RAGUSAN SPYING FOR THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE
SOME 16th-CENTURY DOCUMENTS FROM THE STATE ARCHIVE AT DUBROVNIK

by N. H. BIEGMAN, Leiden

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovacka Republika) occupied, from the middle ages to 1808, a coastal strip in the south of present-day Yugoslavia, stretching from the south of Konavli, not far from Kotor (Cattaro), to the Neretva valley and including the peninsula of Peljesac, the islands of Mljet and Lastovo, and the city of Ragusa, nowadays called Dubrovnik, its Serbo-croatian name. It formed an aristocratically-ruled, trading city-state in the Italian tradition, and under the protection of the Ottoman Empire outlived that tradition for a long time.

At the beginning of the 13th century the territory became a possession of Venice. One and a half century later, the sovereignty passed to the kings of Hungary who interfered in no way with Ragusa’s affairs, so that the Ragusans started to call their constitutional unit a Republic, as in fact it was, and which it remained until it was conquered by Napoleon.

As early as the Venetian period, Ragusa, besides being an important transit port for the western Balkans, possessed a merchant fleet whose ships regularly went all the way to the north coast of Africa, Lebanon and Asia Minor. Contacts with near-by Mediterranean ports, especially those on the Adriatic coast of Italy, were very frequent, and trade relations excellent. By the end of the 14th century Ragusa had become the most important harbour on the east coast of the Adriatic, and in the whole region ranked third, after Venice and Ancona.

1 The collection of which was made possible by a grant from the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.)
About 1450, the Republic came gradually under Turkish influence, and the Sultan replaced the Hungarian monarch as its sovereign; but until 1526 the Ragusans continued to recognize the latter’s rights, especially when they felt they needed his protection or mediation; which in any case proved of no great help.

Ragusa paid tribute of 12,500 ducats, and expressed its devotion to every new Sultan. For the rest, its freedom was considerable, and founded upon capitulations the first of which was issued in 1430 by Murad II, and they got their definitive shape from Süleyman I. The territory was guaranteed; Ragusans were allowed to trade freely in the Ottoman Empire on payment of exceptionally low customs duties and often on better terms than the local people themselves; and no Turkish official was to prevent the coming and going of any foreign merchants, even of declared enemies of the Sultan, to the port.

In the firmans, stored at the Ragusan archives, Ragusans are often referred to as dhimmi’s, and ranked with the other ra’aya. They did not, however, pay an individual poll tax. When in these firmans the word jizya occurs, it means the same thing as is mostly called kharaj; that is to say, the annual tribute. On the other hand, tax collectors on the Balkans had to be reminded of the fact that they were not to treat them as ra’aya on matters of taxes and duties and thus claim too much from them.

Still, the Ragusans, though in the course of time slavicised, kept in close touch with the Mediterranean world; their religion being Roman Catholic, their official language Italian, and their trading interests being to a large extent situated in Christian countries. Cultural and sentimental ties with Italy were strong, notwithstanding a certain, and often bitter, rivalry with other trading cities; primarily with Venice.

Thus lying on the border of two antagonistic “blocs”- forming a loose part of the Turkish Empire, but in many ways attached to the
Christian Mediterranean sphere - the Ragusans were in an excellent position to help both parties, and to profit from each one. The stress no doubt, was laid on the second element, as was usual in those times.

One of the most obvious ways in which the tiny republic could serve was by collecting information.

To the traders, scattered all over the Ottoman lands and more especially in Rumelia, together with the envoys who brought the yearly tribute to Istanbul by land, little from what was going on in the Empire could remain unknown, so that a substantial amount of information about conditions and events in Turkey was passed on to the West by way of Ragusa. The Turks were not perfectly unaware of this, and in 1591 a firman was issued to the Beylerbey of Bosnia, ordering that the Ragusan envoys on their way in Bosnia should be accompanied by reliable çâ'uşes, one of the reasons being that “with the envoys there came so many spies of the Frankish misbelievers” 5.

But nor on the other side did the Ragusan intelligence service remain inactive. Their widely developed Mediterranean trade kept them abreast of many things worth knowing, and often very interesting, to their Ottoman sovereigns. Especially of naval affairs the Ragusans must have had a thorough knowledge, and probably most of their reports to Istanbul contained information on those matters.

The documents edited here, in any case, deal, as far as the subject of the news received is mentioned, with reports concerning the sea, and the Venetian fleet being the most important in the surroundings of Ragusa, we may presume that a good deal of the information bears on this traditional rival and enemy, of Ragusa and the Turks alike.

