

Hungarian strategy against the Ottomans (1365-1526)

The longest, most enduring and fateful wars of Hungary were waged against the military, social and economic forces of the Ottoman Empire. Although it was extremely difficult to offer resistance against the superior Ottoman forces, for more than 130 years the Hungarians succeeded in maintaining a more or less precarious balance of power on their southern frontier and hindered further Ottoman advance into the heart of Europe.

In consequence of this relatively successful Hungarian resistance the contemporaries called Hungary “*clipeus et antimurale totius Christianitatis*” and this period of the Anti-Ottoman crusades had been called “Hungarian crusades”.

This labile balance of power could and should be explained by various factors and circumstances. First of all by the special problems and weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire and its army. Although the Turkish state was without doubt the most powerful empire of Europe – at least in the fifteenth century – its special geostrategic position between Europe and Asia brought about many vicissitudes for the Ottoman sultans and viziers. They very often had to wage a two-front war against their enemies – in the East against Persia and in the West against Hungary and later against the Holy Roman Empire. And we must also add the fact that up to the end of the fifteenth century neither the vassal Balkan states nor the remnants of the former Seljuk Empire – esp. Karaman – were totally subjugated, so it required considerable effort of the Ottoman rulers to maintain their rule in these areas.

So Hungary very often became a secondary theatre of war for the Ottomans, which made it possible for the enemies of the Ottomans to recreate the resources lost in the devastating campaigns.

Of course, Hungary – together with the other states menaced by the Ottoman conquest – needed other means, requiring considerable efforts to withstand the Turkish flood.

The Hungarian countermeasures against the Ottomans embraced many fields of activities: political – looking for allies, searching pacifying means to withstand the Ottoman conquering plans, military – applying different strategies in accordance with the actual situation and developing and modernizing the Hungarian armed forces, financial – a new taxation policy to increase the royal revenues, governmental – strengthening the royal power in order to unify the national efforts to defend the frontiers, etc.

Now I would like to concentrate my efforts on the strategic problems, with the intention to prove my thesis that strategy was not extinct in the Middle Ages, although its means were not so considerable as in the Antiquity or in the later centuries. In order to convince you, dear colleagues, about the validity of my thesis, I am going to enumerate some important medieval warlords who could be regarded as good strategists: William the Conqueror, Charlemagne, Bertrand du Guesclin, Henry V of England, Jan Žižka, Khan Jenghis, or Mehmet II the Conqueror, to mention only a few names.

Turning back to our principal subject, let's begin with a periodisation of the wars against the Ottoman Empire from the beginnings up to the defeat at Mohács in 1526. Of course, it does not mean that it was the end of this very long conflict, but after this battle Hungary's military power ceases to exist, and its role as "defensor Christianitatis" was taken over by the Hapsburg Empire; Hungary became only a theatre of operation, and its troops played only a secondary role in the Imperial and sometimes in the Ottoman armies.

In my opinion, the above-mentioned period could be divided into four parts, adding to them a preliminary subperiod, totally different from the later ones:

1. Prelude to the great wars – from 1366 up to the first battle of Kossovopolye (1389)
2. Organizing the defence (1389-1440)
3. Crusading offensives (1440-1456)
4. Active defence (1458-1490)
5. Passive defence – prelude to a catastrophe (1490-1526)

Although there were considerable differences in the periods as for the momentary political and military situation, for the intentions of the opposing states, for changes in the balance of power, etc.; nevertheless the basic situation, remained always the same, i.e. a superior Ottoman force with offensive intentions, a better Turkish army and state organisation, instable Hungarian relations with the West.

Let's analyse the strategic characteristics of the different periods:

1. Prelude 1366-1389

It was different from later times. Neither was Ottoman power predominant nor was Hungarian territory and integrity threatened. At first even the Venetians, very familiar with the Eastern conditions did not recognise the importance of the rapidly growing Ottoman power.

Nevertheless, when Pope Urban V declared a crusade against the Ottomans in 1365 in order to save Byzantium, the Hungarian king, Louis the Great, was not only willing to participate in the campaign, but also to lead it.

But neither were his intentions very serious nor were the circumstances favourable for the operation.

