THE EFFICACY OF OTTOMAN COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE IN THE 16TH CENTURY*

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This article examines the Ottoman counter-intelligence mechanism and the extent to which it succeeded in preventing enemy intelligence. In the 16th century, the length and the scope of both Ottoman–Habsburg and the Ottoman Safavid Rivalry convinced the Ottomans to establish an intelligence network that gathered information in a large geography. Nevertheless, in the war of information between the Ottomans and their rivals, the success of Ottoman information-gathering was intertwined with the efficiency of Ottoman counter-intelligence. In order to gain an advantage in “politics of information”, the Ottoman secret diplomacy successfully refused its enemies a comfort which it sought for itself: access to information about the adversary.

Key words: Ottoman Empire, spies, espionage, intelligence, information-gathering, counter-intelligence, secret service, secret diplomacy, Ottoman–Habsburg rivalry.

I. Introduction

In the political arena of the 16th century, information played a decisive role and gave a vital advantage to those states that developed their strategies based on accurate information provided by reliable sources. In a constant battle with the logistical difficulties of the time, states had to invest in intelligence networks which, albeit simple and ineffective in modern standards, still provided them with the most precise infor-

*I used the term “counter-intelligence” to denote, lato sensu, all the activities to prevent enemy intelligence. I did not abstain from using such an anachronistic term following the trend among the historians of the early modern intelligence such as Bély (1990), Preto (1994), Hugon (2004), Garnicer–Marcos (2005) who already took the liberty of using modern terms like secret service, disinformation, counter-intelligence, etc.
information according to which they were to allocate their resources and shape their policies. The decision-making process and therefore the feasibility of political and military strategies depended on the quality of the gathered information.

To gain an advantage over their rivals, states sought to make use of and control information. Information gathering was only one aspect of the early modern “secret diplomacy”. In accordance with their “intelligence strategy”, early modern states engaged in a number of different activities such as disinformation, information analysis, cryptanalysis, propaganda, bribery, sabotage and finally counter-intelligence, the subject of this article.

The historical conditions of the 16th century as well as the international situation brought espionage “what could perhaps be considered its first Golden Age” (Garncier – Marcos 2005, p. 13), for two reasons. First, the information or the news itself, nouvelles, avisos, avvisi, ahbar, ahval, evza’ or whatever its name, gained a special importance in the 16th century because of diverse but related factors such as the development of international exchange, opening of new trade routes, printing press, the Reformation, the founding of public postal system and the intensification of human relations. According to Sardella, thanks to these developments, political, economic, intellectual, religious and social life acquired an international and world-wide character that it had not possessed before. Also, the news itself expanded its domain and acquired a more evident role in the daily lives of the commoners; general development of riches, culture and technique permitted the constitution of indispensable sources for the study of information, evident from a number of examples demonstrated by the French historian in 1948.1 Furthermore, newsletters changed the nature and the scope of information between the last decades of the 15th and the first decade of the 16th century in Italy.2 The best example of these newsletters was the Fugger Zeitungen, some of which were published in English (von Klarwill 1926). These not only demonstrate the extent to which the Augsburg firm efficiently gathered information from all parts of the world, but also the relationship between the diffusion of information and the revolutionary developments in exchange systems, overseas communication and international trade networks in the 16th century.

Secondly and more importantly, since the focus of this study is on the central governments, I should explore the relationship between the development of “administrative-bureaucratic structures” (Preto 1994, pp. 25–38) and the complexity and the efficiency of the mechanisms of secret diplomacy. The 16th century experienced several concomitant trends which expanded the influence and complexity of central gov-

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1 The developments in book-keeping, the frequency of resorting to public or private acts in daily transactions and thus the multiplication of diarists (Sardella 1948, p. 16).
2 Merchant letters of private nature gave way to handwritten newsletters about political events in Europe. Before the invention of newspapers in the 17th century, these newsletters provided a regular source of information for the public which sought to appease its “fever of information”. In the words of Pius V in 1568, “a new art” emerged, the art of compiling newsletters (Infelise 2002, p. vi). Could this liberal flow of information in centres like Venice have facilitated spies’ jobs?
ernments and rendered espionage more important. One was the rise of the bigger polities which could and did develop more complex institutions for the central governments to achieve political ends. Certain by-products of bureaucratisation and centralisation such as the establishment of reliable postal services, appointment of resident ambassadors and the development of the techniques of steganography, cryptanalysis and cryptography helped the development of information-gathering mechanisms and consequently raised the importance of counter-intelligence efforts for policy makers. This process of bureaucratisation and institutionalisation brought another advantage for our study; starting from the mid-16th century, early modern states produced more documentation which enhanced the quality of historical analysis. Both Ottoman and European archives which were consulted for this study produced little documentation before the mid-16th century. The amount of pertinent documentation would suffice, neither in quality nor in quantity, to draw too many conclusions.

The 16th century brought important political responsibilities for the Ottomans. The length and the scope of both Ottoman–Habsburg and the Ottoman–Safavid rivalry convinced the Ottomans to develop their secret diplomacy by establishing an intelligence network in a large geography in order to provide the central government with regular information. Nevertheless, in the war of information between the Ottomans and their rivals, the success of Ottoman information-gathering was intertwined with the efficiency of Ottoman counter-intelligence, an important component of the Ottoman secret service. In order to gain an advantage in the “politics of information”, the agents of Ottoman secret diplomacy had to refuse the enemy a comfort which they sought for their masters: Access to information about the adversary.

A small number of articles on Ottoman information gathering in the 16th century appeared in English. Nicolas Biegman (1963) published documents from the State Archive at Dubrovnik and reiterated the role of the Republic of Ragusa as an information provider for the Ottomans. Skilliter (1976), with a thorough study of both European and Ottoman sources, succeeded in portraying an Ottoman spy and his travels in Europe. From the Topkapı Museum Archives, Isom-Verhaaren (1996) published a spy report on Martin Luther and Charles V, while Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (2003) published three others and explored the Ottoman information-gathering in Hungary. Finally, in a recent article, Gábor Ágoston (2007) attempted a systematic study of Ottoman information gathering in the 16th century within the context of the “Ottoman grand strategy” (Ágoston 2007, see esp. pp. 78–92). The following pages aim to supplement these past research and make a significant contribution to the studies of Ottoman information-gathering, still in its infancy, by shedding light to a different aspect of Ottoman intelligence mechanism, that of counter-intelligence.

3 There is also Ménage (1965, pp. 112–132), which covers, however, the 15th century.
4 For his other articles on Ottoman information gathering, in Hungarian, see Ágoston (1999; 2005).
II. The Methods of Ottoman Counter-Intelligence

A. Border Supervision and Road Patrol

One of the struggles early modern empires faced was the supervision of their borders. The difficulties created by the limited capabilities that the early modern technology provided central governments were aggravated by geographical factors and prevented the efficiency of counter-intelligence. The Ottomans were no exception. In the absence of consolidated boundaries and an efficient border patrol system, the physical characteristics of the terrain and the length of the border made it increasingly difficult for the Ottomans to prevent the penetration of enemy agents. To succeed in this difficult enterprise, the Ottomans used a variety of methods.

The most radical method was to close the borders with a state with which the Ottomans were in war, to the extent this was possible with 16th-century military technology and logistical capabilities. In 1572, an order was dispatched to the governors and judges in the frontier districts to allow the entrance of Jewish merchants who came from Venice to Yanya (Ioannina) and Narda (Arta) into the Ottoman Empire with the stipulation that they should still be careful with the Venetian spies who might use the occasion to cross the border which was closed after the outbreak of the Ottoman–Venetian War in 1570. During this war, the possibility of enemy agents’ penetration to their lands agitated the Ottomans and convinced them to close their Balkan borders entirely rather than just the Venetian border. The border with Wallachia, Moldavia and Poland was closed, after the Ottoman officials caught enemy spies who were carrying letters written by the Patriarch of Thessalonica to Poland and Muscovy. Even Ragusa, an Ottoman vassal, was not immune from Ottoman suspicions. In 1572, the Ottoman Sultan prohibited commerce with Dubrovnik and the passage of Christian merchants to Constantinople as well as that of Ottoman subjects to Ragusa, so that, according to the Spanish agent in Ragusa, no information about Ottoman war preparations could be leaked to the Christians. The maritime borders

5 It would be best to make a clarification about the English translations of Ottoman and Habsburg administrative titles to prevent confusion. A Habsburg Virrey, i.e. the King’s representative and the governor in one of the reinos, kingdoms under the Habsburg crown, is translated as “Viceroy”. On the other hand, his counterpart in the Ottoman administration, a Beylerbeyi, is translated as “Governor-General” of a Beylerbeyilik which itself is translated as “Province”. In the lower administrative level, both Habsburg gobernador or governor and Ottoman sancakbey are translated as “governor” despite the fact that the translations of their respective administrative unit differ respectively: “Province” for Habsburg provincia vs. “district” for Ottoman sancak.

6 For instance, mountainous areas in the frontiers such as Eastern Anatolia and Albania created problems for Ottoman counter-intelligence. The length of the Ottoman–Venetian border was another challenge (Kissling 1977, p. 105).

7 Başbakankılık Osmanlı Arşivleri (hereafter BOA), Mühimme Defteri (hereafter MD), XIX, nos 165 and 230.

8 BOA, MD, X, nos 325 and 326 (Hıri, hereafter H.), 3 Ramazan 979, A.D. 19 January 1572.

9 Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), Papeles de Estado (hereafter E), 1331, fol. 217 (24 March 1572).

were no exception and passengers travelling by sea could be subject to similar treat-
ment: In 1564, the Ottomans ordered that people who came from Europe should not
be allowed in the city of Tripolis, when they heard that enemy spies, disguised as
Muslims, managed to penetrate into the city (BOA, MD, V, nos 1502 and 1503 – H. 9 Şevval 973, A.D. 29 April 1566).

Excluding such times of difficulty, the Ottomans were content with establish-
ing an efficient border patrol system rather than resorting to such drastic measures.
Local authorities constantly patrolled roads to catch enemy spies, albeit with mixed
results. It was difficult, but not impossible for able spies such as Giovanni Maria
Renzo10 to travel within the Ottoman Empire without being detected, as he did in
1567. He was audacious; in spite of having been warned by the Spanish agents in
Constantinople that the Ottomans were looking for him, he refused to return and trav-
elled from Ragusa to Constantinople by changing his name and following unusual
routes (AGS, E 1056, fol. 43; 20 April 1567).

Early modern states tried to overcome physical difficulties of patrolling their
borders by certain common practices which restricted the movement of people. For
instance, safe-travelling within the Ottoman Empire required an official authorisa-
tion. In 1571, three monks, who claimed to have been sent by the Patriarch of Con-
stantinople (Metrophanes III, office 1565–1572) to beg for alms (cerrâr makâlesiinde
olub) were detained by local authorities when they could not produce documents given
by the Patriarch (BOA, MD, XVI, no. 541). The Viceroy of Sicily, Don Garcia de
Toledo was convinced in 1566 of the difficulty of travelling freely in the Ottoman
realm because of new fortifications and frequent patrols that made it impossible for
foreigners without documentation to enter the Ottoman lands (AGS, E 1127, fol. 100;
2 July 1566). There was no exception even for the Ottoman spies of foreign origin.
Two Lucchese spies that Joseph Nasi11 sent to Puglia could travel from Constantin-
ople to Ragusa only because they were accompanied by an Ottoman çavuş (AGS, E
1058, fol. 40; 7 April 1570).

Foreign Christians could travel safely in the Ottoman Empire, only if they car-
rried a safe-conduct (‘amân) in the form of an imperial diploma (berât) which pro-
vided them with legal protection under the status of a musta’min (İnalçık 1965; 1971).
Such berât’s were given only to the subjects of those rulers who had received an
‘ahdname on behalf of, and entered into cordial relations with, the Ottoman Sultan,

10 The founder and the leader, until his death in 1577, of the Spanish intelligence network in
Constantinople, Giovanni Maria Renzo travelled several times between Madrid, Naples and Con-
stantinople, carrying important correspondence as well as instructions and salaries for spies. During
these travels he should have gained a considerable familiarity with routes, stops and patrols.

11 Joseph Nasi, a powerful Marrano with large financial means managed to become Selim
II’s favourite and a formidable rival to omnipotent Grand Vizier Sokollu during the Ottoman–Ve-
netian War. He employed numerous spies in the West and used his connections in trade and finan-
cial centres, first and foremost with Jewish communities in Mediterranean ports, for gathering
information on behalf of the Ottomans. See Roth (1948) and Rosenblatt (1965).
such as Venice and France. Foreign travellers and Ottomans’ Christian subjects were not the only ones who had to carry documentation; Muslims also had to prove their identity and establish a valid reason for their travels. To give an example: When the Ottoman local authorities asked for his documents from a certain Ahmed who wanted to cross the Dardanelles, he ran leaving his horse and goods, only to confirm the suspicions. He was detained and transferred to Constantinople with his belongings (BOA, MD, LVIII, no. 447; H. 25 C 993, A.D. 24 June 1585).

