

***The British and Irish volunteers' perception of the Ottoman
and Christian armies during the Great Turkish War
in Hungary (1683-1699)***

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During the Great Turkish War (1683-1699) a great number of foreign volunteers from all parts of Europe flocked to the Hungarian theatre of war in order to participate in the struggle against the Ottomans. Later in their lives many of these foreign volunteers became successful and widely-known generals, like the Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663-1736) or the French marshal of Louis XIV, Louis Hector de Villars (1653-1734). Throughout the war thousands of these foreign volunteers were present in the field, and, arguably, the British and Irish constituted one of the largest and possibly the most prominent group among them. It is hard to tell exactly how many British and Irish volunteers took part in the war. We do not have any information either hints about their numbers in 1683 and 1684, but from 1685 on, the picture becomes clearer. Their most famous and distinguished engagement was at the siege of Buda in 1686, in the course of which about 150-200 English, Irish and Scottish men were active¹, while similar numbers might have been present in Hungary during the next campaign. The torrents of volunteers suddenly stopped as the war in the West had reignited and William, Prince of Orange invaded the British Isles in 1688. As a result of these impactful events in the West, the activity of the British and Irish soldiery in Hungary significantly decreased.

In case of the British and Irish, we can clearly discern their paramount motive for travelling to Hungary. Obviously, everybody had their own personal reasons to risk their lives in a distant war, in a faraway country. For many, seeking an adventure, the gaining of personal glory or other aspects of self-improvement were important goals, but it is prevalent that nearly all of them strived to gather valuable military experience which, arm-in-arm with the fame acquired on the battlefields of Hungary, would help to boost their careers at home in the English, Scottish or Irish armies. Unfortunately, experience was hard to come by in the 1680s. Between 1683 and 1688 the war against the Turks was the only major and long-lasting military engagement in Europe which could offer an attractive opportunity for young, inexperienced noblemen and army officers to learn the art of war. The king himself played an important role in motivating his subjects to go to Hungary. James II, who reigned from 1685 to 1688, indulged in military affairs and desired his English army to be as ex-

¹ The order of mention of the nationalities represents their importance and numerosity in the field, since after the English the Irish soldiers were the most significant, while the Scottish volunteers' number was surprisingly low during the given period.

perienced, fit and ready for combat as it was possible. In order to achieve this goal, the king and his commanding generals actively encouraged the engineers, officers and soldiers of the English army to participate in the war. They also readily accepted the individual requests of nobles and commoners for passes to go to Hungary. The king was not reluctant to send to war even his own illegitimate son, the then 15-year-old James Fitz-James (1670-1734), who later became known as 1st Duke of Berwick and a renowned general of the French army.²

During these bloody and merciless encounters in Hungary, the English, Irish and Scottish volunteers had an abundance of opportunity to learn and observe the combat effectiveness and methods of warfare of the Ottoman and Christian armies. Contrary to many contemporary and modern-day beliefs about the good-for-nothing character of the foreign volunteers, the English, Irish and Scottish actively participated in the campaigns and took part in nearly every military operation, including highly dangerous hand-to-hand combat. During the course of these campaigns they spent most if not every minute of their time in the ranks of the imperial army that is in the army of the emperor, Leopold I (r. 1658-1705). Moreover, they were in daily contact with the emperor's chief commander and other high-ranking generals. In addition to discussing the progress of the campaign, the tactics and strategies with each other, they seized the opportunity to discourse about these exact same things for example with Charles V, Duke of Lorraine (1643-1690) or the Irish born imperial general Francis Taaffe (1639-1704), thereby learning the art of war from the chief commanders themselves.³ Unfortunately, only a fraction of these men, as we currently know it, left behind written testimonies of what they had seen and experienced in Hungary. Nevertheless, it still represents a copious amount of material compared to the number of testimonies written by other nations' volunteers.

