

An Officer to the Habsburgs, A Captive to the Ottomans: Hauptmann Leonhardt Rüblandt's Letters from the Seven Towers (1663–1674)

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ABSTRACT

Hauptmann Leonhardt Rüblandt and several of his company's imperial soldiers were taken captive by the Ottomans in a clash with Habsburg forces at Párkány (Ciğerdelen/Štúrovo) in 1663. Together with a group of other prisoners of diplomatic value, Hauptmann Rüblandt was incarcerated in the Seven Towers in İstanbul. From there, Rüblandt dispatched several letters to the imperial resident in Edirne and to Vienna. These letters testify to his interpretation of the events surrounding him in the Seven Towers as a manifestation of the wider political universe that extended beyond the walls of his confinement.

KEYWORDS

Ottomans, Habsburgs, diplomatic history, 17th century, prisoner letters, early modern military history

It is a rare and auspicious occasion when historians come across letters penned by soldiers in the early modern era. One instance when early modern soldiers picked up their pens was when they were imprisoned, hoping for salvation, writing letters to friends, acquaintances, family members, military superiors, or to the sovereigns under whose flag they served at the time of their captivity. Warriors that participated in the Ottoman-Austrian Habsburg wars in the 16th and 17th centuries were no exception to this rule. Experts of Central European history have partially published and studied their letters, and yet, the source of knowledge has remained for the most part untapped by scholarship. In this paper, I will begin by highlighting historical cases that fall under Smiley's (2018: 30–37) category of 'military captivity' as delineated in his comprehensive book on the 18th- and 19th-century Ottoman-Russian war prisoners in the context of international law. This

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includes a highly selected group of military captives from the early modern theatre of war along the Ottoman-Austrian frontier who left behind personal notes in forms of letters, diaries, or any other written documents.

Pálffy, in his authoritative work (2007) on ransom slavery along the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier in the 16th and 17th centuries, underlines the mechanisms at play when captives of both sides communicated with the outer world from their prison cells. Pálffy refers to several letters, published and unpublished, written by Ottoman and imperial prisoners, among them prisoners holding military offices. In 1879 and 1880, in two consecutive articles, Rački (1879; 1880) published a collection of written material belonging to prisoners in the 16th and 17th centuries along the Croatian frontier. His work included letters penned by Ottoman subjects in Christian captivity (Rački 1879: 76–152; 1880: 1–41). In 1886, Deák brought to light several more letters sent by imprisoned soldiers in Turkish dungeons mainly in the 17th century. Letters by Kemény János and other leaders of the Transylvanian army crushed in 1657 by Tatar horsemen in Podolia may also be regarded as first-person narratives of captive soldiers in hostile territory. Subdued Hungarian magnates were dragged to Crimea to serve their time in Tatar jails; Szilágyi presented their letters to the scholarly community in 1882.

Bebek György, referred to as a ‘major captive’ in Hungarian scholarship, found himself in Turkish captivity in 1562 when he exposed himself in a quietly planned and covertly led mission to take the Turkish castle of Füleke. He spent his days of enslavement in Rumeli/Boğazkesen castle in Istanbul. His imprisonment attracted Takáts’ attention, who in the first decades of the 20th century recounted Bebek’s life with a special emphasis on his captivity in the Ottoman imperial capital. Takáts (1907: 429–433; 1915: 173–179; 1922: 67–86) discussed how Bebek had sent several letters to Vienna and to the prince of Transylvania in hope that the rulers would mediate on his behalf. Recently, Virovecz (2018) discovered and published two additional letters by Bebek to his beloved friend Perényi Gábor in 1562 and 1563 that had hitherto remained unpublished. In these letters, Bebek employs a more straightforward language than the formal content of his letters to the princely sovereigns.

A content analysis of extant early modern prisoner letters allows us to explore the articulation of stereotypes, formulated expressions of grief and distress, recurring themes, or distinctive instances to the opposite effect. When Izsépy (1970), as a specific case, studied the letters of the prisoners held in the jails of Nagyvárad (Oradea) between 1665 and 1669, she came to conclusions that were almost unanimously confirmed by earlier and later surveys regarding the conditions of captives’ incarceration and their pursuit for freedom. According to Izsépy, in the hope of not being forgotten, the Hungarian prisoners in Nagyvárad reached out to political leaders and fortress captains in the Kingdom of Hungary. With letters in hand, they were sometimes allowed on oath to embark on journeys to collect the ransom needed for their release; interestingly, letters dispatched from Nagyvárad dungeons have survived containing military intelligence on the deployment of Ottoman forces along the border area.

Pupils of microhistory, on the other hand, will delight in letters such as that written by the Ottoman *sipahi* Receb in 1646. Receb, a cavalry captain from Pécs, dispatched a letter from the castle of Borostyánkő (Bernstein) to his mother and brother-in-law begging them with pronounced sensitivity to do their best to free him (Újváry 2007: 146–147). Prison experience often, in fact, has the potential of acting as a catalyst for profound life changes. Thus, Ferenc Wathay, a Hungarian soldier of lesser nobility, returned home after serving his time in Turkish prisons in 1606, as a poet and the author of the first comprehensive autobiography written in Hungarian. At

the time of his capture, he had served as the captain of Székesfehérvár. He produced a songbook entitled 'Énekeskönyv' in which he also drew several illustrations depicting himself in different scenes of his slavery. Wathay evokes a genuinely intimate atmosphere in his autobiography, especially when cherishing his love for his wives (Drosztmér 2014). Yet, despite the appeal of personal accounts and expressions of sentiment, most often, the historian is bound to encounter commonplace expressions of captives requesting immediate salvation. Accordingly, in order to illustrate the methods and ways of exchanging captives between the Habsburg and Ottoman governments, Tóth (2013) incorporated the 17th-century letters by Ferenc Uki to Ádám Batthyány in her work.

Kafadar (1989: 131–135) provided a preliminary survey of first-person Ottoman narratives composed in Christian captivity in his study on the methods and genres favoured by the Ottomans in their literary description of the self.¹ Recent research enables us to add a few more titles to his collection.² Here, I will limit myself to two examples from the early modern Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry, composed in the form of individual letters or scripts. Derviş İbrahim's case in the early decades of the 17th century is noteworthy from this perspective. He was a Turkish slave, probably captured in 1598 at Győr (Raab) by Habsburg forces, and lived in Vienna where he worked as a copyist for Sebastian Tengnagel, the court librarian of the Hofbibliothek (Römer 1998). Derviş İbrahim evidently enjoyed having a pencil in his hand; Tengnagel portrayed his slave as a copyist, a poet, and a painter. İbrahim's handwriting manifests itself in a number of Tengnagel's notebooks; two of his poems, echoing his mordant voice and gloomy mind in captivity, have recently found their way to modern literature studies (Çelik 2023).