In the absence of adequate documentation, enemy spies tried to conceal their identities by travelling in disguise. This way they aimed to not only arouse less suspicion, but also create an alibi for their travels in case of an interrogation. The aforementioned Giovanni Maria Renzo was disguised as the French ambassador during his travel to Constantinople in 1567 (AGS, E 1056, fol. 43; 20 April 1567). His success may not have been repeated by others. Three spies, disguised as the French ambassador’s men and travelling with a janissary that accompanied them to Constantinople from Ragusa, the entry and departure point for European envoys to the Ottoman Empire, were detained in Herzegovina in 1571. The local authorities realised that they were in disguise (tebdîl-i sûret) since one of them had previously used the same excuse to leave the Ottoman Empire. He was serving in the entourage of the French ambassador, yet with different clothes and in another function, as the ambassador’s servant (BOA, MD, XII, no. 291; H. 22 Zilkade 978, A.D. 17 April 1571; XIV, no. 1421; H. 29 Zilhicce 978, A.D. 24 May 1571). The same year, a Milanese was detained when the Ottomans realised he was not who he claimed to be. The same Ahmed, who was detained while trying to pass to Anatolia from the Dardanelles in merchant’s disguise, claimed to be the çâñi-gîr of the Grand Vizier ‘Osmân Pasha. He claimed to have been sent to the region to collect a certain amount of money that belonged to a cavuş and a silahdar of the Pasha’s household. Religious attire was often a convenient disguise as well. The famous Spanish agent and diplomat Martin de Acuña used monasteries as lodgings on his way to Constantinople (AGS, E 1074, fol. 108). In another instance, enemy spies chose to travel as monks until they were discovered and detained by local authorities with the letters they carried (BOA, MD, X, nos 325 and 326; H. 3 Ramazan 979, A.D. 19 January 1572).

12 On the development of the Islamic legal theory behind such concepts and co-operation between the Europeans and Muslims, see Theunissen (1998, pp. 24–40; for the Ottoman case, see pp. 185–368).

13 He claimed that he was a Frenchman instead of Milanese (thus he was not a Habsburg subject) and that he came to Constantinople only to bring the (false) news that Philip II was not willing to join an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Venetians. AGS, E 1060, fol. 140 (15 June 1571).

14 Upon discovery of large sum of cash in his bags, he changed his testimony and told his interrogators that these belonged to former Vezir-i Â’zam Siyavuş Paşa. The Ottomans were unimpressed and ordered his dispatch to Constantinople for further investigation. BOA, MD, LVIII, no. 447 (H. 25 Cemaziyelahir 993, A.D. 24 June 1585).

15 Enslaved after the fall of Tunis and taken to Constantinople in 1574, de Acuña quickly recovered his liberty and converted himself to a Spanish agent and saboteur who proposed a number of plots to the Spanish court and became the main protagonist of the early stages of Ottoman–Spanish negotiations for a truce. See Braudel (1962), Rivas – García (2001) and Salgado (2004).

Sometimes, the enemy information gathering was in the form of a reconnaissance mission where a group of soldiers crossed the border to spy on enemy fortifications, a situation which required the active participation of the governors themselves, such as the Governor-General of Bosnia, who had to fight and eliminate such a raiding party in 1584 (BOA, MD, LV, no. 78; H. 20 Zilkade 992, A.D. 23 November 1584). Another document mentions that the governor of Solnok caught 25 spies, probably on a reconnaissance mission since they were all armed (mûselleh) (BOA, MD, XVI, no. 577; H. 12 Muharrem 979, A.D. 6 June 1571).

The Ottoman diligence in patrolling the roads reached the extent to which the authorities chose to divert the routes which the suspicious elements favoured. For instance, to be able to effectively supervise Shiite pilgrims from Persia, the Ottomans imposed upon them a more impractical route during their pilgrimage. They were to follow the “official” caravan routes via Damascus, Cairo and Yemen rather than the Baghdad–Basra–Hejaz route (see Faroqhi 1994, pp. 135–137; see also MD, XII, nos 896 and 897; H. 7 Rebiülevvel 979, A.D. 30 July 1571). The same year, they refused the Ragusan diplomats’ desire to return to their home by sea, as the time was not right (BOA, MD, XVIII, no. 219; H. 13 Şaban 979, A.D. 31 December 1571). This could have just meant that the season was too late to sail. However, this was also a precaution on behalf of the Ottomans who wanted to prevent the information leakage; it would not be wise to let Christians sail out of Constantinople, when the news of the disastrous defeat of Lepanto just arrived. They could have encountered the Christian navy and given them information concerning Constantinople. Furthermore, the Ottomans would not have taken an interest in such an irrelevant issue by discussing it in the Imperial Council and then recording it in the MD, had it not been a state matter.

B. Ottoman Subjects in Enemy Employ: The Fifth Column

Some of the enemy agents were proper Ottoman subjects. In the Western frontier, the Orthodox population in the Balkans co-operated with Christian powers such as the Venetians and the Habsburgs and operated as a Christian “fifth column” in the Ottoman Balkans. The Ottoman and the Spanish archives contain a large amount of documents that relate us the precariousness of the situation. Endemic rebellions and intensive correspondence between Orthodox nobles, clergy, towns and European rulers leave no doubt about the problems that the Ottomans faced in ruling their Christian subjects in less accessible areas. Repeating MD records prove us the failure of the

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16 Hess applied this 20th century term, originally coined by Emilio Mola in 1936 (see “fifth column”, Encyclopædia Britannica Online), for Moriscos in Spain who created a security problem for the Spanish crown in the 16th century (Hess 1968).

17 The centre of these rebellions were the Adriatic coasts and the Morea: The districts of İskenderiyye, Ohri (Eng. Ohrid), Elbasan (which included the port of Draj – Eng. Durazzo), Avlonya (Eng. Valona/Vlorë which included the cities of Arnavut Belgrad and Delvina), Yanya (Eng. Ioannina), Karl-elı (especially Engeli-kasrı) and Mora (Eng. Morea, especially Manya/ Mayna – Mani Peninsula, Kalamata, Mezistre – Mistra, Cimarra, Anapoli – Nauplia/ Nafplion) and finally the Aegean islands.
Ottomans in establishing order in these provinces and preventing the co-operation between the Europeans and their own subjects. Yet, this is not the place to document these incidents and illuminate the details of this co-operation, but to focus solely on the information gathering aspect.

This security problem became even more critical in 1570–1573 when the Ottomans were fighting a Christian coalition formed by Spain, Venice, the Papal States, Genoa, Florence and Malta. The Christian fleet under the command of the young Habsburg prince Don Juan made good use of Christians’ co-operation in order to learn the whereabouts of the Ottoman navy and gain a strategic advantage. Members of the Orthodox Church in the afore-mentioned areas were primary accomplices. The metropolitan of Balya Badra (Patras), for instance, not only organised a local rebellion against the Ottomans in co-operation with rebels of Manya, but also provided critical information for the Christian navy. He sent letters including his observations about the Ottoman navy when it reached the shores of Balya Badra: The galleys were not fully manned and it was the time for Christians to attack (BOA, MD, X, no. 174; H. 28 Şaban 979, A.D. 15 January 1572). Around the same time, the Ottomans issued an order for inspection against the monks of a monastery in Eğriboz (Negroponte/Euboea) who were suspected to be sending information to the enemy (BOA, MD, X, no. 299). In a very critical moment, at the beginning of the naval campaigning season in 1572, a year after the destruction of almost the entire Ottoman fleet in Lepanto when according to a Spanish agent in Ragusa “toda la Turquía comienza a llamars España, España” (AGS, E 1332, fol. 170; 12 February 1573), the Ottomans detected that Don Juan asked the metropolitan of Rhodes to inspect secretly the fortifications of the island. They ordered the elimination of the responsible clergy immediately (BOA, MD, XIX, no. 75 [mükerrer]; H. 13 Muharrem 980, A.D. 26 May 1572). Other Christian powers made use of this “fifth column” as well. During the same period, the monk-spies that were caught in Wallachia and sent to Constantinople for interrogation revealed that the Patriarch of Thessalonica, Yasef, sent certain Christians with letters to Poland and Muscovy (BOA, MD, X, nos 325 and 326; H. 3 Ramazan 979, A.D. 19 January 1572). The Ottomans ordered an overall investigation of the issue and the dispatch of the accused to the capital for interrogation; unfortunately no documentation concerning the result of the interrogation could be located in the archives.

Europeans found important allies among the Balkan nobility as well. Exiled nobles who were trying to get back their lost possessions and vassal princes who tried to throw the Ottoman suzerainty were potential accomplices. Their letters, which invited the Europeans to fight the Ottomans and offered co-operation, were also im-

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18 There are several records in both Ottoman and Spanish archives, especially in Mühimmes nos VI, X, XII, XIV, XVI, XVIII, XIX, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXIX, XL, XLVI, XLVIII, XLIX, LI, LVIII and Mühimme Zeyli Defterleri (hereafter Mzd) V. There is also a myriad of related documents scattered in the Venecta and Nápoles sections of AGS. See Imizcoz (1988).

19 The order also took the possibility of a military co-operation into account. It authorised the inspection of the monastery to see whether it was fortified and it had guns stored in it.
important sources of information concerning the Ottoman affairs. One of the princes of Wallachia, for instance, was in correspondence with both the Habsburgs and the Venetians. He offered to send them information concerning not only Wallachia, but also Moldavia, Podolia, Transylvania and Bulgaria, a valuable service given that the Spanish Habsburgs had no intelligence network in these provinces (AGS, E 1329, fol. 78; 2 August 1571).

Moreover, Christian Ottoman subjects in inaccessible areas were in a perpetual state of rebellion against the Ottoman rule. Among many activities they have undertaken for the enemy, one was feeding them with information. For example, Christian Ottoman subjects in the district of Dukakin were in co-operation with the Venetian garrison in the nearby castle of Kotron (Kotor/Cattaro). The rebels were plundering Ottoman villages, taking victuals to the Venetian castle, setting up ambushes on the roads and finally engaging in intelligence activity (BOA, MD, X, no. 451; H. Gurre-i Receb 979, A.D. 19 November 1571). Some of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire provided invaluable services to Christian information gathering by not only directly sending information to their coreligionists, but also providing lodging and scouting services for the incoming enemy spies. One of the most interesting examples is the co-operation between the Spanish Habsburgs and an Albanian noble, Duli, the leader of villages near Bastia on the Adriatic shores facing Corfu. He was favoured by the Ottoman governors of both Delvine and Avlonya (Valona) who gave them important military tasks and shared military secrets. Although in Ottoman employ, however, he had been helping the Habsburg agents that travelled to and from Constantinople since 1564. It was impossible for these agents to travel between the Ottoman lands and Corfu without being inspected in the port by the Ottoman commissary that was sent there only to catch spies and run-away slaves. Duli helped these agents enter and leave the Ottoman lands and gave them lodgings. He furthermore provided information to the Spanish consul/spymaster in Corfu. Finally, he was also considered by the Habsburg governors of the Adriatic Shores to have 5000 men when the Habsburgs invaded Ottoman shores in co-operation with Christian insurgents (AGS, E 487, Giralomo Combi Albanes; 20 de Abril 1577).

The Ottomans suffered from a similar “fifth column” problem in their Eastern front as well, a fact evident especially during the Ottoman–Persian War of 1577–1590. With the rise of the Safavids, and the propagation of Shiism among the discontent Turkic elements in Anatolia, the Ottomans had to take measures to prevent the spread of the Shiite ideology which alienated their subjects. In spite of Selim I’s victory over Shah Ismail in 1514 and severe persecution of the heterodox religious elements in Anatolia, the Ottomans could not eradicate the pro-Safavid elements within their realm and had to stay on alert for Safavid propagandists, halîfes, who not only recruited Ottoman subjects to their cause and collected alms from the local population, but also spied for the Safavids. There are several orders in MD that authorise investigations against suspect Shiites and their consequent elimination.20 The Ottomans

20 The frequency of these orders increases with the outbreak of the Ottoman-Safavid Wars. For instance see BOA, MD, XXIII, nos 188 (H. 14 Ramazan 985, A.D. 25 November 1577), 451
resorted to secret measures as well. In 1568, they ordered the assassination of the Safavid vizier Ma’sûm Beg who was passing through the Ottoman territory to Mecca for pilgrimage. At a time when the Ottomans and the Safavids were in peace, the Ottomans had to grant him permission for his visit; however, upon discovering that he had appointed functionaries of the Safavi order from among the Ottoman subjects, they ordered his assassination: A staged attack by the Beduins solved the problem (Faroqhi 1994, pp. 134–135). The same year, the Safavid agent (halife) in Amasya, Süleyman Fakih, faced a similar fate when the Ottomans ordered that he be drowned in the river of Kızılırmak or executed based on false accusations (BOA, MD, VII, no. 2067; H. 22 Rebiullevvel 976, A.D. 14 September 1568; Refik 1932, doc. 29).