For the analysis of the volunteers' perception of the opposing armies, I have made use of both published and unpublished sources produced by the volunteers. Most of them contained zero to none information about this question, therefore, for the sake of clarity and brevity, only those are going to be mentioned which were of any importance to our topic. Unfortunately, of the several hundred only a few volunteers' testimonies contained straightforward and unequivocal information about their opinions. I purposely avoided to draw assumptions founded on events they were simply part of, since, for example, seeing the Turks defeated all the time does not necessarily mean picking up negative notions like that the entire Ottoman army and war machinery was inferior to that of the Christian in all aspects. In order to avoid drawing false conclusions and creating vague and most of the time unverifiable theories about their personal perceptions, I have only served with unambiguous and direct statements.

The volunteers certainly have been under the influence of the imperial generals and officers they served with, but, as we are going to see, they dared to differ and to have disparate views, and I assumed that their impressions of the opposing armies are mostly, if not completely, based on their personal battlefield experiences. Since the imperial troops fought alongside various auxiliary forces from the Holy Roman Empire, it is essential to clarify

² For an overview and more info about his life see Petrie, *The Marshal Duke of Berwick*; Handley, *Fitzjames, James, duke of Berwick upon Tweed*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB) Accessed April 16, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9610>

³ Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (BRBML), Osborn b174, 43.

that in case of their statements, which will be shortly put under scrutiny, the volunteers did not differentiate between the diverse bodies of the Christian army and treated them as a whole, united force as they expressed their views. They tend to describe the Habsburg troops and the Empire's regiments simply as "Germans", but this is not entirely accurate if we consider the fact that a lesser portion of the imperial regiments was consisted of other nationalities. It is also important to note that the volunteers formed their opinions by comparing the imperial army to the Ottomans. They might have come to different conclusions if they were to observe the imperial army against the French.

Volunteers of note

The first volunteer of importance, in chronological order, was an English captain named John Talbot who arrived in Hungary in 1685 from the Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg (Braunschweig-Lüneburg, or Hannover as it is generally known). He was an experienced and battle-hardened soldier who, previous to his Hanoverian employment, served in the army of William, Prince of Orange (1672-1702). In this capacity, Talbot fought in the Dutch War (1672-1678) doing "*many gallant actions before Maastricht and other places*". Only later on out of necessity he took up service in the armed forces of the Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg and became a commander of a company.⁴ In 1685, as assistance to the emperor's struggle against the Turks, 10.000 Hanoverian troops were sent to Hungary by their Duke Ernest Augustus (1679-1698).⁵ We do not know whether Talbot's company was designated to march with the rest of the army into Hungary because he never mentions the Hanoverian forces in his letters, neither his own company nor commanding duties for that matter. It is unclear in what condition and under what circumstances Talbot took part in the operations, but most likely he was part of the Hanoverian auxiliary force. In regard to the next year's campaign, although the highly esteemed Brunswick-Lüneburg troops stayed at home, John Talbot himself returned and fought bravely at the siege of Buda, this time as a volunteer.⁶

Captain Talbot's ultimate goal was, which somehow must have corresponded with his volunteering against the Turks, that after years of service in foreign armies finally to return home and receive a commission in the English army.⁷ We do not know anything about his previous connections to Bevil Skelton (1641-1696) who was ambassador extraordinary at The Hague from March 1685 until October 1686⁸, but John Talbot frequently exchanged letters with him.⁹ He sent numerous battlefield reports to the aforementioned diplomat concerning the siege of Érsekújvár (nowadays Nové Zámky) and the battle of Tát in 1685. Unfortunately, only two of his letters survived. In 1686 Skelton was relocated to Paris as an

⁴ The British Library (BL), Additional Manuscripts (Add MS) 41812, fol. 176v.

⁵ Károlyi, *Buda és Pest visszavívása 1686-ban*, 78.

⁶ Only to be killed two days after his arrival during the first general assault on the 13th July 1686. See BL, Add MS 41842, fol. 28v.

⁷ BL, Add MS 41840 fol. 116r. 20th August 1685. From the camp by Gomorha. Talbot's letter to Skelton; BL, Add MS 41812, fol. 176v, 202r. 18/28th August and 2/12th September 1685. Official diplomatic reports of Bevil Skelton from The Hague to Charles Middleton, Secretary of State.

⁸ Bell, *A handlist of British diplomatic representatives*, 206.