When compared to artistic reflections of a cultivated soul, Öküzöldüren Ahmed Pasha's letters appear as rather dull specimens. Ahmed Pasha was a high-ranking military officer who fell captive to the Austrians in 1688 while defending the fortress of Belgrade. He remained in custody until 1694 when his son paid 5000 gold pieces for his release. During his captivity, Ahmed Pasha sent numerous letters to his son and several Ottoman state leaders. Ursinus (2004) studied, transliterated, and published five of these letters with German translations. The imprisoned pasha described the circumstances in which the Austrians had seized him in his letters. To secure ransom money, he sought to persuade his correspondents that he had spent all his fortune in the service of the sultan in the last wars of the Ottoman state.

This paper aims to contribute to the body of literature on the prison experiences of early modern soldiery resting upon a series of letters written by Leonhardt Rüblandt, a captain (*Hauptmann*) in the imperial army, in the years 1667–1673 when he was in Ottoman captivity. Rüblandt's letters are preserved in the Kartons 139–145 in the TURCICA collection of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA) in the Austrian State Archives (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/OeStA). In the years under consideration, Rüblandt penned 12 letters from the Seven Towers in Istanbul, where he spent the vast majority of his imprisonment with the exception of a short period before he was released in Buda. He composed most of his letters single-handedly; he also co-signed four letters with prisoners who had fallen captive with him in 1663.

¹ For recent translations of Macuncuzade Mustafa's memoirs in Maltese captivity and the renowned Osman Agha's autobiography summarising his adventures and imprisonment in Austria, see the comprehensive collection of early modern Ottoman (auto)biographical works edited by Karateke and Anetshofer 2021.

² For Janissary Süleyman's memoirs of captivity in the late 17th century, see Gürsoy 2011; For Hindi Mahmud's captivity in Rome in 1571–1575, see Hindî Mahmûd 2013; For a Turkish letter dispatched in 1576 to Erdoğan oğlu Hamza who at the time was a prisoner in Florence, see Acipınar 2014; Demir (2018) studied and published a number of letters sent to the Porte by Ottomans in Christian captivity in the first half of the 18th century.

THE BATTLE OF PÁRKÁNY AND HAUPTMANN LEONHARDT RÜBLANDT'S CAPTURE BY THE OTTOMANS

In 1663, the power play in Transylvania escalated into an open war and the Ottoman army marched towards the fortress of Érsekújvár (Uyvar/Nové Zámky) in the Kingdom of Hungary. Ádám Forgách, the commander of the fortress, rallied a selected force of nearly 6000 men to launch a surprise attack on the impending Ottomans who in the meantime struggled to build a pontoon bridge to ford the Danube river. On 7 August, 1663, Forgách's troops were crushed by the Ottomans in the battle of Párkány (Ciğerdelen/Štúrovo).³ The marquis of Pio bolstered the assault with 500 musketeers. He was second in rank in the garrison of Érsekújvár and would defend the town against the besieging Ottoman army until he was killed by an Ottoman arrow to the throat.⁴ The Pio regiment suffered a heavy blow at Párkány when their fellow horsemen took flight in the face of the overwhelming Ottoman units. Hauptmann Rüblandt commanded a company within the Pio regiment and fell captive to the Ottomans along with several of his company's soldiers.⁵

According to a testimony four years following these events, Rüblandt was born in Lanškroun (Landskron) in the county of Kladsko (Glatz). In 1663, when he was enslaved by the Ottomans, his wife and child still lived in his hometown. Franz Ferdinand von Troilo, who visited him in the Seven Towers in Istanbul, had long since been acquainted with him, and specifically from when Jan van der Croon (Lacron) held the rank of a commanding general in Prague in the last years of the 1650s.⁶ Seeing an old friend in such a desolate condition, he paid weekly visits to Rüblandt for as long as he was in Istanbul and carried news from him to his family in Lanškroun.⁷

Thanks to his standing in the army, Rüblandt belonged to a privileged group of prisoners. János Ferdinánd Auer, who also fell captive to the Ottomans in 1663, was a lieutenant from the lesser nobility of Bratislava (Pozsony) and remarked in his memoirs that in Esztergom, 20 German and Hungarian captives of higher status were kept together in an Ottoman military official's tent. Rüblandt was there, battered and wounded in the foot.⁸ On 18 August, the imperial captives arrived in Buda, where they were shepherded as if in a victory parade in front of the quarters where the imperial diplomats Simon Reniger von Reningen (resident ambassador) and Johann von Goëss (plenipotentiary envoy) were confined.⁹ In October, Rüblandt travelled with the same company of prisoners to Belgrade. Here, Ottomans supplied them with clothes of fine quality and

³ [Anonymous] 1663. *Warhafftiger Bericht...*; see also Illéssy 1893.

⁴ Kraus 1864: 355. The marquis of Pio, according to his own statement, was not willing to surrender the fortress of Érsekújvár to the Ottomans even after he had lost a good number of his men in the battle of Párkány (OeStA, Kriegsarchiv, Alte Feldakten 160, 1663-9-93c).

⁵ Nicolaus Brenner, for instance, who translated the renowned *Serai Enderum* of Albertus Bobovius into German, was the quartier-master of the Pio regiment and fell captive to the Ottomans on the same day as his commander, Rüblandt, see Fisher and Fischer 1985 [1987]. Rüblandt is recorded in the German pamphlets and news collections of the time as a company captain in the Pio regiment (Meyer 1664: 571–576). The list of prisoners was separately published in the same year in 'Verzeichnus aller gefangenen Teutschen/ welche nach dem unglückseeligen Einfall H. Gr. Forgatschens von den Türcken seyn auf Ofen gebracht worden den 14. Augusti/ im Jahr 1663' ([Anonymous] 1664: 670–672).

⁶ In 1663, the Lacron regiment was also tasked with defending the fortress of Érsekújvár. It fought side by side with the Pio regiment and experienced a similar fate.

⁷ von Troilo 1676: 508.

⁸ Lukinich 1923: 93–94.

