

## THE AMBASSADOR AS THIRD PARTY: BUSBECQ'S SUMMARY ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR 1559

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### ABSTRACT

*During his tenure as Emperor Ferdinand I's ambassador at the Sublime Porte (1555-1562), Oghier Ghiselin de Busbecq showed how a resident ambassador could function as a third party by adapting the instructions of a far-off sovereign to the situation he found at hand. This essay discusses Busbecq's long summary of the negotiations of one year (1559) to show how Busbecq at times ignored or overlooked specific directives from Ferdinand and his Hofrat, in order to work toward his sovereign's larger objectives.*

*Key words: Oghier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Emperor Ferdinand I, Habsburg Monarchy, Sultan Suleyman the Lawgiver, Grand Vezir Rüstem Paşa*

## L'AMBASCIATORE COME TERZA PARTE: IL RIASSUNTO DELLA RELAZIONE DI BUSBECQ PER L'ANNO 1559

### SINTESI

*Durante il suo mandato come ambasciatore dell'imperatore Ferdinando I presso la Sublime Porta (1555-1562), Oghier Ghiselin de Busbecq dimostrò come un ambasciatore residente potesse funzionare come mediatore (terza parte) adattando le istruzioni di un sovrano lontano alla situazione contingente. Il saggio descrive il copioso riassunto di Busbecq dei negoziati di un anno (1559), per mostrare come egli avesse a volte ignorato o trascurato le direttive specifiche di Ferdinando e del suo consigliere di Corte, con l'obiettivo di raggiungere obiettivi di più ampia portata del suo sovrano.*

*Parole chiave: Oghier Ghiselin de Busbecq, l'imperatore Ferdinando I, monarchia asburgica, il sultano Solimano il Legislatore, il Grand Vezir Rüstem Paşa*

Diplomacy is not to be confused with mediation. A resident ambassador was first and foremost a conduit for information about the intentions of a potential enemy, and only on occasion a party to peace negotiations (Anderson, 1993). While ambassadors of the early modern age had more latitude for acting independently than their counterparts do in an age of instant communications, this was also an era when cash-strapped governments stinted on diplomatic expenses, so that a resident ambassador often cut a sorry figure (Dover, 2008), and was hardly in a position to present himself as a quasi-independent broker. By contrast, this essay deals with a diplomatic posting that was richly supported, and an ambassador who made the most of his opportunities.

#### THE SETTING: HABSBURG CONSULTATIVE PROCEDURES, AND RELATIONS WITH THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN 1559

After the so-called Long Turkish War of 1593–1606 (Niederkorn, 1993), the long border between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire was relatively peaceful, until the series of conflicts touched off by the second siege of Vienna in 1683.<sup>1</sup> During the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, however, there was constant low-level fighting, and until a reorganization of Habsburg defenses in the 1570s (Simoniti, 1991), the Ottomans had the better of things in the rough game of border warfare (Szákaly, 1982). Accordingly, Ferdinand I (d. 1564) and Maximilian II (d. 1578) attached great importance to diplomacy. A treaty of peace did not stop the fighting along the frontier, but it did afford some assurance that Habsburg Hungary would not be subjected to a full-scale invasion by the main Ottoman army (Petritsch, 1979).<sup>2</sup> Ambassadors to the Sublime Porte were thus allotted a handsome salary, and had considerable freedom to borrow money for bribes and other extraordinary expenses.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, in the Habsburg Monarchy, an ambassador's dispatches were not intended only for the sovereign and his *Hofrat*. This composite polity – even its component parts were themselves composite<sup>4</sup> – could only function on the basis of continuous consultation. Thus the permanent committees of the provincial estates of the Austrian and Bohemian lands were polled for advice before decisions on Ottoman policy were made,<sup>5</sup> and

1 Ferdinand I (Archduke of Austria from 1519, Holy Roman Emperor 1556–1564) claimed the crown of Hungary in 1526, after his brother-in-law (Louis II Jagellio) had perished in the great Ottoman victory at Mohács. The Habsburg-Ottoman conflict finally ended with the Treaty of Požarevac in 1718.