⁹ His letters can be found, accordingly, among the official reports, various diplomatic papers and many other types of documents related to the mission of Bevil Skelton at The Hague.

voy extraordinary to Louis XIV's court, and Talbot must have given up hope to enlist in England since we have no more letters of his pen either hints about their possible existence, which might also have something to do with his early death during the siege of Buda.

The next soldier of relevance to our topic is called Jacob Richards (c. 1660-1701) who is well-known among modern-day historians for his published and widely-used diary about the siege of Buda in 1686. He was a young commissioned engineer of the English army who was sent to Hungary by his king James II to "... *serve in the said army in order to his improvement for his Majesty's future service.*"¹⁰ He was ordered to lead a scrupulous diary and to note down everything he observes and experiences abroad, most importantly "... *the marching and countermarching, and in the besieging of any town to observe their making approaches, mines, batteries, lines of circumvallation and contravallation, the height and thickness of their parapets and breadth of the grafts...* etc."¹¹ Luckily, Jacob Richards did exactly that and produced a series of diaries about his travels and engagements he had witnessed and been part of. Upon his arrival at Vienna he was accepted into the imperial army's engineer corps for the duration of the campaign and was regularly given tasks by his superiors during the siege.¹² The journal, as said before, was published in 1687 and it mostly corresponds with the surviving manuscripts of the diary. I have consulted both the published version and all three manuscripts of the diary, but preferred to use and cite the original manuscript which can be found in the Stowe Collection in The British Library.¹³

The other volunteer who was present under the walls of Buda was William Stewart, the first Viscount of Mountjoy (1650-1692). He was an educated Irish peer of Scottish origins who had both scientific and military interests. In addition to his colonelcy of a regiment, in 1684 he became Master General of the Ordnance of the king's Irish forces which meant that he was responsible for the condition of the fortresses, the storage facilities, the engineer corps, the armament, the train of artillery etc. in Ireland. Like Jacob Richards, he had no previous battlefield experience prior to his arrival in Hungary. He was already in his mid-thirties when he decided to fight as a volunteer against the Turks and perceived the travelling and the campaign as an excellent opportunity to gather experience and knowledge about nearly everything. As Mountjoy and his retinue passed through Nürnberg towards Hungary, he observed and reported to the Dublin Philosophical Society, whose he was the president for a brief period of time, the "... *most admirable curiosities... the finest (and which crowns) the most useful pieces of mechanism, or ingenuity could contrive, or hands make.*"¹⁴

Mountjoy led a diary about his travels through the continent on his way to Hungary and later about the progress of the siege of Buda. At the end of his siege diary there can be found a delicate elaboration, titled *Some remarks about the foregoing seige* (sic!). It contains many insightful comments about the campaign and represents an evaluation of the past events, where Mountjoy openly shared and expressed his personal opinions. The topics

¹⁰ BL, Kings MS 226, fol. 2r.

¹¹ BL, Stowe MS 447, fol. 1r. "Instructions for Mr Jacob Richards to improve himselfe in Foreigne Parts beyond Seas, to be Employed at his returne as one of his Majesties Engineers in England."

¹² BL, Add MS 41840, f. 163r, f. 174r.

¹³ All of the manuscripts can be found in The British Library under the following references: Stowe MS 448, Kings MS 226, Harley MS 4989. The title of the published diary is *A Journal of the siege and takeing of Buda by the Imperial army etc.*, London, 1687.

¹⁴ BL, Add MS 4811, fol. 179v.

he chose to talk about also speak for themselves. In addition, like Talbot did in 1685 to the English ambassador at The Hague, Mountjoy sent long battlefield reports not only to his friends, but also to the Secretary of State of the Northern Department, Charles Middleton (2nd Earl of Middleton, 1650-1719). Both his diary and letters contain valuable information about the war in Hungary.¹⁵

