteres scriptores, quotquot extant, uno volumine comprehaensi omnes, et in aliquot distributi Tomos*, Basileae 1582, Bd. 2. In the Miechowita’s chronicle Olbracht hasn’t been described as a person who above all want to fight against Turkey. Such an image of the Polish king preserved just Wapowski.

by Paul Srodecki<sup>2</sup>. A conversation I was lucky to have with him during the conference in Debrecen, was an impulse for me to conduct a research on this problem (Srodecki 2015, 217-265). In this article, I would like to analyze some of the sources, so that I would be able to answer to the question of to what extent this anti-Turkish ideology, that was preached in these sources, was indeed the true reason of the Johannes Olbracht's crusade, or whether it was but a propagandist pretext to execute his political goals.

In my opinion, the decisions that had been made during the meeting in Levoca 1494 were of crucial importance, and by them we can explain this issue. The meeting was organized in April 1494. This should have been a meeting of the whole Jagiellonian brothers: Johannes Olbracht, Alexander, Sigismund, Frederik and Wladislaus, but Alexander couldn't attend it. Although this meeting lasted three weeks, there is a significant lack of documents connected with this conference. It is actually not true that there are no documents from Levoca at all, because there are three documents preserved in the Archive in Sibiu<sup>3</sup>, another two are in the Budapest's Archive<sup>4</sup> (Tibor 2014, 399; Hopp 1992, 46) and one in Nürnberg (Wagner 1885, 507). However, these documents can't help us with the reconstruction of the course of the meeting as well as of the decisions that had been made there. This lack of diplomatic sources makes the research on this question difficult. There is the Chronicle of Miechowita (in two versions), the text of Bonfini, the instruction for the Hungarian envoy – Wladislaus Lasonczy and some “rumors” that we can find in several other sources.

The chronicle written by Matthias of Miechów (Miechowita) is one of the most important sources of information for this case because all the further Polish chronicles were based on the second version of Miechowita's chronicle. The problem is, that the true version that was written by Matthias of Miechów was censored and altered by Johannes Łaski and reprinted in the

year 1521. According to both versions (the first and the amended one) during the meeting in Levoca (1494) Jagiellons made many decisions regarding the Moldova's and Turkey's case but, as Matthias of Miechów said, all the treaties were revoked. The main difference between the first and the censored version of the chronicle is the goal of the Johannes Olbracht crusade in 1497. In the original version, there is a narrative only about the campaign against Moldova, while in the altered version Turkey is given as the aim of the Olbracht's crusade (Miechowita 1, 348; Miechowita 2, 349). In the original version, the author described a lot of signs that announced the failure of this crusade: king's horse drowned in the river, during the service the priest dropped the host on the ground and so on (Miechowita 1, 349; Borzemski 1890, 72; Lewicki 1893, 24-25). In this version also, we can feel the author's indignation, revealing that he was definitely against this expedition. In the second version of the chronicle, such signs were either removed or reinterpreted: the king's horse admittedly drowns but the king was safe and sound; the host fell but only on one occasion and it was immediately picked up (Miechowita 2, 349-350; Borzemski 1890, 72; Lewicki 1893, 24-25). Such badly-boding signs didn't match to the crusade against “unbelievers”. The second version of the Miechowita's chronicle was the source-text for the later chroniclers, Wapowski and Kromer. It was Kromer, who created the Olbracht's image as the man who, above all, wanted to fight against Turkey. Kromer, who based his treatise on the second version of Miechowita's chronicle, was convinced that the Olbracht's crusade was directed against Turkey. The Polish king should have been under the strong influence of the Callimachus and believed that he can overcome the Turkish threat. In order to strengthen his opinion, Kromer changed the dates of some of the events: he wrote that one of the reasons for Olbracht's crusade was two Turkish expeditions along the Adriatic coast. As a response, the Polish king sent his envoy – Krzeslaw of Kurozweki to the Stephan the Great with the information that Olbracht intended to make a crusade against Turkey in the spring of the next year. The truth is that these Turkish expeditions on Atlantic coast took place in April and June 1497 (Wapowski 1874, 22-23; Lukas 1879, 4), and Krzeslaw of Kurozweki was in Moldova at the beginning of the 1497 (Miechowita 2, 240; Wapowski 1874, 22-25; Czamańska 1996, 168,

<sup>2</sup> The Jagiellonians in Europe: Dynastic Diplomacy and Foreign Relations/ Die Jagiellonen in Europa: Dynastische und Diplomatische Beziehungen. International Conference and Roundtable, 10-11 April 2015, Department of History, University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary.

<sup>3</sup> Direcția Județeană Sibiu a Arhivelor Naționale ale României, Colecția de documente medievale, Serie U.II, Inventar 25, no 557, 558, 561.