In order to fight with the Ottomans – they were to be found in Southern Bulgaria and Macedonia – the Hungarian armies had to get through Serbia and Bulgaria, and in neither country the Hungarians were beloved guests. Hungarian armies often attacked these countries to fight against orthodoxy and heresy – and to conquer. So for several decades the Ottomans, indifferent to the inner controversies in the Christian camp, had a higher esteem than the Hungarians. So, if Louis wanted to fight the Ottomans, he first had to

defeat those nations which he wanted to save from their influence. A rather intricate situation, isn't it?

If he had chosen the maritime way, having no fleet, he would have had to ask the Venetians to borrow him some ships. He did. But in 1358 Venice lost a war and Dalmatia to the Hungarians, and the "Queen of the Adria" did not want to increase the power of its chief adversary and in a very polite form, with a lot of transparent excuses Venice refused the request. If the Hungarians had attacked they would have succeeded in defeating the Ottomans – perhaps, while the rather weak army of Amadeus of Savoye beat the Turkish army and reoccupied Gelibolu for a short time. The Ottoman army at that time was not as strong as in later days, at any rate it was not stronger than the Hungarian one.

Nevertheless, the two armies had a few indecisive skirmishes as a rather pale introduction for a long series of wars.

2. Organizing the defense 1389-1440

After the first battle of Kossovopolye (15 June, 1389) the situation changed completely. The powerful Balkan coalition was annihilated, the Ottomans proved their quickly developing military force. At that time Hungary was ruled by Sigismund, the later German emperor, who did not feel secure on his throne, and now besides his inner enemies he had to defend his new country against the conquering plans of the new sultan, "Jilderim" Bayazid.

Sigismund was a talented strategist and a shrewd politician, but a very bad tactician. His army was numerous – the military potential of Hungary surpassed the number of 50,000 – but as for its quality, it was far behind the highest level of the Western-European and Asian armed forces.

The Hungarian ruler had to recognise very early that even with the valuable help of the Valachian Prince Mircea Hungary was not able to successfully resist the Ottomans. He looked for more and stronger allies, seeking a traditional way, namely organizing a crusade against the new enemies of Christianity.

He was surprisingly successful. In the summer of the year 1396 a great crusading army, mostly French knights, came to help Hungary and the other South-Eastern Christian countries.

This huge army – together with the Hungarian and Valachian troops it consisted of more than 30,000 soldiers, mostly cavalymen – wanted to liberate Byzantium from the Turkish blockade. The very badly led and even worse fighting Christian army was defeated in the battle of Nikopolis by the outstanding leadership of the sultan and the very effective and special Ottoman tactics.

The consequences were serious: the European cavalry was more willing to fight against such inconvenient enemies and for some years Bayazid wanted to carry on his offensive to conquer Hungary. Tamerlaine, the great Turkmen warlord, however, overthrew the

Ottoman army in the battle of Ankara and for some years Europe hoped in vain that the Ottoman Empire would not recover from this destructive blow.

Nevertheless, although Sigismund failed to exploit the consequences of the Turkish defeat, he proved that he was a much better organizer and strategist than leader in the battlefield. With his reforms he laid down the bases of a successful defense of Hungary for more than a century. In order to increase the effectivity of his army he brought about – among others – three important reforms. The first was the creation of the institution of the militia portal, light mounted archers to cope with the irregular Turkish cavalry. The other two reforms were more valuable: the organisation of mercenary troops in order to increase the quality of the Hungarian army, and the building up of a strong and effective system of frontier fortresses. The most important step to its success was to obtain the key fortress of Belgrade from the Serbian prince, Stephan Lazarevich. Belgrad became known shortly after this all over the continent as the “key of Europe“. It was not an exaggeration, at least for Hungary, because as long as Belgrade remained under Hungarian rule it was impossible for the Ottoman armies to conquer the country. (I'd like to remark in parentheses that Belgrade fell in 1521, five years before the catastrophe at Mohács.)

The fortress system consisted of two lines. The first lay beyond the southern frontiers or as in the case of Transylvania on the frontier line, it consisted of eight to ten important and 30 to 40 smaller forts. The second line was built inside the frontier, and even at the end of that period it was not completely ready.

With a standing mercenary army and a chain of fortresses the Hungarian strategy was given: active defence, combined with local counter-offensives. And a considerable element in the Hungarian strategical practice was also the search for allies in the neighbourhood as well as among the European great powers and to avoid, if possible, to wage a two-front war.