We have some volunteers of lesser importance in consideration of our topic whose correspondences about the war contained only minimal, but still relevant information. Edward Vaudrey, a gentleman whose life is rather unknown, fought under Buda in 1686 and was a member of James Fitz-James' retinue as the young man's tutor.¹⁶ He sent some letters to William Trumbull (1639-1716) the ambassador extraordinary at Paris (from September 1685 to October 1686) about the campaign.¹⁷ Another volunteer of note was John Cutts (1660/1661-1707) who later in his life became a successful general of William III and served under John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722). He took part in the siege of Buda in 1686, some mentioning that he was the first to plant the imperial flag upon the walls of Buda. He returned for the next year's campaign and thus participated in the battle of Harsány-hegy and the invasion of Transylvania (1687). Although he had no previous military education nor experience, or any kind of connection to military affairs for that matter, in 1687 the Duke of Lorraine made him his personal adjutant for the duration of the campaign which put Cutts in a unique position only a few could enjoy.¹⁸ Cutts' goal was to establish himself as an army officer with the help of the experience and fame acquired in Hungary. In 1687 he sent several reports about the campaign to Secretary of State Charles Middleton as well as to his sister in London.¹⁹

As we can see, all of them, except John Cutts, had a military background but they differed in experience, education and social standing. Talbot had already smelled gunpowder before the wars against the Turks, while the others, including Mountjoy and Richards, received their baptism of fire in Hungary. This does not mean that the latter two had next to nothing knowledge about military affairs and that their views are ill-conceived or unprofessional. They were born into a family of soldiers, particularly Richards whose two brothers, John and Michael, also became well-known engineers of their time.²⁰ Although we have no exact information about their former education, based on their diaries and letters both of

¹⁵ His diary is located in the repositories of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (New Haven, Connecticut) under the reference: Osborn b174. The publication and analysis of his diary is under way. Small parts of Mountjoy's letters are published in Erlington Ball, *Ormond*, but most of them are located in the British Library: BL, Add MS 41842. His travel diary and other writings from 1686 are stored in the Gilbert Library (Dublin, Ireland) which I haven't had the chance to consult yet.

¹⁶ BL, Add MS 72586, fol. 63r.

¹⁷ He served from this time on at least till his death at the side of James Fitz-James who was his friend. He died in the battle of the Boyne in 1690 fighting for the deposed king James II. See Dalton, *English army lists*, 113.

¹⁸ Chichester and Hattendorf. *John Cutts*.

¹⁹ BL, Add MS 41842, fols. 41-59. The publication of two articles about his engagement in Hungary and his letters to Charles Middleton is in progress.

²⁰ Dickinson, "The Richards brothers." 78-86.; Hebbert, "Major-General John Richards" 8-25.; Hebbert "The Richards brother", 200-211. For even further information see the respective articles in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography series.

them were competent and intelligent soldiers, curious even of the least important matters, with an analytical eye to everything.

The Ottoman and Imperial armies in the eyes of the volunteers

The greatest and most striking difference which was witnessed by the volunteers was the prevalent confusion and outdated order of battle in the Ottoman army which stood in sharp contrast with the properly drilled Christian army's rank and file system. From the top of the hills west of Buda, right after the successful defensive operations on the 14th August 1686 against the Grand Vizier who came with his army to relieve the town, Jacob Richards wrote: "*From hence we could see all the rest of the Turkish army in the plains in numbers like flock of sheep which is their order of battle.*"²¹ Mountjoy came to the same conclusions deliberating the reasons behind the Turks' complete defeat at Buda in 1686. Possibly from the same spot as Richards, since that day all the British and Irish fought together on the side of the imperial general Francis Taaffe and his troops, he wrote in his diary that "*we could see all the rest of the Turkish army in battalia, if we may call their order so.*"²² Furthermore, Mountjoy agreed with the Duke of Lorraine's opinion that "*their wanting that exact order which we observed in our squadrons and battalions*" was a crucial factor in causing confusion during battles and in their eventual defeats.²³

Compared to the Turkish army, the volunteers had the opposite opinions concerning the imperial army's order of battle. The volunteers praised the sturdiness and order they showed during the field operations. Mountjoy writes, that he saw the imperial regiments to receive "*several charges from the enemy, which they supported with a courage that amazed me, and never shaken though many times outnumbered. I saw Taaffe's regiments at the same time charged in flank and rear with a vigour I thought nothing could resist, yet some squadrons faced each way and without any man quitting his rank repulsed the Turks with considerable loss.*" Talbot writes somewhat proudly to Skelton after the battle of Tát that "*we looked more like a wall than men in battle, to the best of my knowledge.*"²⁴ The volunteers often filled many pages while describing confidently the Christian army's order of battle.²⁵ This was done, in case of some volunteers, according to the precise orders of James II to observe the imperial army's methods of warfare and to bring home the knowledge the volunteers considered to be valuable and important to transfer into the English army.