⁹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/135, Konv. 4, fols. 121r-v, Johann von Goëss and S. Reniger, 18 August 1663, Buda.

composed a new register of surviving captives.¹⁰ The group of high-status captives was reduced to 13; the Ottoman register includes a list, Rüblandt among them, on the first page by name, nation, and army rank.¹¹ In Belgrade, Rüblandt and his companions received a sum of aid sent from Buda by von Goëss, which, according to Auer's statement, was not distributed equally among the selected captives. Rüblandt, along with Nicolaus Brenner, the quartier-master of his company, and Maximilian Ernst Freiherr von Weltz were quick to lay hands on the money without considering the other captives.¹² The Habsburg prisoners arrived in Edirne on 8 January 1664.¹³

CAPTIVITY AND DIPLOMACY: IMPERIAL ATTEMPTS TO FREE THE HABSBURG PRISONERS

From the beginning, Ottoman officers viewed Rüblandt as a peer in terms of status by virtue of his diplomatic skills and military expertise. For this reason, I believe, his name was inserted first in the Ottoman lists compiled in both Buda and Belgrade.¹⁴ In Edirne, he was summoned by the viceroy (*kaymakam*) of the city, Kara Mustafa Pasha of Merzifon (grand vizier-to-be in 1676–1683), to be interrogated about the military strategy and possible actions of the Habsburgs. Hauptmann Rüblandt was asked to brief the Ottomans on the military strength of the Christian forces, on what to expect from the Croatian ban Miklós Zrínyi (Nikola Zrinski), and whether the Swedish king was willing to dispatch military aid to the Habsburg government.¹⁵ Mustafa Pasha's questions were admittedly poignant: in less than a week following the summon, Zrínyi, in alliance with the German general Julius von Hohenlohe, initiated a surprise attack on the fortresses of Szigetvár and Pécs and burned down the bridge of Eszék (Osijek) (Perjés 2002: 142–147; Kolçak 2014: 173–177). In the following year, on 1 August 1664, the troops of Bremen and Pommern, commissioned by the Swedish king Karl XI, fought against the Ottoman army in the battle of St. Gotthard (Forst 1899: 78). On 23 January, before being transferred to the Seven Towers, Rüblandt visited Istanbul's *kaymakam*. This was not a private meeting with an Ottoman dignitary, however, as Rüblandt was accompanied by a selected group of captives. Apparently, he had not recovered by that time and could only be moved to the *kaymakam*'s mansion on horseback.¹⁶

Rüblandt's position as a spokesman for the captured imperial soldiers persevered in the coming years. He was always the first to sign the letters with multiple signatories dispatched from the Seven Towers to Vienna. During his captivity, he corresponded directly with the emperor in Vienna, the imperial resident ambassador in Edirne, and the *kaymakam* of Istanbul several times. The Ottomans might have also seen him as a reasonable figure with a degree of communicative skills through whom they could interact with the rest of the Habsburg prisoners in the Seven Towers. The imperial captives, on their side, were also in need of a liaison to help them

¹⁰ Lukinich 1923: 169. Mahmud Agha's procurement of clothing for the prisoners: Cumhuriyet Bakanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi [BOA], Kamil Kepeci [KK], 1957, p. 86, 22 Cemaziyelahir 1074/21 January 1664. Cf. OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/136, Konv. 1, fol. 69r, Simon Reniger, 30 December 1663, Belgrade.

¹¹ BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler [MAD]. 3279, p. 381.

¹² Lukinich 1923: 172.

¹³ Lukinich 1923: 181–185. For an overall account of the imperial soldiers that fell captive to the Ottomans in the battle of Párkány and their forced journey to Istanbul, see Kolçak 2019: 419–429.

¹⁴ BOA, MAD. 3279, p. 377, 381.

¹⁵ Lukinich 1923: 183.

¹⁶ Lukinich 1923: 190.

communicate with the world beyond the walls of their dungeons. Contrary to what they expected in the early days of their imprisonment, Habsburg diplomacy fell short in rescuing the officers and noblemen that fought in the name of the Roman emperor. In February 1665, S. Reniger informed Leopold I of the arrival of a letter from the Seven Towers in which the imperial captives expressed their gratitude to the emperor for allocating them alms and asked him to intervene in their salvation.¹⁷ This was one of the many appeals the imperial captives made in the nearly ten years that followed. In 1665–1666, the imperial ambassador Walter Leslie visited both Edirne and Istanbul where he held several diplomatic talks with prominent Ottoman officials; however, he was unable to free his compatriots (Kolçak 2019: 429–433).

In September 1666, Giovanni Battista Casanova, the new Habsburg resident at the Porte, did not rest much hope on liberating the prisoners; the grand vizier was not inclined to take the easy way out.¹⁸ In the following year, Casanova sought to make an impression on Kara Mustafa Pasha, the *kaymakam* of Edirne, in hope of bypassing the grand vizier who was deeply entangled in the military urgencies of the war against the Venetians in Crete.¹⁹ Casanova's suspicion was accurate: without the explicit approval of the grand vizier, Kara Mustafa could or would not help.²⁰ In January 1668, Casanova held another audience with Kara Mustafa Pasha. He was encouraged by the turn of events; when the *kaymakam* displayed a warm attitude towards him, the Habsburg resident brought the conversation to the release of the imperial captives to Buda. He failed once again.²¹ At around the same time, Panayotis Nikoussios, the dragoman to the Habsburg embassy, represented the imperial interests in the Ottoman military camp in Candia.²² He admitted openheartedly to Casanova that it was almost impossible to earn this matter its way to the grand vizier's table among a myriad of unavoidable problems calling for urgent action. Thus, the imperial captives were to remain in captivity.²³ Casanova was finally able to hear from Grand Vizier Fazıl Ahmed through the agency of Panayotis in the last months of 1668. Fazıl Ahmed had no desire to free the prisoners; Casanova could do nothing but wait for the return of the pasha. Casanova envisaged approaching the sultan through a confidant (a third party), but gave up the idea fearing that it would only offend Fazıl Ahmed and Kara Mustafa.²⁴

In 1669, the tone and content of the diplomatic interactions regarding the fortunes of the Habsburg prisoners displayed a shift. Fazıl Ahmed and Kara Mustafa were now very specific regarding the elite captives: they were to be exchanged with Turkish prisoners of equivalent status held in slavery in Habsburg-controlled territories. Releasing or freeing the imperial captives was not an option; Habsburg officials should work on an exchange of prisoners which was the only way the captives would walk away from the Seven Towers. Habsburg diplomacy responded by putting forward a set of imperial *motiven*: the emperor had no Turkish prisoners in his possession since he believed that keeping captives in peacetime was against the princely maxims. Casanova sought to amplify the effect of his master's contention, albeit manipulatively, by adding that the captives in the Seven Towers were, after all, nothing but common soldiers, solely a captain

¹⁷ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/138, Konv. 1, fol. 42r, appendix to S. Reniger's report of 12 February 1665, Belgrade.

¹⁸ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/138, Konv. 3, fols. 63r–72r, Casanova's report, 12 September 1666, Edirne.

¹⁹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/139, Konv. 2, fols. 168r–169v, Casanova's report, 15 May 1667, Edirne.

²⁰ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/139, Konv. 3, fols. 19r–31r, Casanova's report, 15 July 1667, Edirne.

²¹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 1, fols. 74r–75v, Casanova's report, 31 January 1668, Edirne.

²² For Panayotis, see Hering 1994 and Janos 2005–2006.