Let's sum up briefly the Ottoman wars in this epoch. For two decades after the humiliating defeat in the battle of Nikopolis there was relative peace at our southern frontier. Sigismund tried to make use of the Ottoman vicissitudes and wanted to broaden his zone of influence towards Bosnia and Serbia. But at the same time he had to save Dalmatia against Venice, without any success. His Serbian and Bosnian wars brought more results up to 1415, that is, the revival of the Ottoman wars.

Owing to Sigismund's aspirations for the Bohemian crown he had to wage a war against them, too, so finally he could not avoid a two-front war against the Ottoman Empire and Bohemia.

Both resulted mostly in military reverses, nevertheless, without any serious consequences: the southern frontier was able to defend itself, and at last in 1435 Bohemia accepted him as its legal ruler. Moreover, the appearance of the sturdy Czech infanterists created the first reliable infantry in the long history of the Hungarian Army.

Only one event caused considerable problems in the Hungarian military policy: Valachia gradually lost its independence, became a Turkish vassal state and weakened the Hungarian line of defense.

3. Crusading offensives 1440-1456

These one and a half decades were determined by the personality of John Hunyadi, the greatest Hungarian tactician. This exceptional warlord of Roumanian origin made a meteor-like career: from a noble of middle fortune he was elevated to the highest rank: he became the first regent of Hungary. He had a very different conception of the Ottoman problem compared with Sigismund. He became more and more afraid of the devastating Ottoman raids, which, according to him, should lead to the total attrition of the country's resources. "We have been waging a cruel war for sixty years until now" writes his chancellor, John Vitéz, to the Pope – "we are totally exhausted by the burdens of this constant confrontation ... In order to end this tragedy we put the burden of the war into enemy territory hoping that when we could defeat our enemies with the help of God, we could gain the peace and get rid of our enemies."

So it was a definitive offensive and preemptive strategy. Nowadays we could regard his ideas as totally unrealistic and unrealisable dreams. But this was not quite so in his days. First of all, his army defeated many Ottoman forces stronger than his troops. Secondly, neither the Balkan Peninsula nor Karaman in Anatolia were completely subjugated, a lot of Ottoman troops were bound to maintain their rule in the above mentioned territories. And last, but not least, he could count on the support of several great European powers, especially that of the Papacy, Poland, Venice, not to speak of the help of the Central European nations: Roumanians, Serbs and Bulgarians.

At first the auspices seemed to be very favourable for this ambitious plan. After the death of King Albert the majority of the Hungarian nobles invited the bellicose young Polish king Wladislaw II to the Hungarian throne. Although he had to fight against another pretender's league, he came out victorious from the conflict and helped Hungary in its struggle. The young king was accompanied by a considerable Polish force. (It is interesting to remark that during the civil war Belgrade was besieged by an Ottoman army led by Sultan Amurath II personally. The fortress was so strong and so well defended by the Ragusian Jovan Thalloczy that they were able to retain the fortress without any external help.)

The Pope, Eugen IV, showed great interest in the ideas of the crusade, and seeing the first victories of Hunyadi, he thought with some right that a huge crusading army would defeat the Ottomans and perhaps would succeed in expelling their armies from the soil of Europe.

In order to realize this dream, several warplans were elaborated. According to them, a big crusading army would march on the shore of the Black Sea towards Byzantium to defeat the Ottoman armies and to liberate the city from the Turkish blockade. A fleet should help the operation; partly by accompanying the army and securing its flank, partly by attacking Ottoman ports and by harrassing the countryside it could bind considerable enemy forces. Later this basic plan lived forth with some modifications until the loss of Hungary. The most important supplement was a third force attacking through Albania.

Theoretically, the idea to hinder the concentration of the enemy forces by attacking them from different directions was not so bad, however, it had a serious and sometimes a fatal flaw: the communication among the different parts of the crusading forces didn't work because of the great distances. We shall hear more about this later.

The plan had another problematic side: one undervalued the possibilities and the cohesive force of the Ottoman state and army. It is true that in hand-to-hand fighting the better equipped heavier Christian soldiers, esp. the heavy cavalry, had the advantage over the lighter Ottoman fighters, but the latter army was more numerous, generally better led and more disciplined than the Western military forces. So it needed at least 80 to 100,000 well fed, equipped soldiers led by talented and experienced warlords for at least three years to decisively defeat and perhaps to expel the Ottomans from Europe. And of course, it was beyond the possibilities of contemporary Europe.

Nevertheless, the beginnings were very favourable.