Observing the Turkish army's tactics during the siege and field operations for nearly 4 months in 1686, Mountjoy was astounded by the fact that the Turks were highly inactive in the night, having no initiative at all to undertake sallies or to try to put succour into the town after nightfall. He discussed this issue with the Duke of Lorraine himself and the two men agreed that the main reason of this has to be their disorderly battle formations and "*not bringing their men to fight in rank and file*". The Irish volunteer concluded that these made

²¹ BL, Stowe MS 448, fol. 15r. Entry of the 14th of August 1686.

²² BRBML, Osborn b174, 28.

²³ BRBML, Osborn b174, 43.

²⁴ BL, Add MS 41840, fol. 115r. 20th August 1685. Capt. Talbot from the camp by Gomorha,

²⁵ We can find numerous examples when they described the Christian army's order of battle in a positive light. About the orderly movements of the Christian army prior to and during the battle of Harsány-hegy in 1687 wrote John Cutts. See BL, Add MS 69379, fols. 77-78.

the Turkish army "*liable to fall into confusion*" which would be all the more striking and devastating if they were to fight in the dark. But Mountjoy did not stop here: "*I think we may add to it that the despotic government which they live under abates that natural heat in them which nourished in men that are less enslaved, and their courage is raised in greater proportion by vanity and desire of greatness. This methinks they show by their constant putting on their finest and most remarkable cloths when they go to fight, now where men's actions are not seen there can be no hope of praise or advancement, and where they are equally concerned in the cause, the success must lean to the side who have most inward warmth.*"²⁶ We do not know much about Mountjoy's own political views neither the exact source of his aforementioned beliefs, and right now it is not the aim of this article to answer these questions.

In consideration of the image of the Turkish and Christian soldiers, opinions are somewhat divided and mixed. By reading Talbot's reports, it quickly becomes clear that he looked down on the enemy and had biased opinions, calling the Ottomans "*pitiful fellows*", a little later in the same letter stating the same thing again and says that "*... all the army does agree them to be the most pityfullest fellows they ever fought with.*"²⁷ Although he preferred a contemptuous tone while describing the Turkish army and its commanders, he remained a professional observer of the campaign's military aspects. Mountjoy had a different opinion. He commended the bravery, the constant caution and diligence of the defenders of Buda whose sallies were "*vigorous and hardly ever failed*".²⁸ He also, in part, defended the Grand Vizier's inactivity during the siege in front of whose eyes the city was finally captured. Mountjoy argued that the relieving force was consisted of raw recruits who had never fought before or "*who had fought only to be beaten*", and the loss of this army would mean the loss of the whole empire, but still, he remarks that an "*ill soldier*" would have done more than the Grand Vizier.²⁹ Talbot had much less understanding towards the Turkish generals and perceived them expressing himself, as usual, in a less gentle and subtle manner, to be "*men that does not understand the war.*"³⁰ Later he expressed the same opinion saying that all the Turkish commanders are not behaving like real soldiers and that they have no military experience at all.³¹ It is obvious that the situation in 1685 compared to 1686 was different, and Talbot may sound too disdainful, but in the year of 1685 the Ottoman commanders fared badly indeed since they could not utilise the arising chances and favourable conditions during the campaign. And these are the exact reasons behind Talbot's ill-opinion of the Turkish commanders for he does not forget to elucidate to Skelton the whys of his aforementioned views.

It is never directly stated by Mountjoy, but he mentions the scimitar that is one of the main weapons of the Turks in a respectful and fearful way. He never forgets to remark if the person of quality was either "*struck down with a scimitar*"³² or "*cruelly wounded by a*

²⁶ BRBML, Osborn b174, pp. 43-44.

²⁷ BL, Add MS 41840, fols. 114r, 115v.

²⁸ BRBML, Osborn b174, 41.