Some of these halîfe were Ottoman subjects themselves, who, after having migrated to Safavid Persia, returned and operated as Safavid agents, such as a Küçük ‘Alî, who was executed. Even though the Ottomans tried to force the Persians to return the Ottoman subjects who had migrated to Persia, in accordance with the 1555 treaty (BOA, MD, XXII, no. 78; H. 7 Ramazan 985, A.D. 18 November 1577), they could hardly control their borders and prevent this exodus. These Shiites, mentioned in the Ottoman documents as râfizî, i.e. heterodox, could easily travel to Persia in merchant’s disguise and contact the Safavid authorities to deliver important information (BOA, MD, XXIII, no. 173; H. Gurre-i Ramazan 985, A.D. 12 November 1577). The conquest of Persian territories, in turn, created another problem for the Ottomans, since the Shiite population of the newly conquered cities, such as that of Hoy (Khoi) remained loyal to their Shah and sent him information (BOA, MD, IL, no. 56; 1583).

At critical times of intense warfare when the enemy threat grew more menacing, the Ottomans chose to remove such dissident elements from their borders, whether Western or Eastern. In 1532, when the Habsburg navy under the command of Andrea Doria was besieging Modon, the Habsburgs learned from the Albanians and Greeks who came to their assistance, that the Ottomans dismissed all the Christians in the city before the siege began (AGS, E 1309, fol. 190; 13 October 1532). In 1570, the Governor-General of Algeria, Uluç ‘Alî ordered the departure of all the Christian merchant ships from the port in order to conceal the fact that he would set sail for the Levant and join the Ottoman fleet for operations against Cyprus (AGS, E 487). Immediately after the Battle of Lepanto, the Ottomans received information from the ransomed Muslim slaves that the Venetians in Corfu entertained close relations with the Christian population in Yanya, in the castle of which, according to the report of its governor, one can find no Muslim save for its commander (dizdar), kethüda, imam and a couple of soldiers. The Ottomans ordered an investigation and, in case the allegations were true, the deportation of the Christian population from the castle and the settlement of Muslim population in their stead (BOA, MD, XII, no.


21 His wife, daughters and supporters who attended his meetings were also to be reported to Constantinople (BOA, MD, VII, no. 2254).

22 The letter of Andrea Gasparo Corso from Algiers (6 April 1570).
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1217; H. 27 Zilhicce 979, A.D. 11 May 1572). The Ottomans, especially during the
time of war, could not tolerate enemy sympathisers. In 1571, they dismissed five
thousand Albanians from Spalato (Eng. Split) after they conquered the castle which
was lost to the Venetians a year ago; they must have suspected of co-operation with
the enemy (AGS, E 1329, fol. 134; 16 December 1571). In 1575, Constantinople re-
ceived information that there were outsiders (ecnebi) among the guards of the castle
of Aydonat, contrary to the custom of that particular region, and warned the governor
of Delvine and the dizdar of the castle (BOA, MD, LVIII, no. 201; 17 Cemaziyelih-
vel 983/24 August 1575).

Enemy propaganda was another evil to be fought, especially in Anatolia where
the Safavid Shiism challenged the Ottoman Sunnism. In 1576, an Ottoman çavuş
named Yakup captured a Shiite named Veli in Ortapare who brought 34 books from
Persia to be distributed among the heterodox Ottoman subjects. He did not have
the books on him, however, as they had already started to circulate. The Ottomans or-
dered that these books be secretly confiscated\(^{23}\) and their circulators be imprisoned
(BOA, MD, XXVIII, no. 883; H. 19 Şaban 984, A.D. 11 November 1576; Refik
1932, doc. 47).

\(^{23}\) According to another order (MD, XXVII, no. 957, H. 5 Zilkade 983, A.D. 5 February
1576), confiscated books was to be dispatched to Constantinople (Kütükoğlu 1962, p. 12, fn. 42),

\(^{24}\) He still claimed to have men in the castle though. He renewed his plot with 17 men, one
of whom had the keys of the castle door. He even chose the day to attack: They day of San Jorge.
Mendoza, however, had a very low opinion of him, believing he would easily sell himself to the
Ottomans.

C. Enemy Spies in Ottoman Administration and Military

A further problem was the penetration of enemy agents to a fortification, or to the
ranks of Ottoman local forces. The Ottomans went to great lengths to remove these
enemy agents. In 1544, a Friar Pedro de Spalato contacted the Habsburg ambassador
in Venice, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, the famous Spanish poet, novelist and histori-
ian. He claimed to have established communication with guards of the castle of
Clissa. Unfortunately, the Ottomans suspected of this co-operation and quickly re-
moved the guards from the castle (AGS E 1497, libro E 66, fol. 234; 17 December
1544). In 1571, 3 dizdars, who were suspected to be in communication with the
Venetians, were removed from their positions in the castle of Nauplia as well (BOA,
MD, XVIII, no. 204; H. 13 Şaban 979, A.D. 31 December 1571). Another precaution
was to keep the garrison from leaving the castle and thus eliminating the possibility
of contact between the approaching enemy navy and their informants inside (BOA,
MD, XVI, no. 636; H. 21 Cemaziyelihah 979, A.D. 10 November 1571). An alliance
between a member of an Ottoman garrison and the enemy was not unique to the
Western front. A sol bölük katibi, Veli, in the castle of the newly conquered Tiflis in
1591, was suspected to be collaborating with the Georgian prince Simon. An investi-
gation was ordered and in case of a positive result he was to be arrested and sent to Constantinople (BOA, MZD, V, no. 220).

The caution of the Ottomans convinced them to monitor not only the culprit but also others who were related to him, be they family, friends or supporters. For instance, the Ottomans exiled a certain ‘Ali bin ‘Osmân from the castle of Santa Maura, only because in the past his father surrendered the castle to the enemy without a fight and contrary to the will of its people. The order of exile included his brothers and followers/friends (karınlaşları ve ba’zi tevâbi’leri), who, the dizzar, the kethüda and the guards of the castle argued, may repeat Osman’s father’s deed (BOA, MD, V, no. 1434; H. 17 Ramazan 973, A.D. 7 April 1566). In a similar example, it was reported that the tribe (îâ’îfe) of Çepnis from the Canik region, which had handed in the castle of Erciş to the Safavids, were exiled. However, some of them later returned and managed to acquire office (dirlik) in the castle. The Ottomans, warned by the local authorities, sent an order for the expulsion of all the Çepnis from the castles of Ahat, Erciş, Van, Bitlis and ‘Adü’ıcevâz (BOA, MD, VII, no. 2281; H. 28 Rebiulahir 976, A.D. 20 October 1568).

The details of Ottoman military preparations and frontier fortifications were main targets of enemy espionage. These crucial details may help the enemy’s military strategy by showing the strength and weakness of Ottoman defenses and the time and size of Ottoman military expeditions. To gather such information, the Habsburgs sent several agents such as Scipion Ansalon, who was not only sent to ensure the ransom of a prisoner of war, but also asked to spy on the fortifications of La Goleta, Bizerta and al-Mahdiyya (Africa) (AGS, E 1147 fol. 10; 28 de Hebrero 1577). To prevent such enemy intelligence, the Ottomans tried to keep foreign elements away from fortifications. That this precaution was an efficient method is evident from the worries expressed by Habsburg authorities: The Duke of Gandia was convinced in the impossibility of obtaining detailed information concerning the fortifications and defenses in Algiers. Merchants and foreigners were not allowed to observe the city walls, either from inside or outside, and the only way to observe fortifications would be from the sea, from too much of a distance to gather detailed information (AGS, E 487, Duque de Gandia; 31 May 1573).

There were enemy agents in the central Ottoman military structure as well. For the Ottoman army, this problem was aggravated while fighting the Safavids which could have employed the Ottoman soldiers who were sympathetic to Shiism, as well as the centrifugal elements such as the frontier lords. In the Battle of Çaldıran (1514), the Ottomans had to engage the enemy with an exhausted army since the Defterdar Pîrî Mehmed Çelebi warned the War Council that Shah Ismail had supporters within the Ottoman army, especially among the frontier families such as the Mihalloğulları, who would change sides in case the army was given rest (Tansel 1969, p. 53). They must have also sent information to the Safavids, since in the same battle Shah Ismail was well informed of Ottoman tactics. He attacked the Ottoman reserves in the left

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25 There were Kızılbaş among the timariot cavalry for instance. BOA, MD, X, no. 279 (1571).
flank which the Ottomans planned to use to outflank the Safavid right flank. This
spoiled the Ottoman tactic to fake a retreat in front of the charging Safavid cavalry to
lure them into the range of the Ottoman artillery, a tactic which annihilated the Safa-
vid left flank in the same battle (Tansel 1969, pp. 57–58).

Ottoman navy was not immune to the penetration of enemy agents and sympa-
thisers as well. Most of its sailors and rowers were of Christian origin. The renegades
and corsairs that filled the ranks of the Ottoman navy and Arsenal did not hesitate to
coop-erate with the enemy and send them information in exchange for financial gains.
The Ottoman could do little to prevent this leakage of information. The extensive in-
telligence network that the Spanish managed to establish, thanks to the influx of
Spanish and Italian slaves in Constantinople after the Ottoman victory in the Battle
of Djerba (1560), included several Ottoman officers in the navy and the Arsenal, as
well as the members of the multi-national household of the Grand Admiral Uluç ‘Ali.26
Two of them are worthy of mention: Haydar (Robert Drever) and Sinan (Juan Briones)
sent accurate27 information about the movements of the Ottoman navy as well as se-
cret negotiations between Ottoman dignitaries.28

In addition, there was a constant danger of rebellion by the Christian slave-
rowers. Apart from the problem this weakness created during war-time, proven by
Habsburg strategies to utilise these rowers’ questionable loyalty, they also took con-
tr-o of the ships and escaped to the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily in the ports of
which they left extensive reports full with information concerning the Ottoman Em-
pire for the Habsburg authorities. The Ottomans did not seem to effectively cope
with the problem and prevent this leakage of information, as there are several intelli-
gence reports like that in almost every legajo in the Nápoles section of the Papeles
de Estado in Simancas.

D. Frontier without Boundaries: The Sea

The Mediterranean Sea proved itself a challenge to the Ottoman counter-intelligence.
The maritime border between the Ottoman Empire and the Europeans gradually
moved westwards in the 15th and 16th centuries from the Aegean Sea to the Adriatic
and the Western Mediterranean with the decline of Italian maritime states and the

26 Sola counts six of them in 1581. Murat Ağâ, his mayorduomo, Süleyman Ağâ (Antonio
de Vale, a Lombard), Murat Ağâ (Sp. Comorat, Carlo Daniel, an English), two Frenchmen in the
habito de San Juan, and a Spaniard, the son of the captain of La Goleta. Sola – de la Peña (1995,
pp. 80–81).
27 Juan de Cuñiga considered their news accurate. AGS, E 1081, fol. 163 (14 November
1580).
28 See for instance, AGS, E 490, Poliza de Sinan y Aydar (17 October 1579). Full text in
Emilio Sola: Un Ferrarés en Estambul, Regef Bei Uglan o Recep Oglan Bei. Archivo de la Fronte-
ra, http://www.archivodelafrontera.com/pdf/A-MED24.pdf. Also see two anonymous reports that
give precise information about the movement of the Ottoman navy in the Black Sea. E 1080, fols 41
(14 May 1579) and 51 (1 June 1579). According to Margliani, these were written by Sinan and
Haydar. E 1080, fol. 58 (3 August 1579).
rise of the Ottoman corsary in the Western Mediterranean. This, however, did not solve the problem of supervising the maritime borders since the Christian ships could still penetrate deep into the Ottoman waters.