In 1442 Hunyadi won several battles against the Ottoman armies. And in the so-called "Long Campaign" in the winter of 1443, a big Polish-Hungarian army gained twelve pitched battles and reoccupied nearly all Bulgarian territories. The winter and the very quickly arriving Ottoman troops hindered the crusaders to get across the Balkan Mountains. In spite of all it was a splendid success giving hope for the continuation of the war.

Several consequences could and should be drawn from the experiences of this campaign. It proved clearly the vulnerability of the Ottoman armies.

First: the majority of the Ottoman army was to be found on the Asian shore of the Dardanelles, and if a strong Christian fleet would intercept the passage, it should cause serious damages. Second: the winter was not favourable for the Ottoman warfare. The major part of the army was not to be found in their camps and barracks and it was a slow and cumbersome process to summon them. It was not by chance that some clever warlords like the two Hunyadis preferred to fight against the Ottomans in winter, and very often this tactics proved victorious.

Now I'd like to deal with three very instructive campaigns. The first ended with the defeat at Varna. I would like to mention only two moments, the first one: the problem of communication. It was known that the Hungarians began some peace negotiations with the envoys of the sultan, but they went on with their military preparations, too. Venice, which provided the ships for the campaign became cautious, it did not want to wage a war alone with the sultan. So the Signoria instructed the admiral of the fleet, Alviseo Loredano, not to begin his military activity until he got the information that the Hungarian army had crossed the Danube. The crossing occurred on September 20, 1444, and the information arrived on December 9. The battle was fought on the next day! So the Venetian fleet would and could not prevent the Ottoman from crossing the Dardanelles, it was one of the causes of the Christian defeat in the battle of Varna.

The second lesson: if possible, do not commit a crime; otherwise you could and ought to be punished.

The Hungarians made peace with the Ottomans on August 15, 1444. They took an oath to adhere to the conditions of the peace treaty, although they knew very well that they would break the oath soon, while it was no more than some dubious effort of Hunyadi to be bribed by the Serb prince, who wanted this peace more than anyone else.

But the crime was duly punished, first of all, the effectives of the army were much less numerous than before, the would be volunteers did not trust the Hungarians – there had been former negotiations as well. Second consequence: the moral base of the army was hurt, and when the king fell in the battle, the fleeing soldiers would no longer be held.

The second lesson comes from the campaign of 1448. Years before Hunyadi's envoys visited several foreign courts asking for help for a new crusade against the Ottomans. Nobody promised anything, moreover the envoys were warned: Hunyadi should not venture a risky adventure.

Hunyadi, supposing that the best defence is the attack and hoping to get help from the new hero of christianity, Georg Castriota of Albania, attacked. His army marched towards Albania, but it was halted and compelled to fight a pitched battle on the Kossovopolye. The Albanians were stopped by the Turks and after three days of heavy fighting the Hungarian army was totally annihilated. In the battle Hunyadi, as tactician, had committed no fault, his men had fought gallantly, too. But the strategy was abominable: he risked the whole army for nothing. If they had won, nothing serious would have happened. The Turks were not too sensitive about losses. They had an enormous manpower reservoir. Hungary, on the contrary, lost its best army, an irreparable loss for the country.

After the defeat the charisma of Hunyadi faded, some years later he had to resign from governorship.

Eight years later Hunyadi proved that he was nevertheless a very good soldier. He masterly led the defensive campaign to save Belgrade, besieged by Mehmet al-Fatih, the famous sultan, personally.

This time the sultan, otherwise an excellent general, committed two faults. First, he did not occupy the other bank of the Danube. He thought that his fleet would be able to withstand the attack of the relieving crusading army. He miscalculated, Hunyadi broke through the line of the ships and got into the fortress. Mehmet's second fault occurred after a tiring and devastating day when in spite of all bravery, the Turks were not capable to take the fortress. When a troop of crusaders rather foolhardily attacked the Ottoman camp Mehmet emptied the field fortifications laid in front of the fortress and sent their crew against the invading crusaders. Hunyadi was equal to the occasion, broke out of the fortress and won a great battle against the greatest sultan of the Ottoman Empire.

To sum up, although Hunyadi was a better tactician than strategist, he was successful in keeping the territory of Hungary intact, and by his victories he created an opportunity for a more invariable and more sophisticated strategy for his son, King Matthias Corvinus.