<sup>4</sup> Magyar Országos Levéltár (Budapest), no 24771.

174-175; Papée 2006, 127-128; Górka 1932, 70-71; Kujawski 1987, 73; Tarnowski 1855, 41; Niemczyk 2014, 60; Niemczyk 2016b, 148), that is long before Turkish expedition. So, the chronology, that was given by Kromer, is false. He also didn't mention all these bad signs, that were mentioned by Miechowita. They didn't match to his conception of the military expedition as the crusade in order to defend Christianity. However, Kromer wrote also, that he knew, that during the meeting in Levoca, Johannes Olbracht announced his plan to conquer Moldova and hand over her throne to his brother – Sigismund (Wapowski 1874, 20). Kromer wrote explicitly that "*it was believed that he [Johannes Olbracht] wanted to conquer Moldova and only to mislead Stephan the Great he has spoken about the crusade against Turkey*" (Kromer 1857, 1326). Bielski reinforced this thesis writing in addition, that Johannes Olbracht wanted to fight against Turkey to avenge the death of Wladislaus of Varna, but he also mentioned that the Polish king had one more goal: he wanted to take the throne back from Stephan the Great and gave it to his brother, Sigismund. Having achieved this goal, he would have intended to fight against Turkey (Bielski 1597, 482-484). Although the Olbracht's anti-Turkish attitude is strongly underlined in all of the above-mentioned chronicles, there are mentions saying that during the meeting in Levoca Polish king planned to take the Moldova's throne back from Stephan the Great and give it to Sigismund.

Antonio Bonfini – Italian humanist, Matthias Corvinus' court historian and author of the History of Hungary, who wrote a lot about course of the meeting in Levoca, gave us some additional information about the meeting in Levoca, but unfortunately not much about the decisions that were there made. According to him, the meeting in Levoca was a manifestation of the power of Jagiellons. There were some decisions made against a certain undefined "enemy" (Bonfini 1581, 714-715; Finkel 1914, 328; Wagner 1882, 316-327; Wagner 1885, 465-510 (especially p. 507-508); Ulmann 1975, 149-161; Vogel 1867, 39-44; Klüpfel 1846, 110). Unfortunately, there is no explanation on what kind of enemy he meant. It is known however, that the man, who the emperor Maximilian Habsburg trusted in, Christoph von Lichtenstein, on the 5<sup>th</sup> March of the year 1494 informed him that he knows form Hungary's "great friends" that the Polish king with his brothers: the

king of Hungary and the great prince of Lithuania organized a meeting "*in Czaslaw or in its vicinity*" and concluded there some treaties. Unfortunately, he didn't know what the reason of the meeting is, but he promised to learn more about it (Chmel 1845, no 28). Unfortunately, we don't have access to his later reports. It seems that Maximilian was afraid that the goal of this meeting was to make a covenant against him, because on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April he gave directions to his envoy who should have been sent to Ivan III to renew mutual treaty between him and Ivan against the Jagiellonian dynasty. This envoy wasn't sent at the end (Chmel 1845, no 32; Finkel 1914, 336)<sup>5</sup>. Some historians supposed that this „enemy” about whom Bonfini wrote, was Maximilian (Finkel 1914, 329-338). I think, that the problem with Maximilian, who wanted to take over the power in Hungary, was the important point of the meeting, but at that time, Maximilian was involved in the war against France, so it hadn't make any sense to form an alliance against him at that time. I think that as this "enemy" we should regard Turkey.

The other sources to this question are: the instruction for the envoy of Hungarians – Wladislaus Lasoneczy, who was sent by Wladislaw II to Johannes Olbracht during his endeavor to conquer Suceava, as well as the other instruction for Olbracht's envoy who was sent with the answer for the previous letter (Materiały 1966, 25, no 13, 14). In the instruction first mentioned, Wladislaus II accused his brother – Johannes Olbracht – of breaking the treaty from Levoca. There was decided that Olbracht should attack Turkey, not Moldova, and this was confirmed in Prague by Olbracht's envoy – Johannes of Chodecz. But Wladislaus suspected that in reality his brother's goal is to conquer Moldova and hand over this throne to his brother, Sigismund. He also supposed that Olbracht had been preparing such a plan from three years, since the meeting in Levoca and then his agreement not to attack Moldova, was from the beginning, a farce. Wladislaus wrote also that Hungary was forced to defend the ruler of Moldova because the actions of Polish king was very dangerous for further relations between Hungary, Poland, Moldova and Turkey, so Wladislaus had to prevent it (Materiały 1966, 25, no 13). In the answer to this accusation, Ol-

<sup>5</sup> Finkel supposed that the reason that the envoys weren't sent was the plan of the marriage between Alexander Jagiellon and Helena.