The hardships of supervising the maritime borders shaped the Ottoman grand strategy and the Ottomans tried to prevent information leaking by conquering nearby naval bases. In 1522, they conquered the island of Rhodes from St. John’s Knights who were encouraging Christian rulers to attack the Ottomans by sending them information about possible allies they might find among the Ottomans’ Christian subjects.29 The conjecture that with the Corfu expedition (1537) the Ottomans would have also solved the problem of the penetration of enemy agents, who were using the Venetian island to land the badly guarded Ottoman shores, is worthy of further scholarly debate. One of the main reasons of the Ottoman conquest of Chios in 1566, according to Kâtib Çelebi, was that the Chians were sending detailed information to Europe concerning the size, crew and whereabouts of the Ottoman navy, taking advantage of their geographical proximity (Kâtib Çelebi 1973, p. 120). In a report given by a slave that ran away from Constantinople, it was related that the Ottomans could attack Ragusa and Monte de Santangel in Naples in order to prevent enemy intelligence.30 The conquest of Cyprus should have solved a similar problem, even though there were other strategic objectives as well. The island was giving shelter to not only enemy corsairs, but also spies who wanted to pass to Ottoman Anatolia. In 1531, a Venetian named Andrea Morefin, for instance, was arrested in Aleppo and accused of bringing there a Spanish envoy for Persia whom he provided with two guides until Taurus Mountains. One of the guides was also arrested and Morefin was executed. Despite the Venetians’ denial of involvement, the Ottomans held them responsible (AGS, E 1308, fol. 186; 5 May 1531).31

While the Ottoman conquest of nearby bases as a means of counter-intelligence demonstrates us the difficulties that Constantinople experienced while claiming the sea with its navy, the Ottomans’ efforts to combine human effort and insufficient technology to prevent enemy intelligence was further complicated by the vast dimensions of the sea and the consequent problem of projecting power and control upon it. The Ottomans’ defeat was evident in their overcautious attitude towards suspicious elements that they encountered on the sea. In 1569, for instance, they arrested two Spaniards on a Venetian ship in 1569, warning the bailo that the Venetians should not welcome the subjects of Sultan’s enemies on their ships, unable or at least unwilling to make a distinction between Habsburg soldiers and Venetian mercenaries (Ar-

29 For instance in 1494 to Charles VII. Durrieu (1912).
30 There were other targets that the document mentioned, such as La Goleta, Cyprus and Malta. AGS, E 487, Advertimientos de Turquia y otros de importancia.
31 Cyprus was a stepping stone also for the agents of the Shahs who wanted to go to Europe to propose an anti-Ottoman coalition. For instance, in 1508, Pietro Zen, the Venetian Consul of Damascus, sent from Beirut two Persian agents to Venice, via Cyprus (Lucchetta 1968, p. 127). On their second journey, these agents, as well as their Cypriot companion Nicolò Soror and other Venetian merchants in whose packsaddles Shah’s letters were found, were arrested by Mamluk authorities (Lucchetta 1968, p. 148). Soror confessed that he was sent by the Rectors of Cyprus (Lucchetta 1968, p. 154).
chivio di Stato di Venezia [hereafter ASV], Senato, Dispacci, Costantinopoli [hereafter SDC], fil. 5, fol. 12; 11 May 1569). They furthermore inspected the ships that arrived or left the Ottoman ports, for a number of reasons, one of which was to prevent enemy intelligence. For instance, in 1565, the Kâpi Ağası, the chief eunuch in the Ottoman palace, came down to the port and interrogated the crew of the ship that brought the annual tribute from the Genoese of Chios to Constantinople. When one of them informed that there were numerous letters from the Christian inhabitants of Pera in the ship, he confiscated them to be read out in the palace. Fortunately for Christians of Pera and the Genoese of Chios, they did not contain critical information about the Ottoman Empire (Archivio di Stato di Genoa [hereafter ASG], Constantinopoli, Mazzo, I. n.g. 2169; Argenti 1941, p. xciii). Obviously these were successful episodes which were well-documented; it can be inferred, however, the success rate of this application of extreme vigilance was not very promising.

Where the regular forces failed, irregular ones might have succeeded. The pragmatic Ottomans hardly failed to notice the advantages behind the use of corsairs, which they started to employ after the outbreak of the Ottoman–Venetian War of 1499–1503. Their help was crucial for the Ottomans especially in the Adriatic Sea where the Ottoman naval presence was fragile. One of their many functions was to patrol the sea and by extension help Ottoman counter-intelligence. Apart from occasional raids of frigates that carried Venetian correspondence (ASV, Senato, Secreto, Deliberazioni, Costantinopoli [hereafter SenDelC], reg. 3, c. 51v; 29 August 1566), corsairs also confronted enemy ships which penetrated into the Ottoman waters for either information gathering or smuggling prohibited goods (Ott., mercus esya, Lat. merces prohibite) (Ágoston 2001). In 1574, for instance, a certain corsair named Cafer, who himself was returning from an information-gathering mission, found a galliot that Don Juan had sent to the Ottomans shores to gather information. He seized the ship, liberated the prisoners (dil) whom the Christians kidnapped to interrogate, and massacred the crew (BOA, MD, XXV, no. 2686; H. 26 Cemaziylahir 982, A.D. 12 October 1574). In another incident, in 1540, corsairs seized a frigate destined for Naples with a Spanish spy named Pedro Secula who was carrying the Viceroy of Sicily’s letters. These corsairs also intercepted the Habsburg correspondence between Habsburg officials and spies as well as the Habsburg centre and provinces in the Mediterranean. They thus compromised the speed and the effectiveness of communications and increased the expenditures for the Habsburgs. In 1573, Spanish agent in Ragusa, Luis de Portillo would complain that he had to pay 50 scudi for the frigate that he sent to Barleta, because “nobody wanted to go as they feared the fiuste” (read

32 These letters gave him the task of sailing secretly to the Canal of Corfu from where he would enter the Ottoman lands with a Venetian ship. If he did not manage to do so, he was to throw his letters to the sea and then take the longer route and land in Candia, from where he would send information concerning the whereabouts of the Ottoman navy. Then he would go to Nauplia and look for dissidents to contact for a future military co-operation with the Habsburgs, offering them victuals, man and weapons. He was executed in Constantinople. AGS, E 1497, libro E 67, fol. 112; E 1316, fol. 70 (8 October 1540).
corsairs}. Portillo asked the Habsburgs to write to the Ragusan authorities so that they furnished him with couriers when he needed them (AGS, E 1332, fol. 35; 20 March 1573). Philip II himself complained to the Viceroy of Sicily that his letter dated 24 June 1574 was intercepted by a corsair ship, to which the frigate that carried the courier fell prey, in the southern shores of France. The courier managed in saving his skin and arrived in Spain; albeit without dispatches. Fortunately, upon learning the news, the Viceroy sent the duplicates via Naples (AGS, E 1141, fol. 159; E 1141, fol. 162; 6 October 1574).

Even when there was not co-operation between the locals and the enemy, ships on reconnaissance missions can land and interrogate the locals to gather information. The Ottomans tried to prevent this by seeking to isolate local population from Christian ships. During the heyday of the Cyprus War, two galleys and three galliots (kalîte) approached the shores of Tripolis in Syria, disguised as Muslim ships. They seized a ship, laden with soap, in order to gather information about the Ottoman war efforts. The Ottomans, alerted by this deep penetration of enemy ships, ordered the Governor-General of Damascus and the Governor of Tripolis that coasts should be guarded with sufficient man in order to impede the landing of the enemy. Furthermore, they should not allow flocks and shepherds in the coasts, but rather place them in a palace of one-day distance from the shore. Both precautions intended to cut the communication between the locals and the enemy (BOA, MD, IX, no. 249). In the Eastern Mediterranean, the Ottomans employed a small patrol squadron consisting of 12–16 ships brought by the sea governors (deryâ beyleri), of districts that were attached to the Grand Admiral’s province of Cezâir-i Bahri Sefîd. These were entrusted with the task of deryâ muhafâzâsî, the protection of the Ottoman coasts when the Ottoman navy was away (Imber 1980, pp. 255 ff., and Fodor 2002). They assured the security of sea passage between provinces, escorted important Ottoman officials to their posts, prevented contraband trade and fought enemy ships which not only attacked Ottoman coasts and ships, but also engaged in information gathering.33

**E. Personae non Gratae: Incomunicado Diplomats**

Early modern ambassadors were important figures in the world of espionage. They made profit of their easy access to important government officials, diplomatic prerogatives that granted them relatively larger freedom of action and financial means to recruit spies in the Ottoman capital. The Ottomans tended to supervise these spie

33 The captured sailors, be they the crew of the captured ships or those who had to land ashore after their ships were wrecked by bad weather, were sent to Constantinople, after an initial local interrogation. BOA, MD, V, nos 580 (H. 2 Cemaziyelevvel 973, A.D. 25 November 1565); 660 (H. 20 Cemaziyelevvel 973, A.D. 12 December 1565); 1006 (H. 19 Receb 973, A.D. 9 February 1566). For their dispatch to Constantinople, there were economic reasons as well. The Ottomans wanted to keep the profits to themselves from the sale or ransom of these captured crews. See LXVII, no. 188 (H. Selh-i Rebiul evvel 999, A.D. 26 January 1591). They had a similar policy towards the North African provinces. See Gürkan (2010, pp. 142–143).
onorate as well as their entourage who, as educated government officials, would be more dangerous spies than those disguised in other professions.

Firstly, they limited these envoys’ access to local population on their way to Constantinople in order to prevent them from making observations, contacting with future collaborators and propagating religious ideas. Their routes were organised by the government which sent cavuşes to accompany them on their way to the capital and alerted the local governors and judges to supervise their transportation and limit their access to locals (BOA, MD, VII, nos 549, 594; H. Selh-i Cemaziyelahir 975, A.D. 31 December 1567, and 619). European envoys occasionally had to wait for an Ottoman cavuş in Ragusa, whose task was to take them to Constantinople following a previously specified route. The Ottomans regulated the travel routes of even the ambassadors of their vassals, such as those of the Republic of Ragusa (Biegman 1967, pp. 143–144; docs 69 and 70). Persian envoys, on the other hand, created a much more serious problem because of the pro-Safavid sympathies of the Anatolian population. The Ottomans could not prevent these sympathisers to approach the ambassador and give him offerings and the alms they collected in the name of the Persian Shah (miṣūr u sadakat). What the Ottomans did, instead, was ingenious. In 1568, they ordered the local governors to compile a register of their subjects, who contacted the ambassador and gave him offerings and alms, and then to execute them with false accusations such as murder, theft and banditry. Later they even appointed scribes to accompany the Persian ambassador to draft such registers (BOA, MZD, II, no. 215; H. 27 Zilhicce 982, A.D. 9 April 1585; Kütükoğlu 1962, p. 5, fn. 18). Finally, it should be recorded that the Ottomans forbade the Safavid ambassador from distributing charity to the local people in the name of the Shah and hence making Safavid propaganda in Ottoman lands. If they had money to spend on charities, an Ottoman document recorded, the ambassador should distribute these rather among the Shah’s own subjects (BOA, MD, VII, no. 1292; H. 17 Şevvāl 975, A.D. 15 April 1568; Refik 1932, doc. 24).

34 BOA, MD, XL, no. 204 (H. 26 Şaban 987, A.D. 18 October 1579) orders the Governor-General of Buda to keep an eye on the entourage of the Austrian ambassador who was bringing the tribute to Constantinople, for it was suspected that there were spies among his men.

35 Spying was not exactly a profession per se, spies were not accepted as a part of the military structure and compensated with a regular income; that is why each dealt with another profession. Some of the professions created a more favourable environment which helped spies establish social networks and political connections, vital to the information gathering, as well as easily cross the religious and cultural boundaries that supposedly existed between Christianity and Islam: Merchants, ransom agents, pilgrims, travelling priests, sailors, corsairs, etc.

36 Not every envoy was taken from Ragusa by a cavuş. For instance, in 1546, Alessandro Contarini entered the Ottoman Empire from Cissia where the kahya of the Governor was waiting for him. ASV, Senato, Archivio Proprio Costantinopoli (hereafter SAPC), fil. 4, docs 5, 8 and 9. These documents also give us an idea about how quickly the Venetian bailo started to make observations about military preparations and sent these information to Venice.

37 However, these orders were not implemented.

38 BOA, MD, VII, nos 1835 (H. Gurre-i Rebıulevel 976, A.D. 24 August 1568) to the Governor of Amasya and 1984 (H. Selh-i Safer 976, A.D., 23 August 1568) to the Governor-General of Rum.
Once in Constantinople, a foreign ambassador could even make better use of information-gathering channels. In order to prevent this, the Ottomans strictly supervised these ambassadors, especially if they came from a state with which the Ottomans had sour relations. The famous Austrian ambassador, Busbecq, were kept in house arrest for six months, incommunicado and isolated from the outside when he came to Constantinople for the second time in January 1556 (Forster 2005, p. 79). A couple of years later, he was under close surveillance; every night he was locked in his own resident by a çavuş who then took the keys away. This was done partly to gain a psychological leverage in diplomatic negotiations, a common Ottoman tactic. But it also assured that Busbecq could not involve in any intelligence activity. Spanish envoy Giovanni Margliani faced similar pressures while he was negotiating the Ottoman–Habsburg truce. In 1581, he was even advised by his connections in the Ottoman capital to place a segurta, a bail, to dissuade the Ottomans to place him under guard. This they could have done because they thought that Margliani, after having been refused license to leave at a time when the negotiations between the Ottomans and Habsburg halted, might choose to run away.