²³ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 1, fols. 204a–209a, Casanova's report, 11 April 1668, Edirne.

²⁴ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 3, fols. 38r–50v, Casanova's report, 20 November 1668, Tarnovo.

amongst them.²⁵ Whatever his intention might have been, his statement underlined once more the prominent status of Hauptmann Rüblandt in comparison to other imperial prisoners. Panayotis was tasked by Casanova with advancing the Habsburg point of view before the grand vizier who was still in Crete heading the Ottoman forces besieging the Venetian fortress of Candia.²⁶ Panayotis did so,²⁷ but towards the end of the year, Casanova conceded that the Ottomans were not willing to grant freedom to any of the Habsburg captives. He should wait for the return of the grand vizier and begin anew with him.²⁸

Fazıl Ahmed returned to Edirne on 1 July 1670. He was soon contacted by Casanova who resorted to Panayotis' agency to submit a letter to the grand vizier. Fazıl Ahmed had not softened in the meantime and agreed only to an exchange of prisoners; in fact, according to Panayotis, he specifically sought an exchange in the hope of rescuing someone he knew to be enslaved 'in the lands of the infidel'.²⁹ The following month, Casanova made another move for the release of the Habsburg captives, which was refuted by Fazıl Ahmed. Each passing day brought a new letter by a Turkish prisoner to his quarters; he failed to see the prudence in freeing the Habsburg prisoners for nothing in return.³⁰ Habsburg diplomacy had done all it could before yielding to the fact that the Turkish party would not free the imperial captives without being delivered a group of Ottoman captives worthy of a prisoner trade along the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier.³¹ This genteel play of diplomacy had seen years go by; in the end, it took nearly ten years for Rüblandt and his company to be returned to Christian soil. A lot happened in those ten years and Rüblandt played an active role in the ensuing events; more importantly for us, he wrote about them.

AN OFFICER IN CHAINS (I): RÜBLANDT'S EFFORTS TO SAFEGUARD HIS COMPANY

Hauptmann Rüblandt was imprisoned with twelve other soldiers who all fell captive in the battle of Párkány in 1663: Maximilian Ernst von Wetz, Nicolaus Brenner, János Ferdinand Auer, Bálint Berény, János Varsányi, Georg Longo, Ludwig Pickwardy von Lick, Christoph Just, Gabriel Preyss, Greger Schiller, Gerger Pinsches, and András Bársony.³² In January 1664, Mehmed Agha, the fort's warden, led them to the Seven Towers, where they met a group of Venetian elite prisoners, among whom were Sebastian Mollino and Marco Antonio Delfino, seized by Ottoman forces during the protracted war over the island of Crete.³³ Rüblandt's first matter of business would be to establish a relationship with the Venetian band, who were also of noble and martial

²⁵ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/141, Konv. 1, fols. 10r-16v, Casanova's report, 31 January 1669, Tarnovo.

²⁶ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/141, Konv. 2, fols. 2r-v and 9r-v, Casanova's report, 5 May 1669, Tarnovo.

²⁷ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/141, Konv. 2, fols. 3r-5v, Panayotis Nikoussios' letter to Casanova, 18 April 1669, Candia.

²⁸ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/141, Konv. 3, fols. 134r-144v, Casanova's report, 24 December 1669, Salonica.

²⁹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/142, Konv. 2, fols. 22r-24r, Casanova's report, 10 July 1670, Edirne.

³⁰ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/142, Konv. 2, fols. 54r-65r, Casanova's report, 13 August 1670, Edirne.

³¹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/143, Konv. 2, fols. 105r-106v, 151r-v, 107r-108v, 152r, Casanova's report, 24 December 1671, Edirne.

³² The names are derived from Auer's diary, prisoner lists, and the letters sent by the imperial captives in the Seven Towers to Vienna.

³³ Poumarède 2002. I am grateful to Volkan Dökmeci for a translation of the article.

background and confined to the same secluded area, in order to set himself up as the leader of the newcomers.

Rüblandt believed that the newcomers' relationship with the Venetians was doomed from the beginning, and that Mollino and Delfino were primarily responsible for the Venetians' harassment of the imperial subjects. On 15 May 1667, Rüblandt compiled a *Klag* or *Relation* in which he described the tension between the Habsburg and Venetian prisoners.³⁴ Rüblandt described the feud between the two groups by employing political rhetoric. Venetians, reported Rüblandt, mocked the imperials for losing the fortress of Érsekújvár to the Turks, defamed the emperor and accused him of being incapable of freeing his subjects from imprisonment, and ridiculed the peace treaty signed by the emperor with the Porte in 1664. Rüblandt, in this scenario, defended the imperial cause and dignity in the face of such accusations. Yet, regardless of Rüblandt's attempt to suggest otherwise, the principal cause of friction seems to have been much more mundane: upon their arrival, the imperial captives were allocated a tower in the fort, which had been employed up to then as a cellar by the Venetians, and the parcel of land before it.³⁵ It was now time for the sharing of both resources and space. The Ottomans allowed prisoners in the Seven Towers to erect temporary structures such as huts and pergolas for spending time in daylight before they returned to the tower dungeons where they slept. In the 17th century, the inner court of the Seven Towers was overrun by lodges, sheds, portable kitchens, and even small coops and gardens, necessitating adjustments with the arrival of newcomers. Thus, Mollino resented being ousted from the grounds the Venetians had thus far occupied (Poumarède 2002: 276).

In his *Klag*, Rüblandt uses political and military terms when describing the events that took place between the Venetian and Habsburg captives. For instance, he described the Venetians as 'attacking' the wooden hut erected by the imperials to be used as a kitchen while they rested under its shadow during daytime. Rüblandt interpreted this as an obvious insult to imperial dignity. He decided to send Auer and Weltz to the leaders of the Venetian community for a truce with the message that he would retaliate if the Venetians pursued such a course of action. Rüblandt's choice of messengers was not random: he probably knew that Auer was on good terms with the Venetian noblemen. In his diary, Auer underlined the compassionate help offered by the Venetians during their first days in the Seven Towers: Delfino sent bread and wine when the imperial captives strove to recover from the devastating journey and provided a physician for their sick and wounded. Auer had a different take than Rüblandt on why the relationship with the Venetians deteriorated in the ensuing years. He did not mention anyone by name, but believed arrogance, ambition, and jealousy eventually alienated the Venetian community from the imperial captives. He was straightforward: he remarked that these were the very same nuisances that drove the Habsburgs out of the Hungarian kingdom.³⁶ Thus, Auer also applied political understanding when accounting for a particular issue.