Our first three documents on Ragusan spying date from the years 1541-51, on the seaways a comparatively quiet period as a result of the Turco-Venetian peace treaty of 1540, which was to remain in force for 30 years.

The Sultan, Süleyman I, was occupied in Europe and Persia. Still, rather intensive pirate activity was taking place in the western Mediterranean, not wholly outside Ragusa’s sphere of inte-

5 In A. T. A 109: ایلیجی ایله بیله فرنسکان کفرصندن نیجه جاسوس کلوب ...
rests. Khair ed-Din Barbarossa infested the coast of Italy, besieging Nice in cooperation with the French in 1543; and he was succeeded in those regions by Turghut reis, who raided the Neapolitan shores in 1548 and took the fortress of Mahdiya in Tunesia shortly after, only to be expelled from it in 1550 by Andrea Doria. He sustained, however, Doria’s subsequent siege of the island of Djerba.

The receipts for the information from this period are very brief, maybe because the Ragusans had not very much to tell, and they do not even go into the subject matter of the information, with the exception of A§ 10, which mentions “some information concerning the sea”.

The last three, from the years 1570 and '71, are far more explicit in their statements, as a result of the circumstances of the moment: Christian states preparing for an all-out naval attack on the Turks.

After actions in the Aegean and elsewhere Turkish troops had landed under the command of Lala Mustafa Paşa, on the 1st of July, 1570, at the Venetian possession of Cyprus, near Limasol, and soon occupied the whole island, with the exception of two fortified places, Nicosia and Famagusta. It seems that Venice had invited Ragusa to assist her, but the Ragusans refused. This appears from a firman (A. T. K 112) from May 1570 to Sinan, the Sancakbey of Bosnia, ordering him to assist the Ragusans in every possible manner, “as it is likely that the Venetians will attack them, because they do not give them assistance…”

During that time, the Venetian captain-general, Girolamo Zane, was waiting with his fleet in the Adriatic -at Zadar until June, and then at Corfu; the papal commander Colonna waited at Otranto for the Spanish ships that were waiting with Andrea Doria for an order of king Philip II.

At the end of August, finally, they all assembled in the bay of Suda, Crete. On September 9th Nicosia surrendered, and nine days later the siege of Famagusta started.

8. "Nuove scritte al signor bassa (paşa) :
Che le XII galee del Papa, per quanto s’intende, si sono unite con 49 galee del Re Filippo. Che in tutto sono 61 galee, le quali intorno a XVIII del passato

7. In the instruction for the Ragusan ambassadors at Constantinople of 11.9.1570 we read, among other things:
"Nuove scritte al signor bassa (paşa) :
Che le XII galee del Papa, per quanto s’intende, si sono unite con 49 galee del Re Filippo. Che in tutto sono 61 galee, le quali intorno a XVIII del passato
Still, the commanders at Suda could not for a long time agree on going to Cyprus; and when at last they sailed eastward, Doria turned back off Karpathos, and Zane and Colonna felt they had to follow his example; so Doria returned to Messina, Colonna to Otranto, and Zane with a loss of thirteen galleys to Corfu. Discontent was great in Venice, and Zane was dismissed and punished. In his place was appointed Sebastiano Venier.

In the autumn and winter 1570-71 talks took place between Venice and Spain to form an anti-Turkish league; because of mutual distrust and disagreement over the choice of a commander and vice-commander the talks were without quick results. After lengthy deliberations, however, and partly because of the interest taken by Pope Pius V, a Holy League, consisting of Venice and Spain, together with the Pope was proclaimed in May, 1571.

The supreme command would be with Don Juan of Austria, the vice-command with Colonna. In the treaty, among other things, was recognized the inviolability of Ragusa, which had passed into Venetian hands on the occasion of an earlier crusade, in 1205.

The place of rendezvous was Messina. The papal ships arrived in June; the Venetians came from Crete and the Adriatic in July; and the Spanish fleet, with Don Juan and Doria, arrived on the 25th of August.

On the first day of that month Famagusta had surrendered to the Turks. The combined fleet sailed on September 16th from Messina, and crushed the Turkish forces at Lepanto on October 7th.

(i.e. the month of August) passorno da Corfu, ueleggiando inuer' Candia per unirsi con l’armata venetiana, la quale si trouaua in Candia, che in tutto tra l’una et l’altra armata saranno galee sottili 195, galee grossi XI, il galeone Fausta et XX nau. Et s’intende che e fatta la lega tra il Papa, il Re Filippo et i Venetiani. Il Re di Francia ha fatto pace con gli Ugonoti, suoi ribelli. Quanto altro intenderemo, subito ne daremo auuiso a vostra Signoria illustissima per fante a posta. Ma delle armate difficilmente potremo intendere cosa alcuna, per essere molto lontane di qui.