bracht explained that he didn't break the treaty from Levoca because there was decided that he should conquer Kyllia and Akkerman and hand it over to the Stephan the Great („*castra illa, que per Turcum recepta erant, Voievode Moldavie recuperarentur*”). He also explained that there was no peace treaty between Poland and Turkey because the Polish envoy, who was sent to Constantinople to resolve this case, came back without sultan's confirmation of this treaty. Stephan the Great wanted to support Polish king in this expedition but, according to the Olbracht's explanation, he suddenly changed his mind and supported the Turkish side. The ruler of Moldova sent his envoys: Tăutul and Isac<sup>6</sup> to Olbracht with a demand to withdraw the Polish army from Moldova, but the Polish king ignored it, captured Moldova's envoys and started his expedition against Suceava. Olbracht explained additionally that Bartholomeus Drágffy was a Turkish ally as well. In this complicated situation, he decided to attack Suceava. As he made this decision, he intended to inform Wladislaus about it, but then he noticed that Hungarian's envoys headed towards him, so he decided not to wait for them but attack the capital of Moldova. In that moment Hungarian's envoy – Wladislaus Lasonczy – reached him with the demand to withdraw the Polish army from Moldova. Lasonczy accused him additionally that he wants to deliver the throne of Moldova into the hands of Sigismund (Materiały 1966, no 14; Naker 1874, 312; Lewicki 1893, 5). It seems that there is some inaccuracy in Olbracht's explanations. The first mentioned document is corrupted: we don't know his exact dating, but we know that it was written to Olbracht who already was “*in Moldavia*”. Lasonczy was sent in response to Olbracht's decision to attack Suceava. Hungarians' envoy accused the Polish king of an intention to break the treaty in Levoca, to conquer Moldova and to give her throne to Sigismund. However, Johannes Olbracht explained that it was Stephan the Great who betray him first, that is why he decided to attack Moldova. In this moment, he saw Hungarians' envoy who wanted to reach him. Nevertheless, he started the expedition to Suceava and tried to conquer the capital of this country. Then the Hungarians' envoy reached

him. So, according to Olbracht's explanation, Hungarians' envoy who came to him with the accusations of attacking Stephan the Great, should have been sent before this attack happened. How, in another way, can the fact be explained, that in that very moment, when the Polish king decided to attack Suceava, Moldovan's envoy had already been seen back by the Polish king? There are two opportunities: either it was Olbracht who first attacked Stephan the Great, and after that the Hungarians' envoy was sent with all these accusations and demands to withdraw the Polish army from Moldova or Hungarians from the beginning supposed that the Polish king planned to conquer Moldova and his latest action of capturing Moldovan's envoys only confirmed Hungary's fears and that is why the envoy was sent before Olbracht's attack on Moldova. In older Polish historiography (Finkel 1914, 340), it was written that in the discussed document of Olbracht, not the meeting in Levoca was meant, but the Polish *sejmik*. According to this point of view Olbracht wasn't accused of breaking the treaty with Wladislaus but with the Polish nobility. The answer to this question gives us the second of the mentioned documents: an instruction for Wladislaus Lasonczy written by Wladislaus II to his brother Johannes Olbracht. In that document Olbracht is accused of breaking „*tractatus inter nos et eius majestatem in primis in conventu nostro Leuczoviensi*” (Materiały 1966, no 13). Therefore, the Polish king answering to this document had to refer to the charge of breaking the treaty of Levoca and not to any agreement regarding the Polish *sejmik*. So, the Polish king was accused by his brother of attacking Moldova in order to hand over her throne to Sigismund, what was against earlier mutual agreement. Olbracht had to have such plans and intentions before Wladislaus wrote that he supposed that Olbracht had such plans in the last three years, since the meeting in Levoca 1494 and Wladislaus knew about it (Wiszniewski 1841, 455-459; Czamańska 1996, 173)<sup>7</sup>.

In the documents from the court of Sigismund I the Old, Moldova is mentioned as a goal of the crusade of the year 1497 (“*in conflictu Moldaviensi*”; “*ante exitum versus Moldaviam*”). It has been written that during this expedition “*de Moldavia*” register books (*perditum*) were lost and

<sup>6</sup> The names of the Moldova's envoys are mentioned in some Chronicle: Letopisețul de la Bistrița 1895, 59; Letopisețul anonim 2004, 19; Letopisețul de la Putna II 2004, 37; Cronica moldo-polonă 2004, 44-45.

<sup>7</sup> It was Callimachus who should have given Olbracht an idea to place Sigismund on the Moldova's throne.

that is why the new must have been made (Kozák 2014, LVI-LVII).