2 I am grateful to Dr. Petritsch of the Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv for letting me read a copy of his dissertation. Full-scale Ottoman invasions came in 1526, 1529, 1532, 1540, and 1566.

3 Busbecq's finances are documented in HHSA, Turcica, I 12 Konvolut 1, f. 187–191, an Italian language summary for 28,000 Hungarian florins in receipts between 1556 and 1560, with corresponding expenses; and HHSA, Turcica, I 14 Konvolut 4, f. 178–183, a German-language summary for transfers on Busbecq's behalf by the Augsburg firm of Michael Manlich, for a total of 155,981 *cronen* (equal to 89,332 Hungarian florins) between 1554 and 1560. The latter account seems to include all sums from the former.

4 Austria was made up of the duchies of Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, and Tirol; the Bohemian crown lands (ruled by Ferdinand since 1526) included Bohemia proper, Moravia, Silesia, and Upper and Lower Lusatia. For Hungary and Croatia, Pálffy, 2009.

5 E.g., when the sultan demanded in August 1557 that the fortress of Szigetvár be razed, Ferdinand did not reply until June 1558; after multiple consultations, the answer was no: Tracy, 2013.

copies of the ambassador's missives were included as part of the documentation. The dispatches of Oghier Ghiselin de Busbecq, who served at the Porte from 1555 to 1562,<sup>6</sup> are often referred to in (for example) opinions that Ferdinand requested from the Council of Hungary in Posonia (modern Bratislava).<sup>7</sup> In the 1570s, Ambassador David Ungnad – a member of Styria's *Herrenstand* who served at the Porte from 1573 to 1578 – would send long circular letters directly to the Austrian estates, with the knowledge and permission of Emperor Maximilian II.<sup>8</sup> Busbecq, a native of Flanders, had no personal connections to Austria's leading families. What he did have was a gift for compressing complex issues into a few lines of terse, "Tacitean" Latin. Busbecq's "clarity" and "brevity" were appreciated by Ferdinand I, as they would later be appreciated by readers of his *Litterae Turcicae* (1581–1589) (Martels, 1989, 47–49, 112).<sup>9</sup>

Busbecq's tenure at the Porte was punctuated by crises, and by threats of war from Grand Vezir Rüstem Paşa (d. 1561). As he arrived in Istanbul in January 1555, Sultan Suleyman the Lawgiver (d. 1566) was en route home from a victorious campaign against his greatest foe, Shah Tahmasp I of Iran, and his ministers demanded that Ferdinand renounce his plans for extending Habsburg rule to the Principality of Transylvania, a surrender of his claims that Ferdinand was ultimately forced to make, although not until the fall of 1556. But from 1555 through 1558 the main focus of Ottoman complaints was the fortress of Szigetvár, whose garrison troops again and again raided Ottoman shipping along the vital Belgrade-to-Buda supply corridor (Martels, 1989, 149–196).<sup>10</sup> 1559 was dominated by civil war between Sultan Suleyman's two surviving sons, Bayezid and Selim. Bayezid was the older brother, and had support from the military establishment, but the Grand Vezir had in effect staked his career on the succession of Selim, the son of Hurrem (Roxelana), the concubine whom Suleyman had made his wife (Imber, 2002, 104–108).<sup>11</sup> In these circumstances, Rüstem Paşa thought it prudent to forestall a war in the west; thus in January 1559 he and Busbecq worked out the terms for a new peace treaty, to replace the Treaty of Edirne (1547–1555), which had officially expired a few years previously. Ferdinand sent back a confirmatory letter accepting the terms proposed, and giving Busbecq options for working out the details. But when officials at the Porte presented a sealed *sacculum* containing the sultan's confirmatory letter, Busbecq refused to forward it on to Vienna unless he was given an authenticated copy; this, he was told, was contrary to the custom (*consuetudo*) of the Ottoman court. In the end no agreement

6 From 1555 to 1557 Busbecq served jointly with his two predecessors, Antun Vrančić (Veransciacs Antal) and Ferenc Zay. See Martels, 1989.

7 E.g., Council of Hungary to Ferdinand, s.d., reacting to Busbecq's dispatch of 13 August 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 3, f. 34–36, and 10 November 1559, referring to a dispatch for which no date is given, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 3, f. 66–70.