(Radonic 2.2 - p. 238)
BY N. H. BIEGMAN

D. A. D. A. T. 8)— A8 ga
10.4.9.48 h—
25.7—3.8 1541 a.d.

TUGHRA OF SÜLEYMAN I

(Süleyman, son of the sovereign Selim, the ever-triumphant)

Pride of the rulers of the Christian community, choice of the
great of the nation of Jesus, the Beys of Ragusa.

When the imperial, illustrious Cipher arrives, it shall be known
that now you have sent to my Court, the seat of felicity, one of your
men and a letter, and you have submitted some information.

Everything that was said on this matter has become completely
known and understood.

So, then, I have ordered that henceforth, too, you keep your eyes
and ears to those parts, and do not cease to write and submit the true
information that appear and that circulate, in accordance with 10

8 i. e. Drzavni Arhiv u Dubrovniku Acta Turcorum
9 i. e. God!
10 comp. this use of-la in expressions such as (A.T. K 131)

شurtle كنبالي ثامة

الجري اولان وبردن شرعله ثابة اولورس الام

and (A.T. K 166a)

شurtle مورت صوپو
their source and with the real state of affairs, in detail to my Court, the seat of felicity. Thus you shall know; upon the noble Sign you shall rely.

Dated in the first (decade) of the month of Rabi‘ al-akhir of the year 948 in the camp on the river Mureş.\footnote{The Mureş (Hung. Maros) takes its rise on the Carpathians, runs through Transylvania, and discharges into the Tisza near Szeged, in southern Hungary. The Sultan was on his way to Buda, which he took and annexed about a month later.}

D.A.D.A.T. - A8 10. 3d. 11. 953 h-
13 - 22. 1. 1547 a.d.

TUGHRA OF SÜLEYMAN I

Pride of the rulers of the Christian community, the Beys of Ragusa. When the imperial, illustrious Cipher arrives, it shall be known that now you have sent a letter to my Court and communicated some information concerning the sea.

Everything that was said has become known in detail.

Now I have ordered that henceforth, too, you shall not interrupt the flow of your information, and shall not cease to find out from the

\footnote{superfluous (note 2)}
\footnote{idü}
troops of the dust-like infidels and from their fleet what in fact their absurd thoughts and intuitions are about, and submit it to my high Threshold.

Thus you shall know; upon the noble Sign you shall rely.

dated in the last (decade) of the month of Dhu 'l-qa'da of the year 953 in the Residence Edirne.


TUGHRA OF SÜLEYMAN I

Pride of the rulers of the Christian community, recourse of the great of the nation of Jesus, the Beys of Ragusa.

When the imperial, illustrious Cipher arrives, it shall be known that now you have sent a letter to my Gate, the giver of justice, and have communicated some information concerning those parts.

Everything you have said has become known in detail.

I have ordered that, when my noble decree, with which conformity of action is imperative, arrives, you shall henceforth, too, not interrupt the flow of your information, and shall not cease to write down, in detail and with a commentary, the circumstances and information known to you, and submit and report them to my Gate of felicity.
Thus you shall know; upon the noble Sign you shall rely, dated in the last (decade) of the month of Dhu'l-hijja of the year 957 in the Residence Edirne.


HE

(Selim, son of the sovereign Süleyman, the ever-triumphant)

Pride of the rulers of the Christian community, choice of the great in the nation of Jesus, the Beys of Ragusa.

15 The qadırğa (Byz. katergon) was one the smaller warships - H. and R. Kahan - A. Tietze - The Lingua Franca in the Levant, 1958. 241, 523-526.
When the imperial, illustrious Cipher arrives, it shall be known that you have sent a letter to my Gate of felicity, and have communicated that the Venetians passed near Ragusa with 65 of their small galleys, and that there were also 10 big galleys and 10 of their ships with them, each one prepared with its men and arms; and that a few days later they were passing by at Candia, too, with 30 galleys; on that matter, too, everything you submitted has come to my noble knowledge.

Now I have ordered that, when my noble decree arrives, you shall, according to the demands of your devotion and sincerity towards my illustrious Threshold, not cease to send capable spies to the enemies' parts, study their wicked thoughts and unmarketable fancies, make known anything concerning their fleet and other circumstances in accordance with the truth, and report continuously the true information of which you are cognizant.