On 10 May 1667, five days before Rüblandt penned his *Klag*, the escalating tension between the two parties led to a hand-to-hand fight. The *mêlée* began with a Venetian servant throwing a stone at Rüblandt who suffered a head injury and bled. The two groups then attacked each other with stones, clubs, and shackles. The imperials, Rüblandt wrote, won the field despite the Venetians being superior in numbers. In contrast to Auer's portrayal of the events, Rüblandt

³⁴ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/139, Konv. 2, fols. 226r-229r, 15 May 1667, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

³⁵ Lukinich 1923: 191.

³⁶ Lukinich 1923: 193–194.

blamed the Hungarians for pulling back from the fight at a critical moment. Rüblandt wrote that they stopped backing the Germans and drew themselves back from the engagement, as was their custom – an explicit reference to the unrelenting hostility between the two nations in the imperial armies. Venetians, seeing the discord among the imperial ranks, launched a counterattack, hunting down Rüblandt and his crew. The Ottomans eventually succeeded in putting an end to the scuffle before anyone died. The episode serves to unveil a simple fact: Rüblandt, Auer, and most probably all others involved in the Habsburg-Venetian rivalry and the violence that followed re-enacted the intricacies of the wider political universe in the confines of the Seven Towers. They drew on a medley of insults and verbal challenges to degrade one another, all related to political and military incidents that had occurred outside of the Seven Towers, while in fact they were actually tussling over a tiny piece of land. Rüblandt's resentment grew when he noticed that the Venetian captives were better treated by the Ottomans in spite of an ongoing war between the Porte and the Serenissima.

In his letter to Leopold I, which he wrote on the same day as his *Klag*, Rüblandt hinted at, albeit ambiguously, the inefficiency of the imperial diplomacy at the Porte.³⁷ Rüblandt was aware that the emperor had instructed his resident ambassador in Edirne several times to do everything he could to secure the release of the imperial captives, but Casanova had not been successful in his endeavours. Rüblandt humbly asked from his master to encourage Casanova once again for a fresh undertaking. Referring to his *Klag*, he wrote that all they clung to after three and a half years of slavery was the emperor's glory. Rüblandt sought to establish a personal link with the emperor and draw him closer to the problem. He requested for reciprocal action against the Venetian ambassador and the relatives of the Venetian troublemakers in Vienna. Rüblandt was not content with recent developments and believed something had to be done in retaliation for the Venetian assault.

In April 1668, we see Hauptmann Rüblandt and Casanova working rather closely in handling the affairs in the Seven Towers. On 13 April, Rüblandt warned the imperial resident of his suspicions of unapproved letter traffic.³⁸ Both were eager to impose control over the correspondence from the Seven Towers to Vienna. According to Rüblandt, the father commissar of the Holy Land, who had been visiting the fort many times in the recent past, and the imperial dragoman Marcantonio Mamuca della Torre enjoyed undue familiarity with the Venetian community in the fort.³⁹ The father made a bad habit of spending almost the entire time he was allowed in the Seven Towers with the Venetian noblemen. Rüblandt was certain that he brought and received letters from the Venetians to be forwarded to Vienna. A conversation with the French prisoners in the fort also revealed that Auer and Wetz willingly accepted French letters to be packed with their own letters so that the Frenchmen could remain in contact with a former clerk in the French embassy who was now living in Vienna. Casanova was upset; he forbade the imperial captives from blending foreign letters into their correspondence and advised Rüblandt to be extremely careful when delivering letters to the father commissar.⁴⁰ Thus, we see Hauptmann Rüblandt being used by the Habsburg embassy to influence the behaviour of the imperial captives in the Seven Towers; Rüblandt spied on his company and provided insider information for the imperial resident.

³⁷ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/139, Konv. 2, fols. 236r-239r, 15 May 1667, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

³⁸ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 2, fols. 5r-6r, 13 April 1668, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

³⁹ For Marcantonio Mamuca della Torre's establishing a diplomatic household in Istanbul in the second half of the 17th century, see Rothman 2021: 49–79.

⁴⁰ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 2, fols. 3r-6v, Casanova's report, 8 May 1668, Edirne.

Four days after, Rüblandt wrote another letter to Casanova in which he reported the latest visits of Jesuit fathers to the Seven Towers.⁴¹ He wrote that on that day one of the father commissar's companions, a Jesuit priest named Matthias, came to the imperial prisoners and held Mass. The Jesuits brought glad tidings that the Hungarians had retaken Érsekújvár with a clever stratagem and had slaughtered the Turkish garrison including the pasha himself. The news, however, is a perfect example of misinformation – a comparatively common phenomenon in the world of early modern communications (Ghobrial 2013: 49–53).⁴² The story also captivated Casanova, but only to a certain extent. He found a reoccupying of the fortress of Érsekújvár from the Turkish forces implausible and suggested that the father of the Jesuit order might have talked about Kanizsa which was equally false.⁴³

AN OFFICER IN CHAINS (II): RÜBLANDT'S COMPANY FALLS APART

In July 1668, Rüblandt pleaded with Leopold I to better his financial circumstances in the Seven Towers. He portrayed himself in his letter as being at the mercy of barbarians for the past five years. He was miserable and reaching out to his emperor so as to receive the monthly salary he had been entitled to when on active duty. While formulating his appeal, Rüblandt put forward the argument that minor princes of the world were doing this and were providing for their subjects in the Seven Towers; nothing less would befit a universal emperor.⁴⁴ We know from various historical accounts that the inmates in the Seven Towers could occasionally obtain aid by relatives and friends for easing the conditions of their imprisonment. Rüblandt's primary recourse was the emperor: he was a *Hauptmann* in the imperial army, had fallen captive while fighting against the Turks, and more importantly, contrary to many prisoners in the Seven Towers, he was not a man of wealth⁴⁵ and might be truly dependent on his patron for survival. In his profession and according to his perception, loyalty came before nobility.

On 9 August, Casanova sent a letter to Rüblandt from Edirne via Marcolini, an Italian merchant. The imperial resident was still troubled by a leak in the flow of information to and from the Seven Towers. He asked Rüblandt to pay utmost attention and hinder any attempt on the part of the imperial captives to intermediate in outsiders' letter exchange. Casanova was troubled by the fact that the arrival of the imperial messenger Rodolpho Dane and the interpreter Yanaki Porphyrita in Edirne had become an everyday topic within the Seven Towers, and believed the source of the information could only be Marcantonio Mamuca. The imperial dragoman held a weekly correspondence with the father commissar,⁴⁶ and, once again, Casanova expressed his distrust towards the former. Hauptmann Rüblandt replied on 20 August. He was deeply worried when he read Casanova's letter. The news brought by the courier Rodolpho and the interpreter Yanaki from Vienna, seemed to him greatly laced with unfounded hearsay and false suppositions.

⁴¹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 2, fols. 15r-v, 17 April 1668, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

⁴² For particular examples, see G. Etényi 1999 (misguided reports on the occupation of Szigetvár by the imperial forces in 1664) and Kolçak 2014: 165–192 (false reports on the Ottoman loss of Szigetvár, Pécs, and Kanizsa to imperial forces in 1664).