8 Ungnad to the Stände of Styria etc., 1 December 1576, ARS, Deželni Stanovi 210, 2nd sub-folder. Ungnad's uncle, Hans Ungnad, had been *Landeshauptmann* of Styria.

9 Cfr. Ferdinand to Busbecq, 23 October 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 3, f. 60: "Tuam fidem ac diligentiam quae nobis in negotiis illis prudenter et accurate tractandis cumulate satisfacis clementer admodum laudamus et probamus."

10 Above, note 5.

11 Rüstem Paşa's wife, Mihrimah, was a full sister of the future Sultan Selim II (r. 1566–1574).

was struck.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Ferdinand launched in the fall a military strike against three important castleries west of the Tisza River that was by his lights unlawfully occupied by Transylvania.<sup>13</sup>

The negotiations for this year are summarized in a long dispatch dated November 30.<sup>14</sup> This document is well suited for examining an ambassador's initiatives, because it can be checked against Busbecq's correspondence for 1559, and also against the correspondence of Ferdinand's master-spy in Constantinople, Michael Černović.<sup>15</sup> I will look first at Busbecq's overall strategy in negotiating with Rūtem Paşa, then at some of his tactical decisions.

### BUSBECQ'S STRATEGY IN NEGOTIATING WITH RŪSTEM PAŞA

Despite Habsburg losses in Hungary, Ferdinand did not abandon hope of reversing Ottoman gains. Busbecq's general instructions were to seek a treaty for eight years,<sup>16</sup> along the lines of the treaty concluded in 1547. But Ferdinand made it clear he wished to preserve his freedom of action in regard to the eastern sector of what was called Upper Hungary. While he undertook to respect the territorial integrity of Transylvania, as per his promise in 1556, he explicitly reserved the right to use force if needed to assert his claim to the three castleries west of the Tisza, currently held by Transylvania.<sup>17</sup> The closest that Busbecq comes to enunciating a strategy or guiding principle for his negotiations with the Grand Vezir is a statement that fits neatly within this framework. During the later summer of 1559, when he was pressed to forward to Vienna a letter from the sultan whose contents he knew to differ from what he had been told, Busbecq says that he faced a difficult decision. One of the reasons he gives for deciding not to send on the letter was that "Your Majesty will thereby have more freedom to choose between peace and war."<sup>18</sup> His mandate was to seek a treaty, but not at any price.

In January 1559, when Rūstem Paşa proposed a peace that would be "perpetual", meaning that the Ottomans would have grounds for objecting to a Habsburg military buildup at any future time, Busbecq was put on the defensive. He countered by suggesting a peace for the lifetime of Ferdinand and of Suleyman (then 64 years old, and in ill

12 The terms of this failed treaty were not substantially different from the terms of the treaty that Busbecq concluded in 1562 with Rūstem Paşa's successor, 'Alī Paşa.

13 Munkachevo, Huszt, and Thokay. Ferdinand had to renounce his ambitions for the three towns, but parts of this region would later be conquered for the Habsburgs by Lazarus Schwendi, during the reign of Maximilian II.

14 HHSA, Turcica, I 14 3, f. 79–108.

15 Žontar, 1971. I have used this essay, although the chapter on Černović in Žontar, 1973 has some additional details.

16 Ferdinand to Vrančić, Zay, and Busbecq, 15 June 1556, *Monumenta Hungariae Historiae, Scriptores*, V, Letter: XIV, pp. 197–202. This letter is cited by Busbecq in his dispatch of 30 November 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 Konvolut 3 [hereafter abbreviated as 30 November 1559], f. 80.

17 Ferdinand to Busbecq, 3 October 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 Konvolut 3, f. 53–56, stressing that he had made this distinction in his confirmatory letter of April 29.

