

# Rebels and Ottomans—The Habsburg Monarchy Makes Peace (1606)

## Abstract

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War and peace between the Ottoman sultans and the Holy Roman emperors was a major strand of Imperial history from the Ottomans' first invasion of Hungary in 1526 to their decisive defeat at Imperial hands in Vienna in 1683. In contested Hungary, there were alternating periods of serious campaigning (1526–47, 1593–1606, 1663–83) and long, negotiated truces (1547–93, 1606–63). In its early phase, this contest played a significant role in the Protestant Reformation, for it provided the Protestant princes with a tactic that became a policy: no taxes without concessions on religion. During the next decades, some saw the Ottoman threat as a more or less welcome Habsburg problem, others as a threat to the Empire. Financial and symbolic goods played an important role in this rhythm. For example, the peace of 1547, which was renewed in 1562 and 1590, contained passages in which the Holy Roman emperor acknowledged the Ottoman overlordship of Hungary and agreed to pay the sultans 30,000 Venetian ducats per year in tribute.

Between major campaigns, the respective positions were held by two heavily fortified systems of defense. On the Habsburg side, the defensive line was called “the military frontier” and was manned by Croats, Vlachs, and Serbs who were both free farmers and resident warriors. Trading across the frontier was a reality, but so were raids in strength, which sometimes presaged major outbreaks of all-out war. One such incident occurred in 1592, when Emperor Rudolph II sent a large force to the front and helped spark the so-called Long War. The war broke out at a favorable time, at the height of the Imperial Diet's willingness—a fruit of the Imperial coexistence—to support the Imperial war effort in Hungary far more generously than the estates had done in the past. The Imperial forces regained Esztergom/Gran, the seat of the Catholic primate, but lost Pest and were beaten badly by the Ottomans. As in the Thirty Years War, the victories scored by both sides in the Long War led to little permanent advantage, and by 1606 both sides were ready for peace. Exhausted by the war, Rudolph's family united against him and forced him to entrust his younger brother, Archduke Matthias (d. 1619), with peace negotiations. In 1606, Matthias signed the Peace of Vienna (A) with Prince István Bocskay (1557–1606) of Transylvania. His hand completely forced, Rudolph then concluded peace with István's protector, Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–1617) on November 11, 1606 (B). The latter act guaranteed the territorial status quo; the Holy Roman emperor was freed from the duty to pay tribute after submitting a single payment of 200,000 florins to the sultan; for the first time, the sultan recognized the emperor as a sovereign of the same rank; and the Hungarian villagers and nobles gained, at least on paper, guarantees of self-taxation and tax privileges.

## Source

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### A) The Peace of Vienna with the Prince of Transylvania (June 23, 1606)

We, Matthias, by the grace of God Archduke of Austria, remind everyone by means of this treaty to what He is obliged. [...] We do this, because the Holy Imperial and Royal Majesty, Our lord and Our most honored brother, has graciously consented to Our mediation and granted Us full powers to pacify the disorders and rebellions that have erupted in the famous kingdom of Hungary. [...] Because, however, there continued to be some remaining difficulties, We agreed that those problems remaining from the earlier negotiations should be taken up once more. They should be negotiated and settled in a treaty conducive to the common good of the Christian community and for the sake of peace, also to preserve this kingdom. This is done so that the kingdom will not be consumed by internal strife, and that such a

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great spilling of Christian blood may be avoided. Thereby the neighboring kingdoms and provinces, too, will finally be liberated from the constant attacks, and they, together with the kingdom of Hungary, can breathe freely once again.

1. Concerning the state of religion, [...] it is stipulated [that the emperor] shall nowhere and in no way disturb, nor permit to be disturbed, the following in their religion and confession: all individual states and estates within the kingdom of Hungary, including the magnates and nobles, free cities and royal market communities, and the Hungarian troops in the kingdom's border zones. All of these states and estates are permitted free practice and pursuit of their religion, yet without prejudice to the Roman Catholic religion, so that the clergy and the churches and chapels of the Roman Catholics shall remain undisturbed and free, and whatever was taken by either side during the time of troubles shall be restored to them.