The resident Venetian diplomats were subject to much suspicion of the Ottoman authorities as well. This suspicion should be the reason why the Ottomans restricted the sojourn of the Venetian Bailo in Constantinople, first to one year in 1503, then to 3 years after 1513. Their discontent grew to the extent that they even

39 Busbecq fought his conditions valiantly. Upset with his çavuş, he locked himself in (thus the çavuş out) in one occasion and broke the door in another to see the Sultan leave the capital on an expedition, much to the ire of the Ottoman pashas who “had not liked the idea that their master should be seen by a Christian at the head of the small army which he was leading against his son” (Forster 2005, pp. 138–149).

40 Busbecq was also threatened with worst tortures by the Ottoman viziers and encountered hostility of the local people.

41 It was not only the Ottomans who tried to restrict the contact between locals and foreign ambassadors to prevent information leakage. With a law promulgated in 1481, the Venetian Council of Ten forbade the members of the Senate and all secret councils to reason and discuss state matters with foreigners, whether ambassadors or mere subjects. Preto (1994, p. 61). Also see AGS, E 1357, fol. 295 (26 January 1613) for the Council of Ten’s harsh punishment, following the “Badoaro scandal”, of citizens who had contacted the Spanish ambassador and his personnel.

42 One of his connections, Doctor Solomon Ashkenazi offered to put 50,000 escudos for his bail; yet Margliani refused the offer and stated that, in case the negotiations fell through, he would rather retire with some of his servants into seclusion in order to protest the Ottoman refusal to grant him license to leave. AGS, E 1339, fol. 133 (3 January 1581).

43 The feeling of suspicion was mutual as the Venetians also tried to closely supervise the Ottoman diplomats arriving in Laguna. In 1532, for instance, they placed one of them in Giudecca, rather than Venice, in order to limit his contacts with the locals. AGS, E 1309, fol. 42 (7 December 1532).

44 In 1482 ‘ahdname (capitulation) there is no such restriction (Theunissen 1998, p. 383). This clause seemed to be introduced in the1503 Instrumentum Reciprocum. The Ottoman ‘ahdname reads: “bayoslari dilerse hurendesiyle gelib mahruse-i Kostantiniyye’de bir yila karib tura yil temam olmundan gide.” Cf. the Venetian text: “Et sel Baylo vol venire cum la sua fameia nel imperio mio de Constantinopoli, staga aventure uno anno” (ibid., p. 391). For the extension to three years in 1513, see ibid., p. 397.
expelled one of them, Girolamo Marcello in 1492 because they intercepted and deciphered one of his letters where they saw that he was sending crucial information regarding the Ottomans (Longo 1843, pp. 141–142). The conditions worsened during wartime as the case of Marc’antonio Barbaro who had to stay in Constantinople during the War of 1570–1573 demonstrate. As soon as the war began, an order was dispatched to the judge of Galata and Mustafa Çavuş, the Ottoman officer assigned to the Venetian Bailo, that the latter should be kept in custody without contact with the outside world (BOA, MD, XVI, no. 173; H. 9 Cemaziylahir 979, A.D. 29 October 1571). His servants were searched while entering and leaving the house to make sure that they did not carry any letters and the Bailo was forced to have janissaries accompany him outside so that he could not talk to anybody.45 Embassy personnel were also suspects. The Ottomans interrogated under torture Friar Paulo Biscotto, a suspicious Franciscan who carried letters for the Venetian Bailo on his own incentive. He named the Bailo’s chaplain, Arcangelo de Lyo, as the receiver of the letters he brought, as a result of which the chaplain found himself in prison only to be saved with the large sum the Venetian Bailo paid for his freedom. Yet, his time in prison took its toll: One of his legs had to be amputated and only a month after he was freed, he died. As a result of this incident, the Bailo’s isolation became even harder to endure: the Ottoman Grand Vizir Sokollu ordered the subaşı of Galata to wall Barbaro’s windows, put spies around the house and confiscated all his papers and inkpots. To intimidate the Bailo, Biscotto’s execution took place in Bailo’s neighbourhood; after the execution, the Ottomans passed, with his head on the pole, under the Bailo’s window. Contact with the outside world was strictly limited even for other members of the Barbaro family. A fine of 40 akçe was given to somebody who saluted Barbaro’s son that was taking a promenade in the city only because of health reasons, yet even then accompanied by janissaries (Lesure 1972, pp. 152–155).46

F. Intercepting Correspondence

Early modern states limited the traffic of foreign couriers for a number of reasons. First, they tried to assert their sovereignty on their possessions by regulating the flow of information and correspondence. They furthermore sought to prevent enemy intelligence on the one hand and to gather information from the intercepted correspondence on the other.47 Even though the Ottomans were supposed to refrain from molesting

45 According to a Spanish agent named Costa, sent to Constantinople by the Viceroy of Naples. See Lesure (1972, pp. 156, 163).
46 In the end, he still seemed to have sent information to Venice; for an example of his observations on possible destinations of the Ottoman fleet in 1572, see ASV, SDC, fil. 6E, fol. 7 (10 February 1572, m.v.). In one of his many letters, Barbaro pointed out to the ironic fact that even Sokollu’s çavuş found his confinement too “inhumane” (ASV, SDC, fil. 6, fol. 1).
47 In France, starting from 1601, for instance, Spanish couriers had to submit their correspondence to French couriers, either in Lyon or Bordeaux to be transmitted to either Habsburg ambassador in Paris or other Spanish couriers outside of France, be it Italy or the Low Countries. Even

foreign couriers because of the obligations the international treaties imposed upon,\textsuperscript{48} this was hardly the case. They frequently intercepted foreign correspondence when this suited their needs. The life of a courier was dangerous: The Grand Vizier ordered the Governor-General of Buda to diligently search the couriers and even strip them to their pants and vests to see whether they carried other letters with them (Ágoston 2007, p. 84). Convinced of the unreliability of the correos that carried letters between Constantinople and Ragusa, the wise Giovanni Maria Renzo chose to carry these letters himself in 1567, in spite of the risks involved while the Ottomans were looking for him everywhere (AGS, E 1056, fol. 43; 20 April 1567).

The resident Venetian ambassadors were once again the main target of the Ottomans. The Venetians did not hesitate to employ Ottoman subjects as their couriers since the Byzantine times, especially from two regions in Montenegro, Katun and Ljubotin (Dursteler 2009, p. 611). That this created a problem over the political status of these couriers, Ottoman subjects under Constantinople’s jurisdiction, and justified the Ottoman intervention is evident from the discrepancy in two different cases between the attitude of the Austrian ambassador in claiming the detained letters and the fate of two detained couriers. In 1580, the Austrian ambassador refused responsibility when un turco di nazione unghera, a Muslim and an Ottoman subject, was caught with letters addressed to the Emperor and the Ottomans sent the courier to galleys. A couple of days later, however, upon the capture of another courier with similar letters, ambassador took a different approach and demanded the restitution of his letters and the return of the courier; a request which the Ottomans, after an initial resistance, had to fulfill (AGS, E 1338, fol. 15; 30 June 1580). Galley was not the only form of punishment that awaited Ottoman couriers under foreign employ. In 1582, a Muslim courier from Macedonia was accused of spying and hung (Dursteler 2009, p. 609). In 1584, the Ottomans detected that the Venetians employed fifty or sixty Ottoman subjects from the Karadağ village in the district of Iskenderiye (Shkodër) as couriers. They were to be thrown into prison while the letters they carried were to be sent to Constantinople (BOA, MD, LV, no. 166; H. 21 Zilhicce 992, A.D. 24 December 1584). In 1605, the governor of the afore-mentioned district had several Venetian couriers stopped and beaten, and their mail sacks thrown into river (Dursteler 2009, p. 610).

In the 16th century, the only regular postal service between Europe and Constantinople belonged to Venice. Therefore, when the Ottomans intercepted a Venetian
courier, they seized the letters that belonged to the other ambassadors such as that of France, as well as the non-diplomatic ones written by merchants, slaves, pilgrims, etc., as well. Those who sent letters to Europe were also aware that their letters could be intercepted and their lives would be imperilled in case these letters contained crucial information about the Ottoman Empire. To avoid this, enemy spies wrote their letters with a common technique of the time, called nomenclator, in which codes and ciphers were mixed to prevent the cryptanalysis (Kahn 1967, p. 109, chapter 3). However, in an attempt not to be easily identified in case a double agent broke their codes, they also used aliases and employed different methods such as writing the crucial information at the back of a letter with a script that could only be read with a special method. The most common of these steganography techniques was to write invisibly with lemon juice, which could only be made visible by “tormenting” the letter with fire. To avoid any suspicion, there was a regular letter in the front page which included commercial information or was written by a slave to a relative asking money for his ransom. Still, even with these precautions, it was hard to send regular reports. For instance, the letters which Spanish and Italian prisoners that were caught in the Battle of Djerba (1560) secretly sent from Constantinople included no information at all, because either the Ottomans impeded them or they did not dare to do so (AGS, E 1125, fol. 86; 29 June 1560). In 1580, the Spanish diplomat Giovanni Margliani wrote that he could not write letters even during the night as he feared that Sinan Pasha or Uluç ‘Ali could send a cavuş anytime; another case of hardships that a diplomat negotiating in Constantinople had to endure (AGS, E 491; after 17 February 1580). The Ottomans also managed to intercept a crucial correspondence between the Spanish Habsburgs and a certain Murat Ağa, the mayordomo of Uluç ‘Ali and a Lucchese renegade from Habsburg payroll. One of Don Juan’s envoys to Constantinople, Antonio Avellán was shocked when the son of an Ottoman Pasha, a prisoner-of-war whom he ransomed and brought to Constantinople (most probably the son of Müezzinzade Ali Pasha), gave him a letter written by Philip II and addressed...
to Murat Ağa. When asked to cryptanalyse them, Avellan managed to lie about its content and destroyed it (AGS, E 1144, fol. 281; 6 June 1575).54

In order to obtain information from the confiscated letters, the Ottomans needed to cryptanalyse them. At this point, specialists who were familiar with the chanceller-y methods of foreign embassies were important assets. For instance, the Ottomans managed to cryptanalyse the letters of the Venetian Bailo Vettore Bragadin only with the help of one of the “giovani di lingua”, Colombina who was sent to Constantinople to study Ottoman. According to Bragadin, this young apprentice, who converted to Islam and defected to the Ottomans, knew the Venetian cipher because he should have seen and perhaps even helped the Venetian scribes in Bailo’s house decipher letters (ASV, Capi del consiglio di dieci, Lettere di Ambasciatori [hereafter CCX-LettAmb], b. 3, fol. 55, Villain-Gandossi 1978, p. 77; Pedani 1994, p. 42). Colombina would serve in the Ottoman chancellery for years, appearing frequently in correspondence between the bailo and the Council of Ten. In 1578, he was even designated as the Ottoman envoy to the Serenissima, to great chagrin and protest of the Venetian authorities (ASV, Consiglio dei dieci, Parti Secrete [hereafter CX-ParSec], reg. 11, cc. 154v; 24 March 1578, fil. 20; 24 March 1578).

Obviously, the Ottomans did not always manage to decipher the intercepted correspondence. For instance in both cases mentioned above where Austrian ambassador’s couriers were detained, the Ottomans could not cryptanalyse and learn the content of the letters they sequestered (AGS, E 1338, fol. 15; 30 June 1580). That is why, the Ottomans were upset with foreign ambassador’s utilisation of cryptography techniques and tried to pressurise them to write without cipher/code or hand down their keys to them. In 1567, Sokollu warned the Venetian bailo not to write in cipher and Ibrahim Bey, the Ottoman envoy to Venice, made it known that the Pasha wanted a special clause prohibiting the use of cipher added to the to-be-renewed capitulations. This created an interesting diplomacy traffic between Constantinople and Venice which tried to avoid such limitations at all costs.55 Even though the issue

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55 According to the instructions given by the Council of Ten, the bailo and the ambassador should argue that such a limitation would jeopardise the safety of their correspondence in case their letters were intercepted. They should at all cost reject the idea to add a new clause to the capitulations and tell the Pasha that Venice should not be singled out since the representatives of other “princes” also wrote in cipher. If Pasha said that the Ottomans themselves did not use cipher, then the ambassador should point out to the fact that the Ottomans did not have permanent embassies and that they sent important correspondence with a çavuş to prevent enemy interception. Unless these arguments convinced the Pasha, he should accept the demand but make sure that it was not written down as a clause in the capitulation arguing that this would be best for the “dignity” of the Serenissima. Interestingly, the bailo also was advised to remind the Ottomans, had the Venetians been forced to write without cipher, this would have meant they would be able neither to provide the Ottomans with information nor transmit Ottoman messages to the navy if need be, as was the case in 1565 during the siege of Malta. ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 8, cc. 76v–77r (27 January 1566, m.v.), 79v–80r (18 February 1566, m.v.), 92v–93v (19 July 1567); BOA, MD, VI, no. 1424 (H. Evas-tı Zilhicce 972, A.D. 9–18 June 1565). When they learned that Sokollu made a similar demand to other representatives, the Venetians changed their strategy by stating that they would follow the
was left aside, it resurfaced when in 1570 Sokollu warned Marc’antonio Barbaro once
again and even went as far to ask him, albeit with a laugh in his face, to teach one of
his own men how to write in cipher. The Bailo kindly refused the offer, saying it
would take too much effort and time (ASV, SDC, fil. 5, fol. 12; 21 April 1570).