18 30 November 1559, f. 99.

health), but the Grand Vezir insisted that it be extended to their heirs and successors – in effect, a perpetual peace. So as “not to give offense,” Busbecq agreed. In a retroactive justification of why he had done so, he appealed to one of the options listed in Ferdinand’s confirmatory letter, in which no time limit for a proposed treaty was stated. In other words, he had not acted beyond his instructions.<sup>19</sup> Not wishing to leave things at this point, however, he took advantage of a visit by Murad Beg, the dragoman assigned to him by the Porte. Telling Murad Beg what he wanted Rüstem Paşa to hear, Busbecq made as if to boast of his influence in Vienna, saying that when he suggested a peace of six, seven or eight years, “Your Majesty had approved the longest period; and had I proposed a peace of 50 or 60 years, Your Majesty would have responded in the same way.” Invoking the style of the Ottoman court, in which decisions by the sultan were made once and for all, he noted that the letter of safe-conduct that was given to an ambassador en route to the Porte contained a “permission to depart” (*facultas discedendi*); even if the Porte did not allow an ambassador to leave whenever he wished, the *facultas discedendi* granted by his own sovereign was not thereby revoked. In the same way, Busbecq suggested, a peace once made by Ferdinand could easily be extended.<sup>20</sup> In the end, Busbecq’s interlocutors agreed to continue discussions on the basis of an eight-year term.<sup>21</sup>

The inclusion of “friends” was another sticking point. In January 1559, Busbecq tried without success to have both Spain and England included as friends of Emperor Ferdinand.<sup>22</sup> One may surmise that Rüstem Paşa did not insist on including the sultan’s allies either, because the issue does not come up in the correspondence between Busbecq and Ferdinand until June.<sup>23</sup> But Ferdinand’s spy, Michael Černović, knew by early February that the Porte had sent to France’s King Henri II a version of the treaty containing a clause in which both France and Transylvania were included as “friends” of the sultan.<sup>24</sup> In June, Busbecq was obliged to follow the sultan and his court to Asia Minor, to be nearer the scene of an impending battle between Suleyman’s two sons. When he was summoned for a divan in the Grand Vizier’s tent, Busbecq was given a red silk *sacculum* containing the sultan’s confirmatory letter, but he would not accept it without an authenticated copy. He suspected that the letter in the *sacculum* included clauses of which he had not been informed, regarding France and Venice as “friends” of the sultan: “For Murat Beg recently showed me copies of the two articles, having first sworn me to silence.”<sup>25</sup> Busbecq finally agreed to take the *sacculum* into his possession, after being told that he would receive a copy. When the copy came several days later, Busbecq and his translator found that it did not differ materially

19 Dispatch of 30 November 1559 HHSA, Turcica, I 14t 3, f. 80, referring to the letter cited above, and also to the letter of 29 April 1559, carried by Baldus (HHSA, Turcica, I 14 2, f. 43–47; f. 52–55, another copy).

20 30 November 1559, f. 81–81v. Busbecq says that he spoke “simplicissime” of these matters to Murad Beg.

21 Busbecq to Ferdinand, 21 June 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 2, f. 146–149.

22 Busbecq to Ferdinand, 10 February 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 1, f. 33–36v, here f. 35. Ferdinand’s nephew, King Philip II of Spain, had recently married England’s Queen Mary.

23 In the later summer of 1559, Busbecq was still hoping to include Spain, until word came that Spain would be preparing a war fleet for the following spring: 30 November 1559, f. 88.

24 Černović to Ferdinand, 11 February 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 1, f. 48–49. For details about Černović, from the Venetian branch of a Montenegrin noble family, see Žontar, 1973.