⁴³ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 2, fols. 14r-17r, Casanova's report, 12 May 1668, Edirne.

⁴⁴ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 2, fols. 181r-v, 30 July 1668, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

⁴⁵ Meninski's Relation, Buda, fol. 69v.

⁴⁶ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 2, fol. 147r-v, Casanova's report, 30 August 1668, Edirne.

Rüblandt was in the mood of asserting himself; he had warned the emperor many times that he was living amongst traitors and spies. He meant not only the Venetians who craved for nothing than his destruction; his folk, he maintained, were no better. He could no longer rely on Nicolaus Brenner, for example, the quartermaster of his company, Rüblandt asserted. Could it be, asked Rüblandt, that the Venetians were paying them on the sly or maybe promised them something the imperial officials were not aware of?⁴⁷

The following year, in March 1669, Rüblandt was handed a letter by Leopold I by German merchants via Mamuca along with seventy talers for the needs of the imperial prisoners in the Seven Towers. Rüblandt, in his responsive letter of 6 March,⁴⁸ pointed to a further collapse within the imperial community. He refused to give the emperor's coins to Ludwig Pickwardy of Lick, the French trumpeter of the Forgács regiment, because he had recently turned to Calvinism. Pickwardy and a Venetian-turned-Calvinist were financially backed by the British embassy in Istanbul. The British clergy, wrote Rüblandt, openly held ceremonies in the Seven Towers and encouraged people to convert. Rüblandt was particularly afraid of two persons among imperial ranks, who, he suspected, were inclined to fall for English trickery.

In November 1670, Rüblandt was resentful and critical at the emperor himself. As a good informant, he attached to his letter to the president of the Aulic War Council (*Hofkriegsratpräsident*) a list of Venetian captives freed by Ottoman authorities after the signing of a peace treaty between the Porte and the Senate. In his appendix, Rüblandt listed 26 Venetians being transferred to Edirne. The *Hauptmann* was not able to conceal his amazement that the Serenissima succeeded in liberating all the Venetian captives in the Seven Towers as soon as it procured a treaty with the Ottomans. The list he provided was intended, apart from serving his role as an informant, to emphasise the high number of captives being freed by the Ottomans at once. Rüblandt learned that the *kaymakam* of Istanbul welcomed the Venetian party on 23 July and sent them to Edirne the day after. Rüblandt remarked, with a touch of disappointment, that the Ottomans treated the Venetians with stately respect and reprehended the fact that the Venetians, who had lost lands nearly the size of a kingdom to the Turks in the latest war, were able to liberate their prisoners and to persuade the Ottoman authorities to receive their ambassadors with appropriate deference, while the imperial ambassador Leslie, following a military engagement where the emperor's armies defeated the Turks repeatedly, could not free an ordinary captain such as himself.⁴⁹

Rüblandt's correspondence with the War Council demonstrated his mastery in intelligence gathering. As mentioned above, his register included 26 Venetian prisoners by name (and occasionally by ethnic origin and rank) which was almost identical to Ottoman records of the same time.⁵⁰ Rüblandt proved himself an informant of unparalleled proficiency to the Viennese court. Casanova reported to Vienna in September 1670 that the Venetians were taken by land for an exchange of prisoners at the border; other Venetian captives in the imperial arsenal were also freed, but they journeyed aboard ships.⁵¹

⁴⁷ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/140, Konv. 2, fol. 148r-v, 20 August 1668, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

⁴⁸ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/141, Konv. 1, fols. 29r-31r, 6 March 1669, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

⁴⁹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/142, Konv. 3, fols. 24v-27v, 28 November 1670, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

⁵⁰ BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defterleri, 799, pp. 20-21: Defter oldur ki Yedi Kulle'de mahbûs olup fermân-ı âlî ile mahmiyye-i Edirne'ye irsâl olunan üsârâyı beyân ider.

⁵¹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/142, Konv. 2, fols. 78r-81r, Casanova's report, 5 September 1670, Edirne. Cf.: OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/142, Konv. 2, fols. 132r-133v, Casanova's report, 19 September 1670, Edirne, for the reference see: 133r.

In the last days of 1670, something rather unimagined happened in the Seven Towers: Monseigneur Beaujeau, a Maltese knight of French origin, escaped from the Seven Towers swinging a rope down to the seaside where a slave hired months ago by French sailors picked him up.⁵² Most probably during the time the escape was being investigated, the Ottomans moved Rüblandt and his company to Rumeli Hisarı where they were placed in handcuffs and kept in a tower.⁵³ In January 1671, Casanova sought to alleviate the imperials' living conditions. He sent a gift to the castle's agha and pleaded for humane treatment of the prisoners. The grand vizier, however, rigorously rejected this effort by promptly replying that they would not take advice in handling their prisoners.⁵⁴ In the end, before mid-1671, Rüblandt and his company returned to the Seven Towers.

In the summer of 1671, Rüblandt's company suffered another hit. Two Calvinist Hungarians from the garrison of Érsekújvár, Bálint Berény and János Varsányi, decided to become Muslims. For this, the agha of the Seven Towers provided them separate accommodation, segregating them from the rest of the imperial captives. As far as Rüblandt learned, Berény had served before in the Esterházy palace and Varsányi had been a *hussar* captain in the fortress of Érsekújvár.⁵⁵ They were hoping to acquire similar positions in the fortress once they became approved Ottoman subjects. Varsányi had a wife, who regularly sent him letters, and two sons in Érsekújvár. Hauptmann Rüblandt must have been profoundly distressed when he came to learn that two of his men had turned Turk on his watch.

In the following days, the tide changed partly in favour of Rüblandt. The agha of the Seven Towers abandoned the idea of informing the grand vizier of the new Muslims he now accommodated in his private chambers. According to two Jewish slaves serving in the mansion, an Ottoman dignitary rushed in at the last moment and dissuaded the agha from writing to the grand vizier. The dignitary told the agha that the Hungarians belonged to the sultan and their recent behaviour was not to be tolerated by the emperor. There was peace between the two sovereigns and a Habsburg envoy (Johann Philipp Beris) had arrived at the Porte not long before. This news would not sound sweet to their ears, warned the dignitary; if anything, it would tarnish the name of the agha as if he aimed to break the emerging accord between two monarchs with a covert agenda.⁵⁶ The warning was wise at this juncture: in 1671–1672, the Porte and the Hofburg were doing their best to prevent a war over Hungary where the discontented magnates had lit the fire of a rebellion. To this end, the emperor dispatched Beris, the court chamber secretary (*Hofkammersekretär*), to the Porte as a special emissary (Michels 2019).

