



Grand Commandery "King Ferdinand I" of the Knights Templar of Romania

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Iancu Hunyadi The defender of Christianity Part 3

III. Iancu Hunyadi "The Athlete of Christ"

Regarding an imminent attack, envoys from Ragusa (Dubrovnik, Croatia) were the first to inform Hungarian leaders of the preparations that Muhammad II the Conqueror (1551-1581) had made for an invasion against Hungary. (Teke 1980, 206.) In a letter to Hunyadi, which he called the "Maccabeus of our time," (see note 3) the papal legate, Cardinal Juan Carvajal wrote clearly and with regret that the chances of Iancu receiving military aid from the West against the Ottomans are insignificant. (Mureșanu 2001, 144) The actions of the Ottomans began with campaigns to plunder the southern Transylvanian parts at the end of 1455. (*Ibidem* 191)

Also, before this foreshadowing conflict, John of Capistrano (see note 4), a Franciscan monk and papal inquisitor, began preaching an anti-Ottoman crusade in Hungary in February 1456. (Teke 1980, 208) The diet ordered the mobilization of forces. armed in April, but most of the barons did not give importance to this order and continued to carry on their old customs,

namely to fight among themselves. (*Ibidem*) Before leaving Transylvania against the Ottomans, Hunyadi had to face a local rebellion in Făgăraș. (Mureșanu 2001, 191) Also, at the same time, he supported Vlad Țepeș, who sat at his court with his cousin Ștefan cel Mare, in order to be enthroned as lord of Wallachia, a successful approach. (Pop and Bolovan 2003, 113)

Out of fear, King Ladislaus V left Hungary for Vienna in May 1556 (Mureșanu 2001, 190), and Iancu hired 5,000 mercenaries (Hungarians, Wallachians, Czechs and Poles) and sent them to Belgrade, which is the main center of defense of the southern borders of Hungary. (Pop and Thomas 2005, 296) Ottoman forces marched through Serbia and approached Belgrade in June. (Babinger 1978, 139) In defense of Belgrade and in support of the mercenaries sent by Iancu, thousands of peasants from neighboring areas began to gather. The idea of their struggle to defend Christians in the form of a true "Crusade" was a consequence of the fiery speeches given by the monk John of Capistrano. The peasant army gathered near the Belgrade Fortress in the first days of July. (Teke 1980, 209).

The Ottoman siege of Belgrade, personally led by Sultan Muhammad II, began with the bombing of the walls on July 4. (Mureșanu 2001, 209) Huniade will bring on the Danube a flotilla of about 200 ships (*Ibidem*, 195) which will effectively destroy the Ottoman ships on July 14. (*Ibidem*) This triumph of Iancu prevented the Ottomans from finalizing the plan to conquer Belgrade and allowed the Romanian armies to enter the fortress. (Babinger 1978, 197) The Ottomans will begin a general assault on July 21. (Muresanu 2001, 195) With the help of the "crusaders" who were constantly arriving at the fortress, Huniade repulsed the fierce attacks of the Ottomans and entered their camp on July 22. (Stavrianos, 2000, 61-62) Although wounded during the fighting, Muhammad II decided to try to resist but because of the ferocity with which the Christians fought but also their good coordination by Iancu had to admit defeated and withdraw. (Muresanu 2001, 197)

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Grand Commander in the Near Past