25 Busbecq to Ferdinand, 21 June 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 2, f. 146–149.

from the clauses shown him by Murad Beg, save that some things were said “obscurely or suspiciously.” In a letter to the divan, he asked for clauses concerning the sultan’s friends to be “changed altogether,” as Murad Beg had said could be done. When told that the clauses in question could not be altered, because it was the Ottoman custom (*consuetudo*) to include friends in treaties, Busbecq announced that he could not forward the *sacculum* to Vienna, since he had no instructions from Ferdinand about including France or Venice.<sup>26</sup> In a letter of 3 October, received by Busbecq shortly before he completed his long dispatch of 30 November, Ferdinand removed this obstacle to an agreement, saying he would observe friendship with France and Venice so long as they did not attack his dominions.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, the Ottomans had added Transylvania to the mix. Summoned to a meeting with the vezirs, Busbecq was told he must write a letter to Queen Isabella of Transylvania, promising friendship on Ferdinand’s behalf.<sup>28</sup> For the sultan had made a pronouncement: “It would be an infringement (*dedecus*) to our dignity if, while maintaining the bond of friendship with one who is powerful, we should leave a lesser friend in the lurch.” Busbecq says that this “unexpected” demand “disturbed me greatly” – probably<sup>29</sup> because he expected that Habsburg forces would soon be contesting Transylvania’s control of the three castleries west of the Tisza. Backed into a corner, he decided to ask for “that which I knew they would grant me most unwillingly,” that is, permission to depart for Vienna, so that he might carry the *sacculum* himself, instead of entrusting it to a lesser personage. Busbecq knew what the answer would be, because when he had on a previous occasion written the divan requesting his dismissal, the Viziers “kept my letters secret as best they could, lest word come to the common people (*vulgus*).” The point was that if the Porte was seen to be detaining an ambassador against his will, it could only mean that the vezirs were worried about a possible war.<sup>30</sup> This time too, Ottomans would not let him go; Busbecq thought that it was because if he carried the sultan’s letter himself it would be clear sign of his disapproval, meaning that peace was less likely.<sup>31</sup>

Murad Beg continued pressing for a compromise, so Busbecq listed three points in the sultan’s confirmatory letter (as he understood it) that he wanted changed. Murad Beg

26 30 November 1559, f. 85–87.

27 Ferdinand to Busbecq, 3 October 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 3, f. 53–56.

28 Isabella Jagellio, who died in September 1559, was the widow of Janós Szapolyai (d. 1539), who had claimed the crown of Hungary, and the mother of his posthumous son, Janós Sigismund Szapolyai, Prince of Transylvania (d. 1577).

29 According to the summary-of-negotiations dispatch, this conversation between Busbecq and the Viziers (30 November 1559, f. 87v) comes prior to the arrival in Vienna of Albert de Wijs (9 July 1559), who carried a copy of Ferdinand’s confirmatory letter (Busbecq had already received another copy sent via Venice), and gifts for the sultan and the Viziers. Busbecq himself advocated a strike against the three castleries: Busbecq to Archduke Maximilian, 13 August 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 3, f. 20–24. For how the news of this Habsburg adventure was received at the Porte: 30 November 1559, f. 94v–96.

30 Busbecq to Ferdinand, 19 November 1558, HHSA, Turcica, I 13 3, f. 201–205, here f. 202.

31 30 November 1559, f. 87v, 91; cfr. f. 93v, the vezirs maintain that a letter Busbecq himself carried back would be more favorable to Ferdinand’s cause, since there would in that case be a greater likelihood of war if Ferdinand rejected the treaty; and f. 103v, Rüstem Paşa is said to have commented in the divan that Busbecq’s requests for dismissal had become more urgent once he knew that King Henri II, that great foe of the Habsburgs, had been killed in a joust.

then brought back the Turkish text of a proposed addendum to the sultan's letter, together with a Latin translation. After having his interpreter stay up through the night to translate the Turkish text, Busbecq found it was "more tolerable" than he had expected, but he was still suspicious, and raised further points in another letter to the divan. At these new demands the Viziers reportedly laughed aloud. When Busbecq was asked to return the *sacculum*, so it could be deposited in the treasury (*hazna*), he complied.<sup>32</sup> But Murad Beg soon came back with another version of a proposed addendum to the sultan's confirmatory letter, and Busbecq found some changes that he liked.<sup>33</sup> This was, he says, the first letter that he would have been willing to send on to Vienna. The next day, after the revised addendum had been read aloud to the sultan at the divan, a *chiaus* brought Busbecq a new *sacculum*, said to contain both the original letter and the addendum that he had approved. But "certain men" had advised Busbecq that the Turks will tell an ambassador one thing, and write something else in the text. He decided to do as the Venetians were said to do, by prying the *sacculum* open at the bottom in such a way that it could be re-sewn without detection. In fact, the actual text was "quite different" from what he had been told. This was the point, noted above, at which Busbecq says he faced a decision, but the choice was clear. As he says, if he sent the *sacculum* on to Vienna, he would give the Ottomans reason to think Ferdinand was willing to accept whatever terms they might impose. If he delayed things by refusing to do so, Ferdinand would have more freedom to launch a military operation. In order to justify what he was doing, Busbecq again asked for an *exemplum* of the full text. Rüstem Paşa again responded "in public divan" that such was not the *consuetudo* of the Ottoman court.<sup>34</sup> Murad Beg tried one more time: he brought what he said was an *exemplum* of the sultan's letter, but Busbecq saw that it was in certain respects less favorable than some of the texts he had been shown previously. Instead of renewing his request for dismissal, he decided at this point "to keep silence." Murad Beg came back again on September 11, to demand the *sacculum*, which Busbecq now surrendered for a second time. At this Murad Beg had the doors to Busbecq's residence locked from the outside, whereupon the ambassador had them locked from the inside as well.<sup>35</sup> If Busbecq had leisure to compose his long missive of November 30, it was because he had little else to do.