Another important source for the Olbracht's crusade is the Liborius Naker's diary. Naker was a secretary of the Grandmaster of the Teutonic Order Johann von Tieffen and accompanied him during the expedition of 1497. Naker mentioned some "rumors" about Olbracht's intentions to hand over the throne in Moldova to his brother Sigismund (Naker 1874, 312; Kromer 1857, 1328). Naker mentioned also that some nobleman whose name was Marcin informed the Grandmaster that the Polish king didn't intend to attack Turkey but to expel Stephan the Great out of his country. This nobleman said then that Stephan the Great had to pay kharaj to the Turkey for 30 years, because of the lack of Polish protection. Although Stephan had asked Poland for help, he didn't get it. This was the reason, why he was forced to pay money to Turkey. But he had thought about how he can reduce these costs. Therefore, he had given money to some Russian named Mucha [Fly] and had persuaded him to attack the South-East part of Poland together with Tatars in order to get some money and other goods, that he had needed to pay kharaj. Young Johannes Olbracht had often been brought to Podolia so that he could see what kind of disaster was made by "Walachian" and tried to convince his father to make a war against Moldova. According to Naker, Casimir Jagiellon had put the decision away for later time, because of the queen, who had got certain gifts from Stefan the Great. After Johannes Olbracht had ascended the Polish throne, he put the decision about the expedition way for a later and more proper time as well, but after all he decided to wage the war against Moldova and wanted to depose Stephan the Great (Naker 1874, 306-307).

There are some events that happened during Olbracht's crusade that seems to indicate that the above-mentioned "rumors" about Olbracht's intentions to deliver the throne of Moldova into his brother Sigismund's hands, were not completely false. Some indication of Olbracht's plan announced during the meeting in Levoca was the attitude of Wladislaus II to it. The king of Hungary agreed to make an expedition in order to conquer Kilia and Akkerman, but he insisted that no war against Moldova would be allowed (Materiały 1966, no 14). Probably he wouldn't do this if his brother hadn't had such plan or intention.

What is more, Wladislaus obliged Olbracht not to make any decision regarding this expedition without an agreement of the Stephan the Great. What's more, during the crusade Wladislaus sent his envoy-Lasonczy to Olbracht who already attacked Suceava, with the accusation of breaking the treaty in Levoca and of having an intention to hand over the Moldova's throne to Sigismund. He suspected that Olbracht had had such a plan for three years, so since the meeting in Levoca (Materiały 1966, no 13; Lewicki 1893, 5). So, Olbracht must already had had the over-mentioned plan during the meeting in Levoca.

In several Lithuanian and Russian documents, the information about the aim of Olbracht's crusade is ambiguous (Hustinskaja lietopis 1874, 304, 312; Bychowiec Chronicle 1846, 64-66; Материалы 1887, 147; Citko 2006, passim). According to one of the Lithuanian's chronicles, so called Bychowca Chronicle, the meeting in Levoca lasted two weeks and was very mysterious<sup>8</sup>. The main arrangements between Olbracht and Alexander for this campaign were made later, at their meeting in Parczew in November 1496 (Оболенский 1836, 143; Сборник 1913, 225; Kolankowski 1930, 386). Unfortunately, we don't know what were the decisions that had been made there, but it is known, that in 1496 Stephan the Great and Mengli Girej were already called as the "enemies of the Great Duchy of Lithuania" (Сборник 1913, 225; Kolankowski 1930, 386). Alexander Jagiellon who had been asked by Lithuanian's noblemen during the crusade about its goal, swore that he couldn't say anything about it (Bychowiec Chronicle 1846, 64-65). During the preparation to this expedition Olbracht had sent a letter to Alexander in which he tried to persuade him to hurry up with the fulfilling of his marriage with the daughter of Ivan III because of the need for the peace along the Eastern boarder during the planned crusade (Finkel 1914, 20-21). Alexander was also obligated to give his support for the Polish army (Bychowiec Chronicle 1846, 65; Borzemski 1890, 68-69)<sup>9</sup>. Also, Ivan III had been informed about the planned crusade and even Polish envoy Ivan Sapieha invited him to join the

<sup>8</sup> According to this chronicle also Alexander Jagiellon participated in the meeting in Levoca, but this is of course false information.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander's army during the crusade stopped near Bratslav, because their goal was to stop possible Ivan's reinforcements for Moldova.