In October 1671, Hauptmann Rüblandt wrote back, this time with Weltz and Brenner, to Giovanni Casanova. They were thankful for the money sent by the resident ambassador via the

⁵² Oddens 2009: 153, 197–199. I am grateful to Mahmut Halef Cevrioğlu for calling my attention to Hinlopen's travel book and for making a translation of the relevant part (Chardin 1686: 35–36; Grelot 1680: 27–29).

⁵³ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/142, Konv. 3, fols. 2a–7b, Casanova's report, 7 January 1671, Edirne.

⁵⁴ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/142, Konv. 3, fols. 30r–32v, Casanova's report, 25 January 1671, Edirne.

⁵⁵ Ottoman prisoner lists confirm the fact that János Varsányi (Verşan Yanoş) and Bálint Berény (Berni Balint) came from Érsekújvár (Uyvarlı). According to Ottoman records, Varsányi was a flag-bearer (*bayrakdâr*) and Berény was a cavalry captain (*kapudan*), see BOA, MAD. 3279, pp. 377 and 381.

⁵⁶ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/143, Konv. 2, fols. 130r–136r, 25 August 1671, Seven Towers, Istanbul: Rellatione auß Constantinopoli den Schloß der 7 thurn eines Verlauffs de datto 25 Augusto Anno 1671 Jahr. Rüblandt's *Notierung* to his original account traces the events as late as 15 September 1671. It was usually a complicated issue for a new believer to persuade his environment that his new spiritual path was taken with a pure heart. Coşan and Theilig (2018: 42–43) refer to a similar hesitation towards Muslims in captivity who declared their will to become Christians.

agency of Pestaluzzi. The distribution of the 100 talers showed the ongoing power relations within the imperial party of captives: Berény, Varsányi, and Ludwig Pickwardy were denied imperial help; Rüblandt, Weltz, Brenner, and Auer took the bulk of the financial aid (80 talers); while the remaining sum was transmitted to the rest of the group (six persons). Berény and Varsányi were still enjoying a separate lodgement; however, they do not appear to have converted when the letter was written. On the contrary, the authors of the letter incited Casanova to take stern action against the possibility of the Ottoman government favouring these two Hungarians at a time of prisoner exchange. Johann Philipp Beris was dead – a fact that Rüblandt, Weltz, and Brenner expressed their sorrow over. Therefore, the 1000 talers the deceased envoy had brought with him, the authors supposed, might be used to obtain their independence. Four prisoners (this time including Johann Auer) promised to pay their debt as soon as they were freed. An Ottoman *sipahi* from Buda who had been taken captive in 1664 in Levice (Léva) and had spent years in the hands of the Hungarian magnate Illésházy came to visit the Hungarian captives twice that month (2 and 9 October). He assured them that there were many other Hungarian barons with Turkish prisoners in their possession. Rüblandt and his comrades were apparently beating their own path towards salvation, leading the way for the diplomatic institutions and the authorities in Vienna. A part of their statement was particularly bold: they called for help from each and every Christian if the emperor would not intervene to release them!⁵⁷

The imperial prisoners complained about the lack of clean water in the preceding few months. They had a well at the bottom of their tower; however, water drawn from this well could only be used for dishwashing and body cleaning. In order to attain potable water, their servant walked to a nearby village and carried water back in barrels.⁵⁸ In October, the problem was still unsolved. Rüblandt, Weltz, and Brenner asked the imperial resident to obtain legal permission from the grand vizier for them to consume wine freely within the prison: in the absence of fresh drinking water, wine would help maintain their physical strength, they argued.⁵⁹ To the prisoners' disappointment, Casanova failed to secure any such document. The only wine they were able to consume was smuggled, at his own risk, by the Jesuit father administering sermons on Sundays and holidays which, the three inmates contended, was far from sufficient for the prisoners.⁶⁰

HOMEBOUND: HAUPTMANN RÜBLANDT IN BUDA

The time was ripe for asking a favour from the Ottomans: the two courts were coming closer in the face of an imminent threat in the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania by discontent Hungarian lords. However, Beris had died in Istanbul before he accomplished his mission. The following year, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha without prior notice ordered Casanova and Panayotis to move the 13 imperial captives from the Seven Towers to Edirne. According to Casanova's report

⁵⁷ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/143, Konv. 2, fols. 95r-96v, from Rüblandt, Weltz, Brenner to Casanova, 29 October 1671, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

⁵⁸ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/143, Konv. 2, fols. 130r-136r, Rüblandt and Brenner's Relation, 25 August 1671, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

⁵⁹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/143, Konv. 2, fols. 95r-96v, Rüblandt, Weltz and Brenner's letter to Casanova, 29 October 1671, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

⁶⁰ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/143, Konv. 2, fols. 103r-104r, Rüblandt, Weltz and Brenner's letter to Casanova, 4 December 1671, Seven Towers, Istanbul.

of 1 June, Fazıl Ahmed's change of heart could be linked to his communication with Johann Auer. Maria Sophia Löbl, the widowed wife of Miklós Zrínyi, sent word to Istanbul that she had in her custody a certain Hüseyin Agha worthy of 12000 talers. Fazıl Ahmed, in return, wanted to release Auer with whom he discussed future prospects of a wider prisoner exchange. Auer assured the grand vizier that he alone knew 30 Turkish prisoners in Hungary. On the last day of May 1672, Rüblandt and twelve others were already in Edirne waiting for the continuation of their journey to the Ottoman-Habsburg border. Casanova, in his report, acknowledged Rüblandt's suspicions towards his two Hungarian companions and the French trumpeter of the Forgács regiment who had turned to Calvinism. He apprised the Hofburg of Berényi's and Varsányi's intention of going to Érsekújvár. He believed that they might be spies or informants; and advocated in favour of the frontier fortress captains interrogating all Hungarians passing into the kingdom.⁶¹

On 4 June, the imperial prisoners were still in Edirne. Casanova was sorry about how the Ottoman officers mishandled them. Nevertheless, he avoided an interference which he feared might backfire.⁶² Although he was optimistic that the imperial company would be on its way to Buda in the coming days, it lingered in Edirne for the following week as there reportedly was a shortage of carts in the city. During this time, Casanova managed to improve the conditions of the prisoners and ensured that his men would accompany them throughout the journey as far as Buda.⁶³ The imperial resident also delivered a sum of 100 talers to the captives and paid 30 talers to the Ottoman agha after the prisoners arrived in Buda for his delicate handling of them along the journey.⁶⁴