## BUSBECQ'S TACTICAL INITIATIVES

It was a convention of Habsburg-Ottoman diplomacy that neither ruler would accept a *dedecus*, a public affront to his dignity.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, Busbecq sometimes acted as

32 30 November 1559, f. 91v–93v, f. 97.

33 Notably that Ferdinand would no longer have to make good on his tribute arrears (a total of 60,000 Hungarian florins) before peace could be concluded: 30 November 1559, f. 97v–98.

34 30 November 1559, f. 97v–100.

35 30 November 1559, f. 101v, 103v, 105; Martels, 1989, 253–254.

36 E.g., Busbecq's summary of negotiations that he and his colleagues conducted in 1555, Busbecq to Ferdinand, Vienna, 13 December 1555, HHSA, Turcica, I 12 1, f. 37v; with regard to the treaty made between Ferdinand and Isabella Jagellio of Transylvania, regarding a transfer of Transylvania to the

if his instructions from Vienna were not sufficiently cognizant of Ferdinand's *dignitas* as emperor and king. The draft treaty of January 1559 included a clause to the effect that "Hamza Beg" should be removed from office, as a punishment for having seized the Habsburg fortress town of Tata during a period of truce the previous year.<sup>37</sup> In his confirmatory letter of 29 April, Ferdinand deleted the article about Hamza Beg, which had been recommended by the Council of Hungary, on the grounds that Hamza Beg might cause even more trouble if he learned the Habsburgs were to blame for his transfer to a lesser post. Yet in his dispatch of November 30, Busbecq says that he knew he could not get his interlocutors to agree that Hamza Beg deserved execution, as the Council of Hungary had wanted, and so he obtained agreement instead for his removal from office, "which they call *mansil*," knowing that such "lighter penalties" were deemed "ignominious" by the Ottomans.<sup>38</sup> But if Busbecq reinstated a clause that Ferdinand wanted removed, he framed things in such a way as to suggest that Ferdinand had accepted and passed on the Council of Hungary's recommendation. Thus the Council (sure to receive a copy of this dispatch) would have the satisfaction of thinking its recommendation had been taken seriously, and Ferdinand would be spared (even if against his will) the indignity of seeming to tolerate Hamza Beg's offense.

Dignity was measured also in giving gifts. Ferdinand was two years behind in sending the 30,000 Hungarian florins that he had to pay annually for the right to hold his lands in Hungary.<sup>39</sup> To keep up appearances, the emissary that carried his letter of April 29 also brought elaborate clocks and handsome silver cups for the sultan and the vezirs. Since the presentation was to be made "with the whole army looking on," Busbecq judged that the gifts marked out for the sultan were not sufficient. As two vezirs were not to be present, he added their gifts to those allotted for the sultan. To draw Rüstem Paşa into his plan, he suggested having Murad Beg judge whether the two added cups were "worthy" of the sultan, and Murad Beg found that they were. Rüstem Paşa insisted that the allocation of gifts for His Magnificence be attributed to Ferdinand himself, not to his ambassador. He also thought that some silk vests ought to be added to the gifts for the sultan, "for the better satisfaction, he said, of the malignant multitude." Busbecq thought that the silver cups and the clocks would make "a very satisfying gift," so that vests were "an unnecessary expense."<sup>40</sup> But his decision about the cups was the kind of small intervention by which an ambassador prevented relations between the two powers from becoming more tense.