2. The conclusion of the previous treaty is confirmed, namely, that peace and reconciliation shall be made simultaneously with the Hungarians and with the Ottomans.

3. The royal governor<sup>[1]</sup> shall, as custom prescribes, be elected at the next sitting of parliament. His Imperial and Royal Majesty cannot reside in Hungary or in a neighboring land, because of his various obligations to Christendom, and it should not be necessary for the kingdom's inhabitants to travel to the more distant places where His Majesty does reside, and, where, furthermore, His Majesty cannot always have Hungarian councilors by his side. It is therefore decreed and established, that His Majesty [...] shall have full power and authority in the kingdom's affairs via the Governor and the Hungarian councilors, just as if His Imperial and Royal Majesty were present in person. This authority covers the holding of audiences, rights of nomination, judgment, legislation, negotiation, and command in all things which may be regarded as necessary to the preservation of the kingdom of Hungary.

4. *[When peace returns the royal crown shall be returned to Bratislava/ Pressburg.]*

5. *[The treasurer, who administers the royal incomes, must be Hungarian and a layman.]*

6. Lest the Holy Imperial and Royal Majesty's rights be in any way diminished, it remains in his authority and power to select whatever bishops He wants. Yet none shall be allowed in His council unless they possess episcopal sees or other episcopal rights. His Imperial and Royal Majesty will assure in a friendly manner that in the future, as in the past, among those who are worthy, the ones who descend from eminent families shall be preferred to others.

[...]

8. The Hungarians do not wish that the Jesuits should be allowed to reside or own property in the kingdom of Hungary. His Majesty nevertheless maintains His royal rights.

9. and 10. The Holy Imperial and Royal Majesty shall staff Hungary and the subsidiary realms—Slavonia, Croatia, and Dalmatia—plus any affiliated lands with native Hungarians. He will also appoint qualified Hungarians and persons from the Hungarian lands to the kingdom's lesser offices, to the military commands on the borders and diplomatic posts, according to proposals from the Hungarian council and without regard to religion. If, however, His Imperial and Royal Majesty thinks it good, He will appoint at His own discretion two qualified foreigners from the neighboring provinces to border commands.

11. Plaintiffs may seek redress as the law allows, and no one shall be punished who has not been properly cited before a court and prosecuted.

Concerning the person and demands of Sir Bocskay:<sup>[2]</sup>

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He shall possess Transylvania and the parts of Hungary formerly possessed by Sigmund Bathory,<sup>[3]</sup> plus Castle Tokay with all of its furnishings, together with the entire Comitats of Ugocsa and Bereg and Castle Szatmar with its county [*Comitat*]. [...] In order that this all be enforced more effectively and every danger of mistrust in the hearts of Sir Bocskay's supporters be completely assuaged, so that this treaty will last longer, the Holy Imperial and Royal Majesty will issue to him a public certificate, together with the promise to honor it, and it shall be guaranteed by the kingdom of Bohemia, the archduchy of Austria, the margraviate of Moravia, the duchy of Silesia, and the most illustrious Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, together with the duchy of Styria.<sup>[4]</sup> [*For their part, the Hungarian estates shall issue to their neighbors a letter of assurance.*]

If an honorable peace cannot be concluded with the Ottomans, and if the Ottomans shall insist on terms and demands detrimental, dangerous, and harmful to the kingdom of Hungary and its neighboring provinces, [the Hungarian estates] will join forces with His Imperial and Royal Majesty against [the sultan] as the common foe of the Christian name and homeland, according to the kingdom's laws, and they shall do so with zeal, avoiding all excuses, and witnessing their loyalty.

Source of German translation from the Latin original: Bernd Roeck, ed., *Gegenreformation und Dreißigjähriger Krieg 1555–1648*. Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung, edited by Rainer A. Müller, Volume 4. Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1996, pp. 121–27.

Translation from German to English: Thomas A. Brady Jr.

## **B) The Truce of Zsitvatörök with the Ottoman Sultan (November 11, 1606)**

We for ourselves, Our heirs, and Our successors, announce and proclaim with this letter to all who have a need to know, that a twenty-year Peace has been agreed to, made, and decided between Us, on the one side, and the most illustrious and mighty prince, Sultan Ahmed, Ottoman emperor and ruler of Asia and Greece, on the other, through commissioners deputed for this purpose with plenipotentiary powers.