²⁹ BRBML, Osborn b174, 42.

³⁰ BL, Add MS 41840, fol. 114r.

³¹ BL, Add MS 41840, fol. 114v.

³² Mr Richard Wiseman, a young aspiring gentleman from the county Essex was killed with the said weapon during the first general assault on 13th July 1686. See BL, Add MS 41842, fol. 28v.

scimitar”.³³ Many other instances could be brought up. Mountjoy writes about the Turkish sally on the 9th of July that “*at 4 in the morning [the Turks] sallied with such vigour that they ran over all our advanced trenches and with their scimitars hewed down 160 men.*”³⁴ It is an innocent theory that it might have been Mountjoy’s personal apprehension and worst nightmare to meet his death by the hands of a Turkish soldier armed with a scimitar.

It is interesting to see that some volunteers came to the exact same conclusions about one peculiar feature of the Turkish charges or assaults on the battlefields. They emphasised the great noise and resolution with which they started their attacks which was followed by an immediate and swift retreat after the first, usually devastating enemy volley. Talbot said that they approached the Christian lines with such a noise “*as if they would swallow us*”³⁵ while Mountjoy wrote that the Turks attacked “*with a vigour I thought nothing could resist*” and that after the first discharge they retired as fast as they came.³⁶ Perhaps Talbot was the one who wrote about this question in the most intelligible way, and according to him the entire Christian army shared this opinion: “*The whole army does agree that they never see men coming to blows with a greater sign of resolution than they did and sooner grew daunted. They marched with that assurance as if they would tread us under their horse feet... [they] stood but one valley of our shot which amazed them and turned to the hills.*”³⁷

The British and Irish volunteers considered the German, that is the soldiers of the emperor and Holy Roman Empire to be brave and thirsty of plunder. And we just described nearly every country’s soldiers of the early modern period. Still, we have some other interesting remarks about the German soldiers which deserve to be mentioned. We have already mentioned the amazement of Mountjoy as he witnessed the courage and discipline with which the imperial regiments repulsed the vigorous Turkish charges on 14th August 1686. Edward Vaudrey, as he described a successful attack on the town to William Trumbull, wrote that the “*jolly Germans*”, which should be interpreted as brave or careless of the enemy’s fire, continued the attack and “*mounted boldly over their companions’ bodies and maintained the post in spite of Mahomet and all his Myrmidons.*”³⁸ Mountjoy thought the same and wrote to Middleton that the Germans “*fight like the devil*”, but he also noted that they do so in the hope of plunder.³⁹ Witnessing the final assault on the 2nd of September, his respect was diminished as the Christians sacked the city and massacred a large part of the inhabitants. “*And those, who for near three months had done more than men, in this action were less than women. The unruly soldiers set the town on fire and now I think the honour is only due to the Duke of Lorraine who*

³³ Mountjoy notes this in his diary about general Mercy who later died of his wounds. See BRBML, Osborn b174, 34.

³⁴ BRBML, Osborn b174, 8.

³⁵ BL, Add MS 41840, fol. 115r.

³⁶ BRBML, Osborn b174, 28.

³⁷ BL, Add MS 41840, fol. 115v; James Fitz-James also witnessed and described this event in the like manner but did not leave an explicit comment on it. See BL, Add MS 72524, fol. 176r. 16th August 1686. Imperial camp at Buda. James Fitz-James to his brother, Henry. The abridged version of the letter can be found at Purnell, *Downshire*, 204-205.

³⁸ BL, Add MS 72524, fol. 126v. 29th July 1686. Camp before Buda. Edward Vaudrey to William Trumbull. The mildly abridged version of the letter can be found at Purnell, *Downshire*, 199-200,

³⁹ BL, Add MS 41842, fol. 32r.

ordered all this action and by whose attack it was carried."⁴⁰ Still, Mountjoy, as well as Jacob Richards, thought that the extent of the massacre was smaller and more quarter was given than usually expected from the "*severity of the Germans*".⁴¹ Captain John Talbot also left a quite similar remark about the German soldier in general, commending the "*usual severity and speed*" with which they pursue their objectives.⁴²