alliance<sup>10</sup> (Lietuvos 1993, 120<sup>11</sup>; Сборник 1882, 233; Czamańska 1996, 168; Pietkiewicz 2014, 38), but he rejected this proposal and ordered Alexander not to support his brother in the expedition “against Wallachia”. Alexander tried to explain him that the goal of the expedition is Tatar, not “Wallachia”, but Ivan III seemed not to believe it (Материалы 1887, 147; Lukas 1879, 7; Borzemski 1890, 69). In order to stop the possible support from Ivan’s army for Stephan the Great, Alexander’s army should have centered around Bratslav during the crusade. Its task was to observe and prevent any Ivan’s support for Moldova (Материалы 1887, 147; Borzemski 1890, 69). As Alexander’s army reached Bratslav, there came Ivan’s envoy who warned Alexander not to help his brother. That is why Alexander sent to Olbracht only some small troops under the command of Stanislaus Kiszka. These troops reached the destination of their expedition too late, at the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, after the battle of the Cosmin Forest (Spieralski 1963, 47; Kolankowski 1930, 437; Papée 2006, 152-154). In the Lithuanian and Russian sources there is also information that at that time the Jagiellonian dynasty had a big problem with the fact that their younger brother – Sigismund hadn’t had any land to rule. Bychowski Chronicle informs us about this problem, and, above all, the documents issued by Alexander (Bychowiec Chronicle 1846, 63; Акты 1846, № 135, док. I-VI; Lukas 1879, 7-11)<sup>12</sup>. After Cazimir IV Jagiellon’s death, it turned out, that only Sigismund didn’t receive any land to rule. All what he had was money received from his brother, Olbracht. The Polish *sejm* in Piotrkow asked the king Johannes Olbracht to help his brother and give him money. However, this situation hurt Sigismund’s pride, so he demanded to give him some territory to rule. Johannes Olbracht, who felt that he was left alone with this problem, held a grudge against his second brother – Alexander, who didn’t want to help him to solve this issue. Therefore, the king’s mother – Elisabeth from Habsburg and his younger brother Frederik went to Vilnius to persuade Alexander to give to Sigismund some territory, but the duke of Lithuania refused. Sigis-

mund was so annoyed that he sent his envoys to Alexander time after time<sup>13</sup> (Bychowiec Chronicle 1846, 63; Акты 1846, № 135, док. I-VI; Lukas 1879, 7; Papée 2006, 111) The duke of Lithuania complained in the letter (from April 1496) to his mother, about Sigismund’s importunateness and explained that he was not able to offer him any territory within the lands belonging to the Duchy of Lithuania, even if he wanted to do this (Акты 1846, № 135, док. I-VI). There were also plans to give him a part of the Kiev Voivodship, but because of the Ivan III’s indignations this plan was abandoned<sup>14</sup> (Акты 1846, № 135, док. I-VI, 136). So, it is obvious that there was a huge problem with the territory that should have been given to Sigismund and Jagiellons wanted to solve it in some way. For Johannes Olbracht, who believed himself to be left alone with this issue, it was a priority question and Moldova seemed to be perfect as a solution of this problem.

There are also other helpful sources: report from Nikolaus from Rosenberg – Polish envoy in Freiburg, in which he was convinced that Olbracht’s crusade was organized against “unbeliever”, several letters written by Stephan the Great, Turkish chronicles and Romanian sources. The war “against Turkey” is also mentioned in Lviv’s accounting books (Iorga 1899, no 8; Smolucha 1999, 68). In Venetian sources, there is information that this crusade was made against Turkey, but this was exactly what Johannes Olbracht tried to make Europe convinced about and European diplomacy seemed to believe in this (I Diarii 1879, 756-757; Cristea 2013a, 120). The older Polish historiography, who regarded Stephan’s attitude towards Poland and Lithuania before the crusades as “very friendly” cited those Venetian sources. Poland and Lithuania should have been, according to them, very surprised about changing Stephan’s standpoint during the expedition. It was the effect of the propaganda, that was preached by Jagiellons and that had been preserved in the European sources in which it was widely disseminated: Jagiellons didn’t know nothing about

<sup>10</sup> The letter was written in Vilnius at 10 May 1497, and delivered by Ivan Sapieha

<sup>11</sup> The letter was written in Vilnius at 10 May 1497, and delivered by Ivan Sapieha.

<sup>12</sup> In *Akty* – there are instruction for Alexander’s envoys who had been sent to Olbracht and his mother with the answer to their demands to give Sigismund some territory.

<sup>13</sup> Sigismund sent Alexander Hieronim to Alexander Jagiellon, but the answer that he got: Alexander will confer in this case with Elisabeth of Habsburg and with his brothers, was not that he expected to receive. So, he sent another envoy – Christopher of Szydłowiec, who demanded to give Sigismund some territory. In answer, Alexander Jagiellon sent (in April 1496) over-mentioned envoy to his mother and Johannes Olbracht.

<sup>14</sup> Ivan III sent the letter to his daughter – the wife of Alexander, that she should persuade his husband out of doing this.