The Ottomans were also vigilant in the East. In 1571, they detected that Arme-
nian spies from Ankara joined a trade caravan, which set out from Edirne for Persia,
in order to smuggle letters out of the Ottoman Empire, hidden in their silk crates (sanduk).
A thorough investigation of these crates was ordered, and in case the letters
could not be found in these, Muslim merchants should also be searched. A register
(defter), containing the names of the incarcerated culprits and the content of the con-
fiscated letters, had to be compiled (BOA, MD, XVI, no. 593; H. 11 Cemaziyelahir
979, A.D. 8 November 1571). In 1584, a certain Seyyid Seccad, the ruler of Suster in
Khuzistan, who had recently changed from the Safavid to the Ottoman camp, was de-
tected by the Ottomans, when he wrote a letter in Persian to Sultan Hamza. The Otto-
mans ordered the Governor-General of Baghdad a full investigation of the issue by
dispatching spies to see whether he decided to join his former allies. If he did, he was
to be put to death (BOA, MD, LII, no. 539; H. Selh-i Muharrem 992, A.D. 12 Febru-
ary 1584).

**G. Ottoman Pressure on Information Provider States: Venice and Ragusa**

The Ottoman counter-intelligence could become an issue of international politics.
The Ottomans tried to cope with certain states which provided their enemies with
information concerning the Ottoman Empire. This struggle, with at least two such
states, can be easily documented. Venice (see Kissling 1977, pp. 97–109 and
Hassiotis 1977, pp. 117–137) and Ragusa (Biegman 1963, pp. 237–255 and Emilio
com/pdf/CLASICOS026.pdf) were two major city-states which fed the rest of Europe
with information about the Ottoman Empire, especially before the establishment of
French (1535), Austrian (1547), English (1578) and Dutch (1614) permanent embas-
sies in Constantinople. Their unique position between the East and the West fur-
nished them a great advantage; they were familiar with both worlds. In spite of occa-
sional wars between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, Venice had commercial ties
with the Levant and even in the 16th century, had large trade colonies in certain Otto-
man cities. Ragusa, despite an Ottoman vassal, was also an important trade partner.
The citizens of both states could travel relatively unmolested within the Ottoman Em-
pire. The Ottomans pressurised both of them, to not only provide them with infor-
mation about the events in the Christian world, but also stop helping the enemy

example of other representatives on the one hand, and tried to present a unified diplomatic front
against such excessive demands with other European powers on the other hand. If all this failed, the
final resort was, unsurprisingly for the students of Venetian–Ottoman relations, to bribe Sokollu
and other pashas. Ibid., cc. 93v–94r (19 July 1567), 96r (20 August 1567), 97r (2 October 1567).
intelligence by either directly providing information, or sheltering enemy agents in their lands, dangerously close to the Ottoman borders.

The Ottoman pressure on their vassal Ragusa was immense. Even though Ragusa tried to restrict foreign intelligence on their soil by promulgating a law in 1526 that forbade its subjects from sending information about the Ottoman Empire, the lightness of the penalty (100 gold ducats and six months in prison regardless of their social standing) had little effect (Dedijer 2002, p. 111). In 1547, the Ottomans forced the Ragusans to order one of their subjects, Marino de Zamagno, to stop feeding the Habsburgs with information concerning the Ottoman Empire (AGS, E 1318, fol. 222; 23 August 1547). A report dated 1567 informs that other Spanish agents followed him in Ragusa. Lorenzo Miniati was functioning as a middleman between the Spanish intelligence network in Constantinople and the viceroyalties of Naples and Sicily. He was receiving the letters from Constantinople and dispatching them with a specially assigned frigate to Barleta from where it reached Naples and Messina. When he died, he was replaced by his nephew Dino Miniati and Donato Antonio Lubelo. However, in 1567, Ragusan authorities ordered these two to leave the city in three days, again under Ottoman pressure. The same report accentuates the importance of Ragusa for Spanish information gathering. There may be other agents in Cattaro, Corfu, Cephalonia or Zante in Habsburg payroll; nevertheless, none of these could transmit letters from Constantinople as fast as those in Ragusa did: an average of 17 days. Aware of this fact, the Viceroy of Naples, Duque de Alcalá, reacted and threatened to dismiss all Ragusan merchants from the kingdom of Naples, unless his agents were not allowed back in the city (AGS, E 1056, fol. 84; 13 September 1567). The Ottoman pressure seemed to have jeopardised Habsburg channels of communication and transmission, since in August 1567 Giovanni Maria Renzo had to send the duplicates of his letters, via Venice rather than Ragusa. He also related that his middleman Ambrosio Judice chose another route from Venice to Constantinople (AGS, E 1056, fol. 86; 2 August 1567). Three years later Judice’s successor, Murat Ağa would avoid Ragusa as well and travel to Naples via Corfu (AGS, E 1059, fols 56–57; 31 December 1570). The problem between Duque de Alcalá and the Ragusans, however, was solved quickly. A compromise was reached when the Ragusans suggested that a new agent was to be dispatched and his identity should be concealed from the Ragusan authorities who thus tried to evade responsibility in the eyes of the Ottomans (AGS, E 1056, fol. 118; 8 January 1568). Still, this strategy also failed. In 1571, Sokollu was reported to be furious with the Ragusans who were sending information to the Spanish and let one of their agents reside in the city. Because of this fury, Ragusa was considered one of the possible targets of the Ottoman navy (AGS, E 487, Advertimientos de Turquia y otros de importancia). Sokollu furthermore prohibited the commerce and traffic of merchants between Constantinople and Ragusa (AGS, E 1331, fol. 217; 24 March 1572). He was justified in his suspicions; other Spanish

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56 He was first recommended to this position by Juan Maria Renzo in 1563. AGS, E 1056, fol. 56 (28 July 1563).
agents followed Miniati. Nevertheless, neither were content the Habsburg with the
Ragusans who were caught in cross-fire, unable to satisfy either party. The Habsburg
officer in charge of the news of the Levant, Alonso Sánchez complained that it was
hard to find men of quality to work in Ragusa, because of the Ragusan mistreatment
of Spanish agents. Don Juan sent a letter to Ragusa’s executive body, Consilium
Minus, reproaching that they did not send information about the Ottomans; to which
the Ragusans quickly replied that they were informing the Viceroy of Naples. The
Habsburg agent in the city, however, was far from impressed with this excuse; ac-
cording to him, the Ragusans were deliberately delaying the arrival of information so
that when the information comes, it was already public (AGS, E 1331, fol. 220; 10
May 1572). Habsburg spies in Ragusa created a third crisis in 1581, when the Otto-
mans again managed to have the Spanish spy in Ragusa, Cesar de la Marea, dismissed
from the city. This Neapolitan criminal had been exiled from his natal land because
he killed his mother and then sent to Ragusa to send information concerning the
Ottoman Empire by the then viceroy of Naples, Cardinal Granvela (office 1571-5).
When he made his occupation public, he became too much of a liability for the Ra-
gusan authorities who banished him from the city. The viceroy of Naples, Juan de Cuñiga, protested and gave 20 days to the Ragusan authorities to revoke their deci-
sion, however, this time with no success. When, at the same time, the Spanish envoy
to Constantinople, Giovanni Margliani, was passing from the city, the Ragusans told
him that the order came from Constantinople and there was little they could do.
Margliani should write the viceroy not to insist. He may have written, but obviously
he was not convincing enough. The crisis deepened, when the viceroy wrote
Margliani that he would imprison all the Ragusan merchants as well as the Ragusan
Consul in the kingdom of Naples. After four months of correspondence, he fulfilled
his threat. He imprisoned the six richest merchants in Naples and froze Ragusan
merchants’ accounts in Neapolitan banks (AGS, E 1083, fol. 88; E 1084, fol. 44; 21
June 1581). Sometimes, the Ragusan authorities took the initiative and tried to limit
Habsburg intelligence without a warning from the Ottomans. In 1532, they arrested
Miho Bučinčić, one of the Bučinčić brothers who were providing Ferdinand I with
information about Ottomans’ military activities. He was sentenced to a year’s impris-
onment with loss, in perpetuity, of his rights to offices and privileges that a patrician
enjoyed. Ferdinand protested and wanted the sentence revoked, but to no avail.
Meanwhile, Miho escaped from the jail and fled to Vienna where he was joined
by his brother. The two started plotting against their fatherland by trying to have Fer-
dinand attack Ston. The Ragusan Senate, upon discovering this, proclaimed them
traitors and seized their property (Foretić 1980, vol. II, pp. 19–33 and Harris 2003,
p. 102).

The Venetians, even though to a lesser degree, were also pressurised by the
Ottomans. They were quick to reject responsibility in the Andrea Morefin affair

57 Still, for a brief period in 1569, there remained no Habsburg agents in Ragusa (Hernán
58 Another reason that he quoted was the insufficient salaries that the authorities offered.
AGS, E 1060, fol. 129 (9 May 1571).
whereby the Venetian was detained in Aleppo and later executed by the Ottomans. He had helped a Spanish ambassador to Persia land in Anatolia and gave him two guides for the Taurus Mountains. The Venetian diplomat Pietro Zen, experienced in dealing with the Ottoman diplomacy, was dispatched to Constantinople immediately to explain that Venice had no responsibility in the affair and Morefin was an enemy of the state (AGS, E 1308, fol. 186; 5 May 1531). The Serenissima went to great lengths in order to prevent the exchange of secret information in Venice, the Adriatic Sea and the Stato di Màr. In 1535, they prohibited the Venetian jeweler Marco de Nicolo, the Ottoman envoy/spy destined for France, yet in secret talks with the Spanish ambassador Lope de Soria, from discussing “cosas del turco y sophi” with anybody “a pena de la vida”. In 1539, the Venetian governor of Cattaro flatly refused to help Estefano Seguri who was dispatched by the viceroy of Naples, Pedro de Toledo, to learn the whereabouts of the Ottoman navy with his frigate. Spaniards were neither allowed to hire somebody in Cattaro to carry their dispatch to Castelnuovo, briefly under Spanish control between 1538 and 1539. This is quite interesting as the incident happened in 1539, when the Habsburgs and Venetians were allied in a war against the Ottomans (AGS, E 1030, fol. 54).

In 1553, the Venetians chased a Sicilian frigate that entered the Adriatic Sea with the intention of spying on the Ottomans. They warned the Spanish agent in Corfu that the Adriatic Sea was “free” and it was not right for Emperor’s vassals to sail in the Adriatic for purposes of information-gathering, something about which France, an Ottoman ally, had complained to them. They furthermore pressurised the Spanish agents residing in the Venetian island in the Ionian Sea. In 1541, they dismissed Camillo Stopa, who was sending information concerning the Ottoman navy from the island of Corfu, fearing his activities would jeopardise the recently signed capitulations with the Ottomans.

59 Ironically, Zen himself had secret correspondence with Shah Ismail and sent two of his agents to Venice via Cyprus, during his consulship in Damascus (1508–1510). Upon the discovery of his plots, he was arrested and summoned to Cairo for interrogation, creating a crisis between the Mamluks and the Venetians. Lucchetta (1968, pp. 109–221).

60 He offered his services to the Habsburgs in an effort to get a safe-conduct to travel to Spain and, according to Lope de Soria, to spy for the Ottomans. Still, Lope de Soria succeeded in obtaining information from him. AGS, E 1311, fols 40–42 (9 August 1535), 45–47 (9 August 1535), 48–51 (6 July 1535), 60–61 (24 June 1535), fol. 149. The Ottomans, aware of this double agent’s betrayal, decapitated him the next year. AGS, E 1312, fol. 12 (27 March 1536). The Venetians were aware of his activities, yet they still gave him a safe-conduct, probably in order not to infuriate Ibrahim Pasha. ASV, CX-PaSec, reg. 4, cc. 38r–37v (7 October 1534), 50r–51r (23 June, 12 July and 8 August 1535).

61 The governor did not want to infuriate the famous corsair and the Ottoman Grand Admiral, Barbarossa, who was in the Adriatic Sea with the Ottoman fleet. He had already sent him presents to which Barbarossa replied with an envoy and the talks between the two for a Veneto–Ottoman rapprochement were reported by a Spanish agent writing from Buda. AGS, E 1030, fol. 55 (26 July 1539). This aroused the Habsburg suspicion of their allies’ commitment to the war, one proven right by the 1540 capitulations between the Ottomans and the Venetians. The Venetians were also uncomfortable with a Habsburg garrison in Castelnuovo. AGS, E 1030, fol. 120 (4 July 1539).