1. That both of the embassies next sent by both emperors shall be accepted as sons are by fathers,<sup>[5]</sup> and that this shall begin with the present embassies.
2. That in all missives, letters, and visits they will conduct themselves in a friendly manner, and that each shall name the other "emperor," not "king."
3. That the Tatars and other nations shall be included in this Peace.
4. That the Peace shall be kept everywhere between the two emperors.
5. [*Forbids raiding.*]
6. No fortress or castle shall be attacked or captured, either secretly or openly. All that the Peace of Vienna allots to Sir Bocskay shall remain his.
7. [*Regulates the exchange of prisoners.*]
8. The commander at Raab and the Pasha at Ofen (to whom the other pashas are subordinate), along with the commanders on this and on the other side of the Danube and the Ban [Governor] of Croatia shall avoid all provocations, demonstrations, and agitations along the border, and they shall have the authority to put down the same. When an important issue arises, which cannot be settled there, it shall be referred to each of the emperors.
9. The old fortresses and castles may be rebuilt and refortified, but no new ones may be erected.

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10. An ambassador shall be sent with gifts by Us to the Ottoman emperor, and the Serdan Murad Pasha shall in return send an embassy with gifts to His Princely grace, Archduke Matthias. When Our envoys arrive at Constantinople, the Ottoman emperor shall send an ambassador with the customary gifts to Prague to ratify the Truce.

11. His Imperial Majesty's envoy to Constantinople shall bring a gift in the sum of 200,000 florins, to be paid only this once and never again.[6]

12. This Peace shall endure for twenty years, beginning on January 1, 1607. After three years, each emperor shall send his envoys to the other with gifts.

13. The fortress of Vacz/Waitzen may be rebuilt but not expanded, and it shall remain in Our hands.[7]

14. When Our embassy arrives at Constantinople, they shall be free to ask of the Ottoman emperor what they will.

15. [*Regulates issues of territory, including the status of nobles in villages captured by the Ottomans and the payment of taxes and tributes.*] And if nobles live in the villages or have houses there, they shall not be subject or owe service, but their persons, land, and houses shall be free. And those who cannot render payments to their King, shall not be obliged to render them to the Ottomans.

And the Ottomans may not come to the villages in person but shall request their tributes through the local judges. When the judges do not render the payments as obliged, their commanders or regular authorities shall be written to and asked to see that the agreement is obeyed. If nothing is achieved in this way, the Ottomans may come into the villages and demand payment. The Hungarians may do the same.

## NOTES

[1] In German called "the Palatin"—trans.

[2] István (Stephan) Bocskay (1557-1606), a Hungarian noble (briefly prince of Transylvania), who in 1604-06 led an anti-Habsburg uprising (in alliance with the sultan) in Royal Hungary (now eastern Slovakia)—trans.

[3] István (Stephan) Báthory (1533-86), Hungarian nobleman, prince of Transylvania (1571) and king of Poland (1576)—trans.

[4] Archduke Ferdinand (1578-1637), later (Ferdinand II, r. 1619-37) Holy Roman emperor—trans.

[5] Meaning uncertain, but this is what the text, which derives from the Latin original (there is also a Turkish original) seems to say—trans.

[6] An annual tribute had been stipulated by the peace signed between King Ferdinand of Hungary and Sultan Suleiman I in 1533—trans.

[7] Vacz/Waitzen, a strategically important fortress, lay above Pest on the Danube's left bank—trans.

Source of German text: Karl Nehring, *Adam Freiherrn zu Herbersteins Gesandtschaftsreise nach Konstantinopel. Ein Beitrag zum Frieden von Zsitvatorok* (1606). Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983 (Südösteuropäische Arbeiten 78), pp. 150–55; reprinted in Bernd Roeck, ed., *Gegenreformation und Dreißigjähriger Krieg 1555–1648*. Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung, edited by Rainer A. Müller, Volume 4. Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1996, pp. 129–31.

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