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Habsburgs in return for suitable compensation, the ambassadors had expressed the pious hope that "His Magnificence [the sultan] would make allowance for the contract that has been made, and not wish it to be revoked, to the great shame (*dedecus*) of Your Majesty." Cfr., note 34 above, Suleyman is said to believe that it would be a *dedecus* for him to abandon his "lesser friend" (Transylvania) in order to make peace with Ferdinand.

37 Busbecq to Ferdinand, 10 February 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 1, f. 33–36v, article 18. On the taking of Tata, Ferdinand to Busbecq, 27 June 1558, HHSA, Turcica, I 13 3, f. 135–141, here f. 137. The Hamza Beg in question could be Hamza Beg Biharovi, who served as sançakbeg of Bosnia from 1557 to 1561.

38 Ferdinand to Busbecq, 29 April 1559, HHSA, Turcica, I 14 2, f. 48–51; 30 November 1559, f. 79–79v.

39 Above, note 33.

40 30 November 1559, f. 88–88v.



There was, finally, the question of how to deal with Rüstem Paşa. It was customary for the Grand Vezir to be rewarded for his pains by European interlocutors (Tracy, 2010). When Ferdinand's confirmatory letter was brought to the Porte, Busbecq found that Rüstem Paşa's disposition improved when he told him he would receive a handsome gift when peace was concluded. In their discussion about the allocation of silver cups, he suggested that the Grand Vezir's cup might appropriately contain an added gift of 3,000 or 4,000 Hungarian florins; although no such sum had been sent from Vienna, Busbecq had in mind taking out a loan to raise the money, and his credit in Pera would have permitted him to do so. But Rüstem Paşa was under scrutiny because of his personal stake in the struggle between the sultan's two sons, and he insisted, even when asked a second time, that he wanted "not so much as an obol" in his cup.<sup>41</sup> The other vezirs were not so scrupulous, and Vienna had sent smaller sums for inclusion in their gift-cups. But here too Busbecq made a choice. 'Ali Paşa Semiz, the second vezir, had previously served as *paşa* of Buda. When Busbecq called on him in December 1554, 'Ali Paşa presented himself as a man of peace surrounded by subordinates eager for combat.<sup>42</sup> Now, at the Porte, there were signs that 'Ali Paşa was more disposed to an agreement than the Grand Vezir was. One contentious issue was the extraction of taxes from border villages: should traditional obligations to be respected, as the Habsburgs demanded, or did the Ottomans have the sole right to collect taxes in any areas their troops controlled? Rüstem Paşa upheld the Ottoman view, but 'Ali Paşa said that for the sake of peace he could accept the Habsburg position.<sup>43</sup> On another occasion, when Busbecq brought up Ottoman forts built during a time of truce, Rüstem Paşa wanted to argue, but 'Ali Paşa held him back, saying that such matters could be settled later, when boundaries were negotiated.<sup>44</sup> Thus when the gift-cups were being prepared for the vezirs, Busbecq arranged that while other vezirs got 400 Hungarian florins in their cups, 'Ali Paşa got 1,000. Rüstem Paşa was angry when he learned that Busbecq had made what he deemed an invidious distinction among the vezirs.<sup>45</sup> But Busbecq was evidently looking to the future. When Rüstem Paşa died in 1561 and 'Ali Paşa succeeded him, there was an immediate improvement in the tone of conversations between the ambassador and the Grand Vezir, leading eventually to the treaty of peace that Busbecq brought back to Vienna in 1562.<sup>46</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Busbecq was of course not just presenting a narrative of events, he was also presenting himself as a skilled negotiator. That he overstated his initiative would have been clear to Ferdinand and his *Hofrat*, since they were also receiving Černović's reports. Though

41 30 November 1559, f. 81, 88, 88v.