Stephan's hostile standpoint, they were surprised and were forced to attack him during the crusade. But the fact is, that Poland had sent to Stephan the Great an envoy – Krzesław of Kurozwęki who informed Olbracht about unfriendly standpoint of Stephan. This shows, that the sources are wrong, and that was only the Jagiellon's propaganda and Jagiellons knew about the unfriendly attitude of Stephan. It is possible, that the Polish king intentionally ignored the Kurozwęcki's warning, and counted on Stephan's refusal in case of crossing the border of his country, because that would have given him pretext to attack Moldova. In this way Olbracht would execute his plans from Levoca, that had to be cancelled because of his brother's – Wladislaus – standpoint. But Stephan the Great was warned by his friend Bartholomeus Drágffy, who was present at the meeting in Suceava, about the plan of Polish king and was seriously afraid of it (Niemczyk 2015, 104, 107). According to the Turkish documents and letters, Stephan turned to the sultan with the information that Olbracht planned the war, but he himself wasn't sure against whom. However, he ensured sultan that he would support in the case of war, but in return for it he would count probably also for sultan's help. Additionally, he wrote in the letter to Bayezid, that the Hungarian's army gathered in Transylvania (Anafarta 1970, no 1; Kissling 1988a, 136-155; Kissling 1988b, 163-195; Smołucha 1999, 415)<sup>15</sup>. In reply to this letter sultan commanded Stephan to attack Transylvania but the Moldova's ruler explained that he couldn't do this because he was afraid of possible attack of Tatars (Anafarta 1970, no 1, 2)<sup>16</sup>. To the distrust towards Poland we can also join Stephan's letter of unknown dating to sultan in which he asked him for help (Ludovici 1874, 333-334; Spieralski 1963, 47) as well as sending Moldova's envoy Tăutul to Constantinople (Górka 1932, 71; Papée 2006, 67; Fac 2007, 62).

The aim and the course of the crusade was described in Polish and Turkish sources in another way. According to Polish chronicle (Wapowski, Kromer, Bielski) it was a crusade against Turkey. Kromer wrote that "*it was said*" that Olbracht wanted to conquer Moldova and hand over the throne of this land to his brother – Sigismund,

this was decided in Levoca, but – Kromer wrote – this were only some rumors made up by Hungarians because they were afraid to lose influence on Moldova and that is why they wanted to set Stephan the Great against Poland. The ruler of Moldova wanted to conduct a war against Turkey, but he was afraid of the rumors and of the fact that Olbracht's army went not towards Killia and Akkerman but towards Pokuttya. So, he sent two envoys to the Polish king to ask him about his intentions. He ensured Olbracht, that if he wanted to fight against Turkey, Stephan would help him, but he warned him against starting the war with his own country. Olbracht, who was outraged, caught the envoys, sent them to Lviv and went towards Suceava. According to this chronicle Wladislaus II demanded Olbracht's army to immediately leave Moldova. The Polish king who was already sick, agreed and made peace with the ruler of Moldova. Stephan warned him against choosing another – the shortest one – route towards Poland, because of the Turkish trap. The Polish king ignored this advice and in consequences fell into a trap in which, according to Kromer, Stephan the Great also took part. So, according to Kromer the ruler of Moldova at first tried to warn Olbracht about this Turkish trap (Bielski 1597, 484; Kromer 1857, 1328-1333; Miechowita 2, 350; Wapowski 1874, 24-29).

The same events were described in completely another way in Turkish documents and chronicles, for example: old-Turkish chronicles translated by Kreuter (Kreutel 1978, 92-98) and Kissling (Kissling 1988a, 136-155; Kissling 1988b, 157-195). According to the first one, Stephan the Great was obligated not only to allow the Polish army to cross this border, but also promised to support them. As a reward, he should have received two towns, which names were not mentioned in the chronicle, but it was written, that earlier they had belonged to Turkey (Kreutel 1978, 212-216; Smołucha 1999, 417)<sup>17</sup>. When Polish army reached Moldova, Stephan changed his mind and took the Turkish side. As soon as Polish army crossed the border of Moldova, he sent his envoy to Mesih Pasha – the ruler of Silistra – asking him for help. However, there were only 800 knights who came to Stephan with help – way too little. That is why, Stephan-who knew that with this small army he is not able to defeat the Polish forces, and was

<sup>15</sup> The original – Turkish version of the Chronicle, see: Kissling 1988a, 136-155 and Kissling 1988b, 163-195, author translated this text into German.

<sup>16</sup> The Stephan the Great's letter to the sultan.