4. Active defense 1458-1490

In the first years of the reign of the young king no novelty occurred in the Hungarian anti-Ottoman strategy. Hungary was afraid of the repetition of the Belgrade campaign a few years ago, Mehmet, however, showed no enthusiasm to return to the place of his greatest frustration.

And when the Pope declared the crusade, Matthias obeyed and attacked Mehmet's newly acquired province Bosnia. The capital of the former kingdom, Jajce, was taken and later became the center of the Hungarian system of defence. In the following year the war went on with varying results, but an unexpected event brought about a fundamental change in Hungarian strategy. The Crusade of Pope Pius II was a total frustration; with the exception of a few Venetian galleys nobody wanted to take part in it. So Matthias had to recognize that he remained alone if he carried on an active Ottoman policy. But he recognized another thing, too: Mehmet had absolutely no intention to wage a conquering war against Hungary. It was absolutely correct because as later researches proved Mehmet never tried to occupy Hungarian territory. It is true that he intended to occupy Belgrade, but not as a prelude to a Hungarian campaign, on the contrary, by taking the fortress he wanted to prevent Hungarian intrusions into his Balkan territory.

So both rulers wished a relatively peaceful connection with their partner.

It did not mean a "perfect" peace, because the Ottoman frontier troops rather often "visited" neighbouring territories to get slaves, gold or treasure. Sometimes the troops of the Hungarian king invaded Turkish land, too. Hungary got some fiscal subsidy to finance the Ottoman wars, and the Pope and Venice always wanted a little more zeal from the part of Matthias to fight against the "infidels". All in all, two important Ottoman raids – in 1474 and in 1479 – and three more considerable Hungarian limited offensives – in 1463-64, 1476 and 1479-81 – proved the "bellicose" intentions of the two rulers.

This relative freedom of movement made it possible for Matthias to carry on with a much more active military policy in another theatres of war. Owing to the enlistment of a few thousand Czech mercenaries he began to build up a standing mercenary army, and increasing with every means his revenues he could pay his troops. At the end of his rule the effectives of his mercenary troops counted nearly 20,000 soldiers.

In the Middle Ages it was rather customary that if someone owned a good and numerous armed force he tried to employ it, otherwise it would constitute a superfluous burden. In this respect Matthias was not an exception either. It wouldn't be worthwhile to dissipate this treasure in vain Turkish wars. In the West, however, one could find more valuable and not so strong enemies.

Consequently, the majority of his wars were waged against Austria, Bohemia and Poland. To tell the truth, his opponents were not innocent lambs either. Emperor Frederick III was and remained during his long life a resolute pretender of the Hungarian crown, Casimir IV of Poland did the same and his former father-in-law Jiřy Podiebrad of Bohemia was also an enemy of Matthias after the death of his daughter. In this latter case, however, Matthias

was much more responsible for the conflict, because he obeyed voluntarily to the proclamation of Pope Paul II to fight against the Hussite heresy.

These wars brought more military successes than reverses, but none of them ended with definitive victories. Some Czech and Austrian provinces – Silesia, Moravia, Lower Austria – were conquered, but the costs of war surpassed the revenues from the new provinces.

We can only suppose the actual reason for his policy and strategy. Matthias was a very secretive personage who very rarely made his intentions known. So we must try to draw conclusions from his deeds.

I think we could agree on the statement that his Ottoman policy was excellent. He recognized the motives behind the Turkish inactivity against Hungary and discovered that it was not so difficult to maintain a rather precarious balance of power with his mighty neighbour. As for his other strategic plans and intentions the opinions of historians were and are divided. In my opinion he had to make use of the relative peace with the Ottomans, in order to increase and strengthen the resources and military power of his country. He thought, and was possibly right, that he did not choose a secure and long way for the economic and social development of his realm. This way of thinking was not *à la mode* in the Middle Ages. The great majority of his contemporaries chose or would have chosen a shorter and more brutal way to increase their power: the way of conquest.

For many centuries to come, Matthias was the last Hungarian statesman who could choose among real or seemingly real solutions. Owing to his relative short lifetime and to his personal weaknesses he was not able to realize his grandiose plan: the creation of a great Hungarian local power. At least he had to try it.

5. Prelude to a catastrophe 1490-1526

In the last decades of its independence Hungary had no independent foreign or military policy. The resources of the state were exhausted, the standing army was to be dissolved. The situation was very similar to the first years of the reign of Sigismund. With one notable exception: the fortresses in the southern frontier with their 8,000 soldiers were still able to defend themselves against smaller Ottoman raiding troops. In case of a more serious siege owing to the lack of a standing reserve army it would have been impossible to relieve or to defend the fortresses.