62 By this term, the Venetians meant that the sea should be free from the intruders, i.e. anybody who was not endorsed by the Venetian authorities.
(AGS, E 1317, fol. 45; E 1497, libro E 67, fol. 158; 28 April 1541; ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 5, cc. 52r–52v; 18 March 1541). A year later, the Council of Ten reproached the Provveditor of Corfu for entering into cordial relations with another Habsburg agent and ordered his immediate dismissal from the island (ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 5, cc. 72v–73r; 21 August 1542). In 1552, members of the Council were so disturbed with the activities of Habsburg and Maltese spies on their soil that they unanimously (28-0-0) decided to remind their governors to dismiss these spies on the one hand, and inform the bailo on the other so that he could assure the Ottomans of Venice’s goodwill and sincere efforts, in case the Ottomans raised the issue (ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 6, cc. 85v–86r; 4 May 1552). In one example, the Venetians even threatened the Spanish agent in Zante with burning his frigate with its crew.63 In 1563, the Governor of Corfu was ordered to dismiss both the Habsburg agent Zuan Thomas Napolitano and the frigate that secretly came to the island to collect information (ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 7, cc. 128v–129r; 30 July 1563; 134r–134v; 7 October 1563). In 1567, ironically upon a failed Ottoman plot to capture the Spanish resident agent in Corfu, Balthasar Prototico, the Venetians sided with the Ottomans and expelled the Spanish agent.64 Nevertheless, this did not stop Spanish intelligence; Prototico returned and letters from Corfu and Zante continued to arrive in Lecce and Naples (AGS, E 1056, fol. 86; 27 September 1567). Therefore, in 1569, the Ottomans protested once again.65 From Corfu, the Venetians furthermore expelled Ernando Dispero in 1576 (AGS, E 1519, fol. 84; 12 February 1576; ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 11, cc. 66v–67r; 2 December 1575, cc. 68v–69r; 9 and 10 December 1575; 73v–74r; 28 November 1575; 90r; 10 March 1576) and Balthasar Prototico once again in 1581 (AGS, E 1524, fol. 5; 10 May 1581). The Council of Ten, in an effort not to infuriate the Habsburgs, was generally lenient towards their spies, urging the governors to dismiss them with “de-strezza” and “miglior forma di parole” (ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 6, cc. 85v–86r; 4 May 1552; reg. 7, cc. 128v–129r; 30 July 1563; AGS, E 1336, fols 219 and 220; 12 February 1578). Stuck between two mighty empires, they sought to find a compromise between the Habsburg insistence to send spies and ships to the Ionian Islands and the vigilant Ottomans’ discontent in observing enemy intelligence so close to their territory. For instance, in 1577, they dismissed once again a Habsburg spy from Corfu, because he was doing a job, which required a discreet person, very “publicly”.

63 “… che le {i.e. fragate} abbrussiariano e apichiaranno li homini.” He was appointed by the governor of the Tierras de Otranto y Bari, Ferrante de Lofredo. His mission was to wait there for the incoming news with a frigate (Sola 2005, pp. 122–123). In 1565, another order was dispatched to the Provveditor of Zante, asking for the clearing of the island from enemy spies, in order not to upset the Ottomans. ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 8, cc. 34v (18 April 1565).

64 The Ottoman Grand Admiral had sent a double agent to Corfu to catch Prototico. The plan failed and the Venetians captured two Turkish soldiers. However, the Venetians not only released the two Ottoman soldiers, but also ordered Prototico to leave the island immediately. He had to go to Morea in disguise as he had no other place to go. AGS, E 1056, fol. 217.

65 The Venetians were not only giving shelter to run-away galleys, whose rowers provided crucial information about the Ottoman navy (ASV, SDC, fil. 4, fols 43–54 (April 1569) and Sola (2005, p. 212), but also harbouring Spanish spies in Corfu (ASV, SDC, fil. 4, fols 111–113 (11 June 1569).
furthermore enlisted their remonstrations about the conduct of ships that were sent from Naples to gather information. Under the command of a long time enemy of the Republic, Pietro Lanza, these ships not only unnecessarily entered the Canal of Corfu, instead of coming to the nearby islands where they would be given every accommodation by the authorities, but also engaged in some extracurricular activity, such as visiting Ottoman shores and enslaving Ottoman subjects, that jeopardised the Venice’s relations with the Ottomans. The Venetians naturally asked for the removal for Lanza from the command of these ships and Madrid, if not Naples, chose to relent (ASV, CX-ParSec, reg. 11, cc. 132r–132v; 22 May 1577, fil. 20, 8 March 1577 and 10 February 1577, m.v.). In short, the carefulness of Venice demonstrates us that Ottoman pressures seemed to have borne fruit and despite their resistance on the diplomatic level, the Spanish had to look for alternatives. For instance, in 1576, Bartolomeo Brutti, who was working for the Spaniards at that time, offered to send letters via Cattaro and Ragusa rather than Corfu and change the Greek couriers with Slavs (Sola 2005, p. 229).

H. Employment of Renegades and Double Agents

The Ottomans, of course, employed double agents to reveal the identities of their colleagues. In 1564, one of the spies whom the viceroy of Sicily sent to Constantinople, Amerigo Balassa, was frustrated because he was not paid what was due to him. When he decided to take his vengeance, he offered to the Ottoman Grand Admiral to catch Balthasar Prototico in Corfu, and almost succeeded.66 Aurelio Santa Croce and his brother were suspected to be double agents as well.67 In 1577, a Greek spy in the

66 He went to the nearby island of Zante with a frigate and pretended to have come from Sicily to collect the letters for the viceroy. When Prototico was about to fall into the trap and bring the letters personally, the frigate left the port hurriedly, having seen a Maltese ship coming into the port. AGS, E 1056, fol. 217.

67 Two Spanish correspondents in Constantinople, Fray Diego de Mallorca and Martin de Padilla claimed that Aurelio and his brother Juan Antonio were double agents. AGS, E 1144, fol. 212; E 1072, fol. 232. Aurelio would come under further suspicion when the Spaniards detected that he was sabotaging the Ottoman–Spanish truce negotiations in 1579. He left Constantinople for first Naples, and then Madrid where he realised he would be left out of the truce negotiations. The Habsburg envoy Margliani sent a letter which Aurelio wrote to the Ottomans, telling them which demands to make in the negotiations. His hope was to sabotage Margliani’s mission and convince the Spanish court to send him back to Constantinople. AGS, E 1080, fols 22 (29 January 1579), 23 (3 February 1579), 98 (1 April 1579). In the end, he was incarcerated; however, not because of his dealings with the Ottomans, but because two merchants from Constantinople for whom he vouched to Marquis of St. Croce did not pay the 8000 ducats they owed to the Marquis in exchange for his slaves they had ransomed. AGS, E 1080, fol. 62 (18 November 1579). Aurelio went on sending letters from prison that contained information about the Ottoman Empire (one wonders how he received these detailed news) and his comments about the Ottoman–Spanish treaty. He criticised the formula as well as the content of the treaty and warned the Habsburgs that just a suspension of arms instead of a treaty (tregua) with the exchange of ambassadors would not bind the Sultan in the future. AGS, E 1083, fol. 86 (22 May 1581).
service of Philip II, named Esteban, ran away from Naples for Constantinople where he became Muslim (turco) and identified three Habsburg spies that Martin de Acuña brought and almost caused the collapse of the entire Spanish intelligence network in Constantinople (AGS, E 1071, fol. 191; 5 March 1577). In 1578, one of Don Juan’s scribes (yazici), who became a Muslim with the name Sinan and was inducted into the military cadre of sipahiğlan, was collecting for the Ottomans the money, arms and victuals that Don Juan distributed in the village of Kalamata and the district of Manya. He seemed to have been quite efficient; in a short time, he collected 100,000 akçe, 300 rifles, 2 flags (bayrak) and a drum (tabl) (BOA, MD, XXXV, no. 928; H. 17 Ramazan 986, A.D. 17 November 1578). Finally, a former Spanish agent, Bartolemeo Bruttì informed his kin Sinan Pasha of the arrival of another Spanish agent Antonio Sanz in 1582 to Constantinople. Luckily for Sanz, he had a salvocoeundocto given by Uluç ‘Ali; yet he still had to leave the city and his wife and children in it immediately (AGS, E 1085, fol. 81). In 1608, the renegade Andrea Vintimiglia “persecuted” for the Ottomans fourteen Spanish spies (ASV, İS, b. 416, 3 March 1608). The Ottomans also used the services of its allies. The Ragusans informed the Ottomans that the head of Spanish information gathering in Constantinople, Giovanni Maria Renzo left Ragusa for Constantinople in 1567 (AGS, E 486, Battista Ferraro, Gregorio Bergante, Simon Massa; 20 April 1567; E 1056 fol. 43), and handed to the Ottoman authorities the two spies that they caught while trying to pass to Constantinople (ASV, Capi del Consiglio dei Dieci, Lettere di rettori et di altre cariche [hereafter CCX-LettRett], b. 292, fol. 75; 30 May 1571). In 1595, Pedro Brea, a former

68 Coincidentally, 12 days later, in the same village of Kalamata, the Ottomans detected an agent among the local people, called Todor, in the payroll of both the Spanish and the Venetians. He robbed and killed Ottoman sipahi, gave lodging Don Juan’s men in his house and now were harassing the people (zulm ü te’addî) in the nearby villages. He also spied and had a correspondent in Spain. The document mentions a petition (arz-ı hâl) as the source of the news, but does not clearly indicate whether Sinan, who could be expected to identify Don Juan’s agents, was involved in the gathering of this information. BOA, MD, XXXV, no. 959 (H. 29 Ramazan 978, A.D. 29 November 1578).

69 Bruttì travelled from Naples to Constantinople with Margliani, but later fell out with him. Margliani accused him of betrayal, because Bruttì offered him to escape with him to Anatolia on the one hand, and informed Sokollu of such plans on the other. Sokollu never liked him, since he was plotting with his kin Sinan Pasha in favour of a Moldavian prince which was a rival to Sokollu’s protégé, Petru Schiopul. Having realised his tricks, he tried to use this excuse to order his execution which he would have done, if not for the constant appeals from Sinan Pasha and Margliani who was trying to prevent Bruttì give away certain secrets. He was released with the condition that he was to be sent to Naples and punished by the Habsburg authorities. He managed to run away before reaching Naples, however, and return to Constantinople where he entered into the service of the new Moldavian prince, Iancu Sasul. In 1582, he came to Constantinople as his envoy, bringing his presents for the circumcision of the future Mehmet III. E 1080, fols 44 (4 July 1579), 46 (4 July 1569), 47 (18 July 1579), 59 (3 August 1579), 60 (11 August 1579), 61 (18 August 1579). ASV, CCX-LettAmb, b. 5, fol. 113. In 1590, we see him as an Ottoman envoy to Poland sent by the then Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha. ASV, Inquisitori di Stato (hereafter İS), b. 416, 4 September 1590. For more information about Bartolemeo as well as Bruttì family in general, see Luca (2008, pp. 107–128).
slave of Uluç Ali and a long time spy in Habsburg employ, had to retreat himself from the streets of Constantinople when he realised that French and English ambassadors were trying to secretly warn the Ottomans of his presence (AGS, E 1094, fol. 227). Finally, in 1606, the Venetian Bailo helped the Ottomans to reveal the identity of four Spanish spies in Constantinople (AGS, E 1351, fol. 38; 5 June 1606).

The most interesting of these cases is that of a French renegade and an agent for the English, Baron de la Fage, who revealed the identity of a number of leading Spanish spies in Constantinople in 1592. He was an able spy and a swindler. Previously, he had been to Rome, where claimed to have reconciled with Christianity and addressed Pope Innocent IX and the College of Cardinals with his plans to win the Governor of Negroponte back to the Christianity and seize several Ottoman galleys which renegade Christians sailed. He also went, probably with similar designs, to Florence where he was warmly welcomed and contacted the Duke of Florence and the ambassador of the French king, Henry IV. Eventually, all his machinations were only a ruse, a cover-up for him to travel freely in Italy and spy for the Ottomans. He also went to Venice where he contacted the Habsburg ambassador for money who realised his true nature and saved the four Christian boys whom Fage tricked into accompanying him to the Levant under the pretext of showing them the Ottoman Empire, nevertheless with the intention of either selling them into slavery or making them renegades. On his way back, he defrauded the captain of the ship he embarked for Cattaro and took his 450 escudos as well as other goods promising to buy horses for him. Upon his return in Constantinople, he was making fun of the Pope and Cardinal de Santa Severina by showing off with brevets and safe-conducts that he acquired from them. Unfortunately for the Ottomans, he died in the fall in a plague epidemic (AGS, E K 1675, fols 142, 167b; 15 August 1592, fol. 172; 5 September 1592, fol. 183; 24 October 1592; E 1349, fol. 5; 2 February 1602).