<sup>17</sup> Most probably Killia and Akkerman is meant here.



afraid of Olbracht's revenge for his betrayal, decided to set a trap for him. He informed the Polish king that the huge number of the Turkish army crossed Moldova's border and he strongly advised Olbracht to choose a retreat. To protect Polish king, he warned him against choosing the shorter route towards Poland, that lead through a ravine. Johannes Olbracht didn't take it into consideration and fell into the trap (Kissling 1988b, 185; Cristea 2011, 97; Cristea 2013b, 259-260).

There is also *Letopisețul de la Bistrița* (called also Chronicle of Bistrița) that gives us additional information to this problem. This source had been written in Moldova at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, probably by two different persons (*Letopisețul de la Bistrița* 1895, 59; Czamańska 2010a, 1019-1020). According to this codex, Stephan's decision was not to allow the Polish army to cross Moldova's boarder, which caused a big problem for Olbracht, whose goal was to conquer Kilia and Akkerman. Going towards Kilia and Akkerman without Stephan's permission was too risky, so Olbracht decided to force the ruler of Moldova to cooperate and therefore attacked Suceava, but without any final success (*Letopisețul de la Bistrița* 1895, 59). However, Olbracht's brother Wladislaus was strongly worried about this situation and demanded to withdraw the Polish army from Moldova. The Polish king who had no other option, made a peace treaty with Stephan at the 18<sup>th</sup> of October. The ruler of Moldova advised him to avoid the shortest route towards Poland, because it's very dangerous, but the Polish king ignored this advice. In effect on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October the Polish army was defeated in the battle of the Cosmin Forest (*Letopisețul de la Bistrița* 1895, 59-60). So, Chronicle of Bistrița gives the same information as Polish chronicles, just as the *Letopisețul anonim al Moldovei* (*Letopisețul anonim* 2004, 18-19). In *Letopisețul de la Putna I*, which was written at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century as a part of the Codex of Pochayiv by an unknown author, it has been written that Stephan supposed that Olbracht had a plan to conquer his land and that was why he sent to him his envoys: Isac and Tăutul, but they were caught by the Polish king, and then Olbracht attacked Suceava (*Letopisețul de la Putna I* 2004, 33; Czamańska 2010b, 1020; Czamańska 2010c, 1020; *Letopisețul anonim* 2004, 19; *Letopisețul de la Putna II* 2004, 37; *Cronica moldo-polonă* 2004, 44-45; *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* 2004,

60-62; Kromer 1857, 1328-1329; Wapowski 1874, 26). In an anonymous *Letopisețul de la Putna II*, a part of the same Codex as *Letopisețul de la Putna I*, Olbracht was called a swindler, who spoke about the war against Turkey, but in reality, he wanted to conquer Kilia and Akkerman and attack Moldova. Stephan, to stop Olbracht, sent to him his envoys: Isac and Tăutul (*Letopisețul de la Putna II* 2004, 37; Czamańska 2010c, 1020). According to the *Cronica moldo-polonă*, *Letopisețul Țării Românești și a Țării Moldovei* and *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* the king of Hungary as well as the ruler of Transylvania sent 12000 knights to help Stephan (*Cronica moldo-polonă* 2004, 44; *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* 2004, 61; *Letopisețul Țării Românești* 2004, 131). There is also Chronicle moldo-germană that gives additional information. Olbracht spoke about the war against Turkey, but Stephan didn't believe him and sent envoys to him to demand not to attack Moldova, but Olbracht caught his envoy (*Cronica moldo-germană* 2004, 29).

The fundamentally difference between Polish and Turkish chronicles is Stephan's standpoint during the Olbracht's crusade. According to the Polish sources (but also Romanian's Chronicle of Bistrița) Stephan wanted to warn Olbracht about the trap, for he was concerned about his safety, but according to the Turkish chronicles he intentionally led him into the trap. There is also no information about his attack at Suceava. What really happened? It's doubtful that Stephan, who was afraid of the real goal of the Olbracht's crusade, wanted to protect him. The standpoint of the Polish sources is probably connected with the fact, that they spoke about the war against Turkey, not Moldova, so such an unfriendly standpoint of the Moldova's ruler didn't pass to this description at all. I. Czamańska – one of the most important Polish historian – said that there was only one route to Poland, so it is obvious that Stephan wanted to lead Olbracht's army into a trap (Czamańska 1989, 303; Rezachevici, Căpățina 1975, 370).