We have one single event which draw the volunteers' attention to the Hungarian soldiers of the siege, the so called "*Heyducks*". On the 24th of July the tents of the English were burglarized many of them losing everything except for what they wore that day. Richards and all the English volunteers immediately blamed the Heyducks "*who truly have the reputation of being very dexterous that way [in robbery]*" until they found out that the true culprits were their own servants.⁴³ An unknown English volunteer, possibly the unidentifiable Robert Clarke, called the innocent suspects "*thievish hussars*" in conjunction with the same affair.⁴⁴ The Hungarian common soldiers weren't the only notorious ones in the camp and their German counterparts were also criticised for their sticky fingers, for example by Mountjoy himself who remarked that "*the German soldiers are very yare that way...*"⁴⁵

We have one last topic which the volunteers touched in their letters, and it is the image of the individual commanders of the Christian army. Unfortunately, they do not mention any of the Turkish commanders personally. The two generals they were mostly in contact with were the Duke of Lorraine and Francis Taaffe. Both of them were praised for their diligence and commanding skills. Mountjoy was particularly satisfied with the chief commander, saying that "*the Duke of Lorraine is so good and does place the advantage of the Empire and of Europe so far above any other concern, that the other will be no great mischief to us. There never lived a more watchful general, nor a better tempered man than he seems to me.*"⁴⁶ In his diary he writes that "*For the rest no man could shew more care, courage and applications, than he did during the whole siege. No man was up before him or after him went to rest, he toiled the most and slept the least of any in the army, and the successfulness of this siege is more justly due to him than to all the other officers together, had his discretion appeared in nothing else...*"⁴⁷ We have many more instances as he shares with his friends his exceptional opinion about the Duke. He was also delighted to see as the Duke of Lorraine encouraged the soldiers with his presence at the foot of the city walls during the many general assaults.⁴⁸ Possibly the closest to the Duke of Lorraine was John Cutts who, as we have mentioned already, served as his adjutant during the campaign of 1687 and was a respecer of the Duke.⁴⁹ Francis Taaffe was also held in high esteem by the volun-

⁴⁰ BL, Add MS 41842, fol. 39r.

⁴¹ Both of them used these exact same words. See BRBML, Osborn b174, 38; BL, Stowe MS 448, fol. 19r.

⁴² BL, Add MS 41840, fol. 115v.

⁴³ BL, Stowe MS 448, fol. 10v.

⁴⁴ BL, Add MS 41840, fol. 212r

⁴⁵ BL, Add MS 41842, fol. 30v.

⁴⁶ Erlington Ball, *Ormond*, 426.

⁴⁷ BRBML, Osborn b174, 46.

⁴⁸ BL, Add MS 41842, fol. 34r; BRBML, Osborn b174, 17, 37.

⁴⁹ BL, Add MS 69379, fol. 77v. Cutts remarks that the Duke led the operations and encouraged the troops before the battle "with negligence and easiness suitable to the greatness of his character..."

teers, many of them commenting on his good capabilities and extreme good care he shows towards them.⁵⁰

Conclusion

As we can see, for the most part, the British and Irish volunteers had similar or sometimes perfectly identical images of the Ottomans and imperials, and this might tell us a little more about the general notion which was present among the Christian soldiers, or at least the British and Irish volunteers. We know that the aforementioned volunteers formed a cohesive group during the operations in Hungary. They fought together and, during respite, most likely discussed the events and progress of the campaigns. Even in those apparent cases when there was no chance that the volunteers were in contact with each other, for example Talbot who wrote his letters in 1685 while Mountjoy and Richards' in 1686, Cutts in 1687 and so on, they came to the same or similar conclusions. Regardless of the circumstances, whether they formulated their opinions on their own or have been influenced by the imperial generals and officers it does not alter the fact that the abovementioned impressions must have applied to the whole camp of the volunteers or, possibly, to the entire Christian army. As we have seen, Mountjoy discussed his ideas with the Duke of Lorraine and the two mostly shared each other's views. Talbot states it quite straightforwardly, and he does it more than once, that all the army does agree with his opinion about the Turks. Still, for the ultimate proof whether the volunteers' opinions correspond with the general image of the Turkish army, more research has to be done related to the perceptions of other participants of the war. Also, since the above presented manuscripts were not published like many other letters and diaries, except for Richard's diary, these written testimonies couldn't have any significant influence upon the English-speaking world's image of the Ottoman and imperial armies. Instead, we can treat them as a set of properties of the Turkish and Christian armies of the period. On the other hand, by looking at Lord Mountjoy's ideas about the decadent and "*despotic*" nature of the Ottoman state and society, they surely weren't born right on the battlefield but had a background with deep roots at home.