Thus you shall know; upon the noble Sign you shall rely.

Dated in the middle (decade) of triumphant Safar of the year 978 in the Residence, Constantinople.

D.A.D.A.T. - A7 29a. 3d.11.978h - 16-25.4.1571, a.d.

At the beginning of the dispositio we find كرذكر كه instead of accustomed بيرودوم كه.

In the sanctio is left out.

هو

TUGHRA OF SELIM II

ماخر امراء الملّة المسبحية مراجع كبراء الطاليفه العيسويه دومونيك
بكلرى توقيع رفيق همايون واصلا أوليج معلوم اولا كه 2 سدّه سعادته
مكتوب كوندروب قلال وندككه معاونت ايجتهن بوزياره قدره
باباه ووروب 3 احضاره عجله ابكوكلر وجلمه اكر وندكه متعلق
واكر باباه ووروب وجن قرالي وسائر فرنكستان 4 وغريبه متفرغ هره كه
اعلام اولتش اسه مفصّلا معلوم شريفهم اولشندر كركر كه قدمدن 5
Pride of the rulers of the Christian community, recourse of the
great of the nation of Jesus, the Beys of Ragusa.

When the imperial, illustrious Cipher arrives, it shall be known
that you have sent a letter to my Gate of felicity (and made known)
that king Philip has given 100 galleys to the Pope to assist Venice
and that they make haste to get there; (that,) and in short,
everything that was communicated, that which concerns Venice
as well as that which touches the Pope, the Doge, the king of
Vienna and the rest of Europe, etc. came in detail to my noble
knowledge.

It is necessary that henceforward too, you donot cease to study
and spy in those parts, without neglect, unceasingly their condition
and circumstances, and report continuously the true information of
which you are cognizant, according to the abundance of devotion
and sincerity that you have had from olden days towards my Gate
of felicity.

You shall rely upon the noble Sign.

Dated in the last (decade) of Dhu ’l-qa‘da of the year 978 in the
Residence, Constantinople.

16 before the proclamation of the Holy League (see introd.)
Pride of the rulers of the Nazarene nation, recourse of the great in the Christian community, the Beys of Ragusa.

When the imperial, illustrious Cipher arrives, it shall be known that you have sent a letter to my Gate of felicity and communicated that the Venetians have formed an alliance and united with Spain and you have reported the case of the Venetian captain-general; on that matter, too, everything you have said became known.

I have ordered that when my noble decree, with which conformity of action is imperative, arrives, you shall, according to the re-

17 most probably to be read: جنرال فوردوان
18 comp. K 113, line 7
19 The so-called Holy Alliance (see introd.)
20 by this time Sebastiano Venier; maybe Zane's dismissal from that post, and his being replaced by Venier—which, however had taken place as early as December 1570 (see introd.)
quirements of the abundance of devotion and sincerity that you have towards my Gate of felicity, not cease to send henceforward, too, capable men of yours to study and spy their condition and circumstances, and report the true information of which you are cognizant about any wicked thoughts and unmarketable fancies they have. Thus you shall know; upon the noble Sign you shall rely.

dated in the first (decade) of Rabi' al-akhir of the year 979 in the Residence, Constantinople, the well-protected.

itt: I. Bozic - Dubrovnik i Turska u XIV i XV veku - Beograd, 1952
A. Galante - in TOEM, Istanbul 1340.
J. von Hammer - Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches, Pest, 1827/35
W. Heyd - Histoire du Commerce du Levant - Leipzig, 1885/6
H. Kretschmayr - Geschichte von Venedig, Band 3 - Stuttgart, 1934.
B. Stulli - Pregled Drzavnopravne Historije Dubrovacke Republike - Dubrovnik 1956.
لا يوجد نص يمكن قراءته بشكل طبيعي من الصورة المقدمة.
که شوروار از سایه‌گیرنده بی‌کلامی و از بین یافتن مرزهای بین‌المللی، برای توزیع این بی‌کلامی، به‌طور کلی، باعث می‌شود که این بی‌کلامی از طریق آزمون‌های آزمایشگاهی، به‌طور احتمالی باشد. البته این بی‌کلامی که در آزمون‌های آزمایشگاهی، برای اجرای آزمون‌های آزمایشگاهی، به‌طور احتمالی باشد، همچنان باعث می‌شود که این بی‌کلامی از طریق آزمون‌های آزمایشگاهی، به‌طور احتمالی باشد.