Trying to conclude this article and answer the main question: if the war against Turkey the real goal of Johannes Olbracht was, or only a propaganda, that gave him a pretext to war and justify a different political goal. It is obvious that there was no Jagiellon's conspiracy against Moldova (this idea was very popular in Polish historiography at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Caro 1888,

721-722; Borzemski 1890, 66). Olbracht acted on his own will and against his brother Wladislaus' wishes, so this could not be a conspiracy. Also, the idea that the crusade was intended only against Moldova must be rejected. In the existing political situation, the attack at Moldova meant also the war against Turkey and Olbracht must have known about it. In my opinion, the decisions that have been made during the meeting in Levoca 1494 are of critical importance to explain this issue. During the meeting, the Jagiellons disputed about some "enemy", who in my opinion was Turkey. In my opinion, the main problem, that was discussed in Levoca, was how to prevent the Turkish treat. The solution of this problem was to build a buffer at the South-East side of the Europe to protect both Hungary and Poland. According to the sources, Olbracht wanted to put Moldova under the authority of his brother – Sigismund, who would willingly play this role. In this way not only the bastion would be created, but also Sigismund would have get the land to rule, and as we know, it was one of the biggest problem for the Jagiellons (especially for Johannes Olbracht and Alexander). However, Wladislaus didn't agree with this idea at all. He was worried to lose Hungarian influences in Moldova, and to intensify her relations with Turkey and rise the treat from its side. The war against Turkey was out of the question for Hungary because of the peace made between them. Instead of this, he proposed Poland to conquer Kilia and Akkerman – two towns conquered lately by Turkey, but on condition that they will be hand over to the Stephan the Great (Materiały 1966, no 14). The Turkish chronicle from the time of the Bayezid II's reign

seems to confirm this information, as it was written there that Stephan the Great not only made a treaty with Poland and intended to allow the Polish army to cross boarder of his country but also guaranteed his support for this expedition. In reward for this help, he should have received two – previous Turkish – towns, which names weren't mentioned in this chronicle, but this must have been Kilia and Akkerman (Kreutel 1978, 212-216; Smolucha 1999, 417). Taking the Kilia and Akkerman by Poland would have meant extending Poland's authority over the Moldova and its control over the Black Sea's trade. That wasn't an option for Wladislaus. So, he ordered not to attack Moldova and the expedition had to be made in the cooperation with Stephan. Olbracht had to agree with his brother's demands – at least officially. The goal of the crusade was for sure Kilia and Akkerman. But, didn't he in reality look for the conflict with Stephan the Great? Didn't he want to conquer Kilia and Akkerman not to hand over it to the ruler of Moldova but to take it for himself? That would have given him the authority over Moldova and control over the Black Sea's trade. It is obvious that the Polish king had to assure both his brother – Wladislaus and the whole Europe about the expedition against Turkey. Only such propaganda would give him necessary protection and Wladislaus' agreement to his plans. But he knew (thanks to his envoy – Kurozwęcki to Stephan) that Stefan's friendly attitude towards Poland was a fiction, and he knew that without Stephan's permission the expedition to Kilia and Akkerman could not be pursued, and that would have meant war with Moldova. Maybe he counted on Stephan's refusal?

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### **Antemurale Christianitatis? Propaganda anti-turcească și obiectivul principal al expediției militare a lui Jan Olbracht**

*Cuvinte-cheie:* Jan Olbraht, Moldova, bătălia din Codrii Cosminului, Ștefan cel Mare, Imperiul Otoman.

*Rezumat:* În studiu, în contextul surselor de propagandă anti-turcească, sunt abordate unele aspecte ale expediției bucovinene, din anul 1497, a regelui polonez Jan Olbracht. Scopul principal al acestuia constă în analiza așa-numitului bastion al creștinismului – *Antemurale christianitatis*. Autoarea cercetează problema prin prisma propagandei politicii private a dinastiei domnitoare ale Jagiellonilor. În urma studierii surselor autoarea demonstrează rolul expediției regelui polonez Jan Olbracht în sistemul relațiilor polono-ungare de la sfârșitul secolului al XV-lea (congresul din Lewoczu). O atenție specială este acordată rivalității militaro-politice dintre regatele Poloniei și cel al Ungariei pentru influența asupra Moldovei.

### **Antemurale Christianitatis? Антитурецкая пропаганда и истинная цель военной экспедиции Яна Ольбрахта**

*Ключевые слова:* Ян Ольбрахт, Молдова, сражение у Козминского леса, Стефан Великий, Османская империя.

*Резюме:* В исследовании рассматриваются аспекты буковинской экспедиции польского короля Яна Ольбрахта (1497 г.) в контексте источников антитурецкой пропаганды. Целью статьи является анализ так называемого бастиона христианства – *Antemurale Christianitatis*. Автор освещает данный вопрос через призму частной политики правящей династии Ягеллонов. На основе исследованных источников автор демонстрирует роль военной экспедиции польского короля Яна Ольбрахта в системе польско-венгерских отношений конца XV века (съезд в Левочче). Особое внимание в статье уделяется военно-политическому соперничеству между польским и венгерским королевствами за влияние на Молдову.

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