42 Busbecq to Ferdinand, Buda, 12 December 1554, HHSA, Turcica, I 11 3, f. 201-204.

43 30 November 1559, f. 82.

44 30 November 1559, f. 83v.

45 30 November 1559, f. 100.

46 See the contrast that Busbecq later makes between Rüstem Paşa and 'Ali Paşa in his *Litterae Turcicae*, 317–327.

Busbecq does not name him, it was Černović who suggested prying open the *sacculum* containing the sultan's confirmatory letter, pried it open, and translated the Turkish documents.<sup>47</sup> Without disclosing that he too was working on Ferdinand's behalf, Černović visited Busbecq regularly (Martels, 1989, 220), and one suspects that Buesbecq's first inkling that France was included in the Turkish version of the treaty came from Černović, not from Murad Beg. One might also argue that Busbecq fails to give his Ottoman interlocutors due credit for the subtlety of their initiatives. For example, when Rüstem Paşa tells Busbecq that this or that cannot be done because Ottoman *consuetudo* forbids it, it looks as if he is turning against the Habsburgs an argument that Ferdinand's diplomats had used time and again.<sup>48</sup> Still, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Busbecq was, in a difficult situation, a resourceful and effective defender of his sovereign's dignity.

He also impressed Ferdinand (and no doubt others) with the way in which he presented things; he was not the only Habsburg ambassador to write in an elegant classical Latin,<sup>49</sup> but I at least have not found the same terseness of description in any of his colleagues. Yet not all members of the ruling elite were comfortable with Latin: Busbecq's dispatches had to be translated into German for the convenience of the *Hofrat*.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Tacitean brevity was not the preferred idiom of the day for all readers. The above-mentioned David Ungnad was more a man of his time and place, both in the pleonasm of his German prose, and in the effusive Lutheran piety that often breaks through.<sup>51</sup> Busbecq, by contrast, never lets a word slip that might indicate his personal religious preference.<sup>52</sup> Upon his return to Vienna he was given an honorable post as tutor to the emperor's grandsons, but he was not called upon to join in the councils of state. Thus if the brilliant Latinist used his dispatches to make a career, it would not be a brilliant career.

47 Martels, 1989, 248, citing a letter from Černović to Ferdinand, dated early August 1559.

48 E.g., Ferdinand's instructions for Vrančić, Zay, and Busbecq, 14 November 1555, HHSA, Turcica I 12 t 1, f. 153-161, here f. 158: Ferdinand cannot renounce his claim to Transylvania all at once, because it is the *consuetudo* of Christian princes to consult with their estates on such matters.

49 Antun Vrančić was his peer in this respect.

50 By contrast, the opinions of the Council of Hungary are always written in an elegant classical Latin, not doubt by clerical members of the council, like Nicholas Olah or (later) Antun Vrančić.

51 Above, note 11. An erstwhile rector of the University of Wittenberg, Ungnad is said to have spoken Latin and Greek as well as six vernacular languages, but he wrote his dispatches in German. Following his return to Vienna he joined the Hofkriegsrat, of which he was president from 1583 to 1605.

52 This is true both of his dispatches and his later published writings.

AMBASADOR KOT TRETJA STRANKA:  
BUSBECQOV POVZETEK POGAJANJ ZA LETO 1559

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**POVZETEK**

*V času svojega mandata je Oghier Ghiselin de Busbecq kot ambasador cesarja Ferdinanda I. na Visoki porti (1555-1562) pokazal, kako bi lahko ambasador rezident deloval kot tretja stranka, in sicer s prilagajanjem navodil (ki jih je dobil od oddaljenega vladarja) razmeram, ki so ga obdajale. Pričujoča razprava obravnava dolg Busbecqov povzetek pogajanj enega leta (1559), da bi pokazala, kako je Busbecq včasih ignoriral in prezrl določene direktive Ferdinanda in njegovega Hofrata, da bi s tem dosegel višje cilje svojega vladarja.*

*Ključne besede: Oghier Ghiselin de Busbecq, cesar Ferdinand I., Habsburška monarhija, sultan Sulejman Zakonodajalec, Grand Vezir Rustem Paša*

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