It is unfortunate that there are many other aspects of warfare which were not touched by the volunteers, for example the comparison of the opposing armies' firepower or artillery. Even so, by taking into account their remarks we can get closer to a better understanding of the reasons behind the Ottomans' defeats on the battlefield. There is a long-standing debate about the causes and nature of the military backwardness of the Ottomans and their ultimate defeat during the latter part of the early modern period, mainly focusing on the effects of the so-called European Military Revolution. We have seen that, according to the volunteers, the two greatest deficiencies the Ottoman army suffered from were their outdated order of battle and incompetent commanders, while at the same time the imperial army enjoyed both the advantages of a pool of capable leaders and a modern battle formation, the latter being a

⁵⁰ Erlington Ball, *Ormond*, 426.; BRBML, Osborn b174, 30.; BL, Stowe MS 448, fol. 15v.; BL, Add MS 72524, fol. 177r. 16th August 1686. Imperial camp at Buda. James Fitz-James to Henry Fitz-James (his brother). The printed and abridged version of this letter can be found in Purnell, *Downshire*, 204-5.; *Memoirs of Berwick*, 13.

key element of the Military Revolution theory.⁵¹ Interestingly, none of the articles or books I had access to discusses in detail these two factors. Nevertheless, it would be, of course, an oversimplification to state that only these two features are to blame for the Ottoman army's impotence against the Habsburgs, therefore, this short article has to be treated only as a small contribution to the debate, and certainly not as a definitive answer.

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⁵¹ For further information see the many works of Geoffrey Parker, Jeremy Black, Gábor Ágoston, Murphey Rhoads, and published works of other authorities on the question of the Military Revolution and early modern Ottoman and European warfare. For the latest contributions to this debate in Hungarian, see: *Századok* 152, No. 5. (2018): 937–1127.

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La perception des volontaires britanniques et irlandais sur les armées ottomane et impériale pendant la Grande Guerre turque en Hongrie (1683-1699)

Pendant la Grande Guerre turque (1683-1699), un grand nombre des volontaires venant de toute l'Europe se sont rassemblés sur la scène hongroise de la guerre pour combattre les Ottomans. Des centaines d'entre eux sont venus de l'Île britannique. Pendant ces batailles sanglantes et sans merci, les volontaires anglais, irlandais et écossais avaient des possibilités abondantes d'observer l'efficacité des combats et les stratégies de guerre des armées ottomanes et impériales.

Même si les preuves ne sont pas nombreuses, pour l'analyse de la perception des volontaires britanniques et irlandais, nous trouvons peu de commentaires perspicaces et univoques sur le sujet venant de leur main. Les lettres manuscrites du capitaine expérimenté John Talbot, et le journal intime et d'autres écritures de William Stewart, premier vicomte de Mountjoy, sont particulièrement importants. D'après ces comptes rendus écrits de première main, il est possible de déterminer la perception des volontaires sur l'armée adverse. Pour éviter une conclusion fautive, seulement les rapports évidents étaient pris en considération. Entre autres, les volontaires ont trouvé l'armée ottomane gravement désorganisée, leur ordre de bataille dépassé et les commandants turques totalement incompetents. L'opinion sur l'armée impériale était justement l'opposée. Les volontaires ont perçu l'armée de l'empereur comme solidement organisée et formée, dirigée par des commandants compétents et doués, qui accentuent avant tout l'application et les capacités de Charles V, duc de Lorraine. En plus, ces remarques peuvent nous aider de nuancer nos connaissances sur les raisons des défaites de l'armée ottomane et ainsi, bien que d'une manière limitée, sur les questions déjà bien documentées des effets de la révolution militaire européenne à l'Empire ottoman.