In July 1672, Fazıl Ahmed delegated full authority to the pasha of Buda in the affairs regarding the exchange of prisoners. Casanova was hopeful and believed that much more could be achieved by Hüseyin Pasha, the governor-general of Buda.⁶⁵ Not long after this, François de Mesgnien Meninski, the celebrated court interpreter with a vast experience in oriental affairs, was tasked with the exchange of prisoners by the Hofburg.⁶⁶ For many reasons, however, pairing Ottoman and imperial captives proved to be a time-consuming task, and the Ottoman officials in Buda and the Habsburg authorities in Vienna worked for nearly two years to match available prisoners. In the meantime, the Ottomans provided several lists to the Habsburg government including the names of prominent Ottomans rumoured to be somewhere in the Kingdom of Hungary. Meninski, for instance, spent the latter half of August 1672 in Buda negotiating the deliverance of the imperial captives to Habsburg officials. On 16 August, one of Meninski's servants visited the imperial prisoners in the Buda dungeons and saw Rüblandt and Auer personally. After a short conversation, the servant submitted a bundle of letters to Rüblandt to distribute among his peers.⁶⁷ A few days after, Meninski also had the opportunity to see Rüblandt, Auer, Brenner, and Weltz in a saddening scene where the imperial prisoners came forth accompanied by the clinking sound of their shackles.⁶⁸ Meninski suggested that he take Rüblandt with him to Vienna on oath and engage with his agency in ransoming the imperial captives, but Hüseyin Pasha did not abide

⁶¹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/144, Konv. 1, fols. 1r-2v, Casanova's report, 1 June 1672, Edirne.

⁶² OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/144, Konv. 1, fols. 5r-8v, Casanova's report, 4 June 1672, Edirne.

⁶³ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/144, Konv. 1, fols. 14r-v, Casanova's report, 11 June 1672, Edirne.

⁶⁴ OeStA, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Reichsakten 189B, fol. 915r; HHStA, Türkei I/144, Konv. 1, fols. 185r-190r, appendix to Casanova's report, 14 September 1672, Timarova.

⁶⁵ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/144, Konv. 1, fols. 36r-39v, Casanova's report, 11 July 1672, Timarova.

⁶⁶ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/144, Konv. 1, fol. 51r, Meninski's Creditiv to the pasha of Buda, 28 July 1672, Vienna.

⁶⁷ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/144, Konv. 1, fols. 67r-75v, Meninski's Relation, Buda, for the reference see: 68r.

⁶⁸ Meninski's Relation, fols. 71r-v.

with the idea. He had developed a close relationship with the German captain and considered him a man of great judgement and wisdom.⁶⁹ Presumably, the pasha wanted to keep him in close quarters for as long as the imperial band of captives stayed in Buda under his responsibility.

In December 1673, Meninski once again went to Buda following the arrival of a letter by İbrahim Pasha, who had replaced Hüseyin as the pasha of Buda, stating that the grand vizier finally sanctioned an exchange of prisoners.⁷⁰ The following month, Hasan Agha of Buda arrived in Vienna; when handing over İbrahim's letter to Habsburg officials he also submitted a conclusive list of Turkish prisoners demanded by the Porte at the exchange point.⁷¹ In April 1674, Mustafa Agha held official talks in Vienna. Eventually, everything seemed in order: Raimondo Montecucoli, the president of the Aulic War Council, wrote back to İbrahim Pasha that the prisoners would be exchanged no later than 10 May at Szőny near Komárom,⁷² the same location Ottoman and Habsburg courts had been using throughout the 17th century for diplomatic interactions.

CONCLUSION

Leonhardt Rüblandt was a military captain when taken captive by the Ottomans and continued to conduct himself as one during his confinement in the Seven Towers. His perception of events surrounding him was largely affected by his military background, which manifested itself in the wording of his letters: he took matters seriously and saw events as clear manifestations of the rivalries occurring in the wider political realm. His conflict with the Venetians in the Seven Towers testifies to this: in his struggle against the imprisoned Venetian community, he employed the terminology of military confrontations. He also followed the accustomed 17th-century course of calling for princely intervention to release him and other imperial prisoners from Ottoman slavery. At times, the Habsburg captain could not suppress his feelings and implied his disappointment towards the imperial resident at the Porte and even, indirectly, towards the emperor.

Rüblandt always saw himself as an imperial officer and his imprisonment in the Seven Towers was not an obstacle in fulfilling this duty. He supplied the Habsburg embassy with intelligence he gathered in his confinement in his *Relations* and was, thus, part of the imperial intelligence network operating in Ottoman lands. His captors likewise considered him a leader: he was the one contacted by Ottoman officials before anybody else when a problem occurred regarding the imperial captives.

Rüblandt sought to hold authority over the imperial band of captives, a commitment he could only partly accomplish. This said, he did not lose any member of his company throughout the troublesome years of captivity. In 1673, his twelve companions were still with him in Buda waiting to be delivered to freedom by Ottoman officers. At this point, one is tempted to draw parallels between Rüblandt's relationship with his fellow captives and the habitual frictions prevailing in the eastern edges of the Roman Empire. The imperial spirit in the Seven Towers often reflected

⁶⁹ Meninski's Relation, fols. 69v and 72v.

⁷⁰ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/145, Konv. 3, fol. 71r, Meninski's Creditiv, 2 December 1673, Vienna and Wolfgang Heister's (vice-president of the Aulic War Council) to İbrahim Pasha, fol. 80r-v, 2 December 1673, Vienna.

⁷¹ OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/145, Konv. 4, fol. 65r-v, Raimondo Montecucoli's letter to İbrahim Pasha, 13 January 1674, Vienna. For the list of prisoners see: fol. 67r. The list contained 38 names.

⁷² OeStA, HHStA, Türkei I/145, Konv. 4, fol. 146r-v, Raimondo Montecucoli's letter to İbrahim Pasha, 22 April 1674, Vienna.

the convoluted and the long-conflicted political contours of the empire. The disputed treaty of Vasvár signed by the emperor with the Ottomans in 1664 caused tension between the leaders of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg court in Vienna. The treaty was highly unpopular among the Croatian and Hungarian magnates. Rüblandt was in the Seven Towers when the mal-content along the frontier first turned into a plot against the emperor, the so-called Wesselényi Conspiracy, and finally into an open uprising at Tisza in 1670. The German captain must have heard about Hungarian leaders taking up arms against the emperor, although we do not know how he reacted to the news. We do know that Hauptmann Leonhardt Rüblandt blamed the Hungarians in the Seven Towers for letting him down in a fight in defence of the emperor's honour against the Venetians. We also know that Rüblandt did not give Ludwig Pickwardy his share of the emperor's coins because he had turned to Calvinism. Rüblandt also turned against two other Calvinist Hungarians from the garrison of Érsekújvár, Bálint Berény and János Varsányi, who were rumoured to become Muslims; in 1672, Casanova warned Habsburg authorities of the possibility that these two could simply be agents inserted by the Ottomans in the imperial group to cross into the Kingdom of Hungary. Yet, in the eyes of Ottoman officers and from the outside, regardless of their inner strife, the Habsburg captives constituted a single body of political power.

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