To compensate the inner weaknesses, the Hungarian rulers tried to get foreign help. The Hapsburg Empire came to their rescue with royal marriages and later with the defence and maintenance of the Croatian fortresses. There was a restricted support, because from 1495 on they were bound in the Italian wars against France. As we later shall see even the causes of the defeat at Mohács partly originated on the Italian battlefields.

For a time, Hungary was lucky, because the Ottomans were occupied in the Eastern theatre of war and had no time to deal with Hungary. It was especially fortunate during the

rather short reign of Selim I, who was not only an excellent soldier, but a very brutal and cruel personality as well. So apart from smaller raids by both parts there was a relative peace at the Ottoman-Hungarian frontier.

In 1520 the situation radically deteriorated. The new sultan Suleiman the Magnificent was a person quite different from his father. He had a better heart, better political, organizing and juridical virtues than he, but had a fatal “flaw“ for Hungary at the same time: he was very interested in European affairs. One of his first envoys went to the Hungarian court requiring free crossing for Ottoman troops in Hungarian territory and more treasure for the treasury of the sultan.

For some inexplicable reasons the Hungarians did not obey to the pious wish of the sultan; on the contrary, they put his envoy in jail.

This was unfortunately a veritable *casus belli*. The terrible riposte of the sultan came soon. In the following year, i.e. in 1521, a great Ottoman army under the leadership of the sultan laid siege to Belgrade and after a long and heroic defence the fortress was taken by the Turks. (The exact date is August 29, and it is perhaps interesting to mention that the battle of Mohács and the occupation of Buda happened on the same day – but of course in different years – 1526 and 1541, respectively.)

With the fall of Belgrade the way lay open for the invading Ottomans. There was in spite of all a temporary lull – lasting for five years – because the sultan had other things to do and had enough time.

But in 1526 his attention turned once more towards Hungary. His decision was prompted by two events: at the Italian theatre of war the French army had been completely defeated and the king, Francis I, had been taken prisoner in the battle of Pavia by a Spanish-Imperial army. And in Istanbul the janissaries rebelled, they wanted a new war. Hungary was an easy choice: it was militarily weak, allied to the Hapsburgs and promised rich booty for the soldiers and for the treasury.

Even before the huge Ottoman army was summoned to the capital, the Hungarians got knowledge of the impending catastrophe. Only one important fact remained unrevealed: the direction and exact aim of the Turkish attack.

This was the reason why the Transylvanian and Croatian troops did not move earlier, being afraid of an Ottoman attack against their provinces.

Nevertheless, it seemed quite possible that the Turks would choose an ancient Roman road leading on the right bank of the Danube, from Eszék (now Osijek) to Buda. The difference between the two armies was clearly shown by the fact that the Ottoman army, after having taken the important fortress of Peterwardein, arrived at the river Drava earlier than the very slowly assembling Hungarian army from Buda.

Being late the Hungarians could not prevent them from crossing the Drava, and having arrived at the plain south to Mohács, they had to wait for the coming of the Turks. With many infantrymen in their lines they could not hope to return and look for a better battlefield – or at least to wait for the arrival of the foreign troops – Czechs, Transylvanians, Croats, etc.

Recognizing the fact that they have no hope to win the battle they were preparing for

the oncoming death. The general of the army, Paul Tomori, was a brave and excellent fighter, but by no means an experienced warlord.

In the ensuing battle the Hungarians fought bravely, for a short time they even succeeded in disturbing the lines of the Rumelian Corps, but after one and a half hours their charge collapsed.

About half of the Hungarian army, i.e. 15,000 soldiers, fell in the battle, and while fleeing the young king of Hungary also lost his life. Hungary at once succumbed.

Beyond the physical losses the inner power of resistance of the majority of the Hungarian population also succumbed, and Hungary ceased to be the „bastion of Christianity“. This difficult role was taken over by the peoples of the Hapsburg Empire.

In this relatively short time – I am convinced that for the listeners it surely seemed extremely long and tiresome – I tried to prove the existence of the art of strategy in the Middle Ages and to explain the different facts and situations which made it possible for the relatively feeble Hungary to resist during more than a century against the greatest military power of their age.

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