Sometimes, the Ottomans went to great lengths to recruit Christians which they considered of use. One such person was Carlo Cicala, the brother of the Ottoman Grand Admiral, Djighâlâzâde Yusuf Sinan Pasha. He was residing in Chios to gather information for the Habsburgs and negotiate his brother’s defection to the Habsburg camp. The Ottomans, aware of his presence and potential, but perhaps not of his ties with the Habsburgs, decided to impede him from leaving the island. When Carlo contacted his brother, the Sultan mentioned him the great services his brother could offer the empire. In order to convince Carlo to change his religion, the Sultan’s favourite, Mehmed Ağa even sent him a book named *Apologia* penned by a former Genovese

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70 They did it secretly because they did not want to infuriate Cafer Pasha with whom Brea was given the task to negotiate his defection.

71 A similar example is that of the polyglot agent of Sokollu. This Transylvanian “jugador” spied in Germany on the one hand, and defrauded the Emperor with false promises on the other in 1575. Next year, he was spotted by Spanish counter intelligence and reported to have left Constantinople for his new targets: Naples, Rome and Venice. AGS, E 1072, fol. 232.
Augustinian friar, who himself became a Muslim. In the end, the Ottomans might have succeeded in luring him into their camp, if not into conversion. A Venetian document dated 1600 records that Carlo was secured by his brother the governorship of the Aegean Archipelago and sailed off from Messina accompanied by a spy-cum-military engineer who would offer the designs of the fortress of Corfu to the Ottomans (ASV, IS, b. 460, 25 July 1600).

I. Investigation, Interrogation and Punishment

The Ottomans were carefully conducting their investigations; even the paranoia of war-years did not change their diligence. In certain instances, when the accused were proven innocent, justice was served. In 1570, certain Ragusans, suspected of intelligence with the enemy, were imprisoned and their money sequestered by Derviş Çavuş and the kadi of Filibe (Plovdiv). Upon the instigation of the Ragusan ambassador, the Ottomans ordered their release and the return of their money. They were not to be molested as they were travelling with necessary documentation (emr-i serif) (BOA, MD, XV, no. 1738; H. 13 Receb 978, 11 December 1570). In another example, the Governor of Morea was ordered to investigate a case in 1572. Three Christian Ottoman subjects from Arkadya and Kalamine were accused by five other of being Venetian spies. The report from the judges suggested their innocence and warned Constantinople that there were other issues between two parties. The five had tried to illegally seize the accused three’s possessions by falsely testifying on each other’s behalf in local courts; thus their accusation was just a means to achieve their ends. The Ottomans ordered a full investigation on these five, who were to be exiled to Cyprus in case the accusations against them were valid (BOA, MD, XIX, no. 309; H. 14 Ramazan 980, A.D. 18 January 1573).

Once a suspect was detained, the Ottomans interrogated him to not only ascertain his crime, but also reveal other enemy agents and fight enemy intelligence networks. In this endeavor, they were not merciful; torture was a common interrogation technique (BOA, MD, VIII, no. 842; H. 7 Safer 978, A.D. 11 July 1570; AGS, E 487, Hieronimo Combi Schiavo; AGS, E 1063, fol. 55; 8 August 1573, E 1344, K 1675, fol. 167b; 15 August 1592). The importance of the information these suspects provided during the interrogation for the Ottoman counter-intelligence is evident from the level of interest the central government took in these interrogations. They insisted on interrogating detained suspects themselves and dispatched several orders to the local governors to send the detainees to the capital with their goods and letters for

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72 The author was an important person. He was a priest, preacher, theologian and finally a general of the Augustinians for 3 years and twice the nuncio of Pope Sixtus V in England. AGS, E 1158, fol. 53 (29 March 1595). On negotiations for the defection, see fols 55, 62; E 1675, fols 4, 8, 44, 70, 125, 150; E 1157, fols 151, 152; E 1158, fols 26, 29, 30, 53, 54, 55, 62, 67, 68, 187; E 1159, fols 243, 278; E 1160, fols 116, 139, 140, 147, 211; E 1517/cuaderno XIX, fol. 12; E 1885, fols 6, 144; E 3478, fols 20–28.
further investigation (BOA, *MD*, V, no. 580; H. 9 Cemaziyelevvel 973, A.D. 25 November 1565; XVIII, no. 21; XXIII, no. 93).

Methods of punishment varied. Often the Ottomans executed enemy spies. In 1536 they decapitated the afore-mentioned Marco Nicolo who, they realised, was a double agent (AGS, *E* 1312, fol. 12; 27 March 1536). Four years later, it was a Habsburg agent sent from Sicily, Pedro Secula, who lost his life at the hands of the Ottomans (AGS, *E* 1497, libro E 67, fol. 112; *E* 1316, fol. 70; 8 October 1540). They furthermore ordered local governors to execute their Christian subjects who were sending information to the Habsburgs about Ottoman defenses and the navy (BOA, *MD*, X, no. 174; H. 28 Şaban 979, A.D. 15 January 1572; XIX, no. 75). In 1570, the Ottomans first interrogated and then impaled alive the saboteurs whom the Habsburgs hired from among the Arsenal workers for starting a fire in the warehouse (*magazen grande*) (AGS, *E* 1059, fols 56–57; 31 December 1570). In 1573, a group of 23 people, who confessed under torture that they had correspondence with Don Juan, had been executed in Constantinople (AGS, *E* 1063, fol. 55; 8 August 1573). Another confident of the Habsburg prince, a *gentiluomo* from Lepanto was decapitated by the Ottomans; his son sought refuge in Habsburg hospitality with his brother and was given a small *merced* (AGS, *E* 1152, fol. 186). The Ottomans even authorised secret measures such as executions based on false accusations or assassination. As previously mentioned, the Governor of Amasya, for example, was ordered to either drown secretly or execute, based on false accusations, the Safavid *halife*, Süleyman Fakîh (BOA, *MD*, VII, no. 2067; H. 22 Rebiulevvel 976, A.D. 14 September 1568; Ahmed Refik, *op.cit.*, doc. 29).

However, execution was not always the case. The chances of a spy evading execution was related with a number of factors: The type of activity he was engaged in (espionage, reconnaissance, sabotage, bribery, etc.) and consequently the seriousness of the damage he caused, his connections both with the Ottoman elite and the foreigners in the Ottoman capital, financial means at his disposal, his willingness to co-operate and the usefulness of his future services for the Ottomans.

It was possible to ransom the detained spies out of prison by bribing officials. The chaplain of the Venetian Bailo Marc’antonio Barbaro was ransomed from prison, even though shortly after, he died (Lesure 1972, p. 155). Genoese Cassano Giustiniani from Chios in Spanish payroll, spent a fortune to liberate himself from prison (AGS, *E* 1163, fol. 238; 14 May 1609). The story of the Albanian Hieronimo Combi, an *Alfer di cavallo* in the Venetian service, is another good example. He was enslaved during the Cyprus campaign and brought to Constantinople. There he was ransomed by a Greek *gentiluomo* with whom he engaged in a very profitable trade. Meanwhile, he added Turkish to Latin, Greek and Albanese and befriended Ottoman officers such as Sokollu’s secretaries and galley captains in the Arsenal. Apart from many services he claimed to have done for Christianity – that included ransoming 30 Christians from his own pocket, he also contacted Givoanni Maria Renzo, only to have been detected by the Ottomans who sacked his house and put him in prison. After three months, he managed to buy his freedom for 400 ducats from one of Sokollu’s officers (*ministerio*) (AGS, *E* 487, Geronimo Combi Albanes, 20 de Abril 1577).

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In later years, he was to play an important role for the Habsburgs in his natal land (see AGS, E 494). In the following century, another Spanish/Papal agent, Andrea Rinaldi from Ancona was taken out from the Ottoman prison by the English ambassador who paid 1000 zecchini (ASV, IS, b. 416; 3 March 1608).73

The protagonists of another interesting intelligence story, the Ansalon plot, also managed to have themselves freed from prison. Two brothers, Scipion and Luis de Ansalon were negotiating with dissident Ottoman officers their defection and the submission of Tripolis when the Spanish navy approached. When the Governor-General of Tunisia learned of their designs and informed his colleague in Tripolis, the Ansalon brothers, as well as their accomplices, ka’ids Ferhad and Hasan were imprisoned in 1575. Ferhad managed to escape and went to Constantinople where he secured his freedom. He returned as the Governor of Mahdiyya (Africa) and was even promised the post of the Governor-General of Algeria by Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The Ansalon brothers avoided torture in prison, only thanks to 800 escudos Hasan paid for them. Luis also escaped from prison and went to Tunis where he implored the Governor-General to free him and his brother from prison. The Governor-General had to agree since Ferhad had already arrived with Constantinople’s orders for two brothers’ release a couple of days ago. Scipione returned to Sicily, whereas Luis remained in Tripolis to pay his debts. He continued sending information and negotiating with Ferhat (AGS, E 1140, fol. 137; 12 July 1573; E 1144, fols 92; 8 August 1575, 128; 24 November 1575 and 137; 3 December 1575; E 1145, fols 118; 2 November 1576 and 119; E 1147, fol. 4; 9 January 1577; E 1149, fols 9; 10 February 1579, 13; 1 March 1579, 18 and 21).

It seemed possible to avoid punishment by converting to Islam as well. The suspicious Milanese who were detained in 1571 and the Ragusan dragoman who brought him to Constantinople chose this path in order to avoid the fate of their companion, an Anconite merchant who was sent to galleys (AGS, E 1060, fol. 140; 15 June 1571). This strategy did not work all the time, though. In 1610, two friar-cum-ransomers that the exiled Moors in Constantinople identified as Spanish spies were refused the opportunity to convert (ASV, IS, b. 416, 26 June 1610, also see 13 June 1610).

Exile was also a form of punishment, at least for those who had important connections in the Ottoman palace. David Passi, an influential courtier of the Ottoman Sultan as well as a Habsburg informant, was exiled to Rhodes in 1591 (BOA, MZD, V, no. 93, quoted by Fodor 2000, p. 179). His punishment seemed to be lenient since he managed to return later. However, he lost all his political influence in the Ottoman capital (Roth 1948, p. 212). Similarly, Bruttì was released by Sokollu, only because of the intervention of his kin Sinan Pasha, but even then with the stipulation that he left for Naples (AGS, E 1080, fols 59; 3 August 1579, 60; 11 August 1579, 61; 18 August 1579).

There is an interesting MD record that gives us a number of possibilities for the fate of a detained spy. According to this, the governor of Solnuk (Szolnok) ‘Ali,

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73 The fact that a Habsburg/Papal agent who was saved from the Ottoman prison with the money provided by English ambassador complained that he was left alone by the Habsburgs as well as the French and the Venetian ambassadors demonstrate the number of allegiances a spy might have (ASV, IS, b. 416; 24 January 1607, m.v.).
sent a group of 25 armed spies (müselleh dil) to Constantinople. One of those converted to Islam and was inducted to the Ottoman military by being made a boruzen, showing us the possibility of a swift defection. Another was kept in the ‘imâret-i ‘âmire, in Edirne. The rest were to be sent to the Arsenal 74 where they would be kept under custody (hıfz), with the exception of their leader whose punishment was execution. He was to be thrown to the sea, with a stone tied to his neck (BOA, MD, XVI, no. 577; H. 12 Muharrem 979, A.D. 6 June 1571).

III. Conclusion: How Efficient?

In general, the Ottomans seemed to have an efficient counter-intelligence apparatus, which made it harder, if not impossible, for enemy spies to operate. To the extent possible with 16th century logistics and technology, they succeeded in protecting important information from enemy spies by employing a variety of methods. They efficiently supervised their borders, frequently patrolled roads, kept a close eye on dangerous elements such as renegades in the Ottoman military and administrative apparatus, foreign merchants, ambassadors and pilgrims, policed incoming and outgoing correspondence and utilised their own complex intelligence network to reveal the identity of enemy spies.

It is true that several enemy agents penetrated into the Ottoman Empire and sent reports to their employers. The best example of this is the network that the Habsburg spies established in Constantinople from the 1560s onward. Yet, the efficiency of this network is a matter of debate. First, the Ottomans were partly aware of their activities and may have intended to use them as double agents. For instance, Aurelio Santa Croce was also a middleman between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs in the exchange of prisoners of war; could his good relations with the Habsburgs in Naples have escaped the attention of the Ottomans?75 Did Guillermo Saboya, one of the Spanish spies whose identity Baron de la Fage revealed, not argue, during his interrogation, that he intended to use the network for espionage purposes?75

74 The document does not mention where they should be kept under custody. However, the order was given to Mütekâ‘id Ferhad Paşa who was to order in his turn a ship captain, Seyyid Re‘is to throw the leader of the spies to the sea. Another document (BOA, MD, XVI, no. 154) informs that Ferhad Paşa was ordered to help the Janissary Ağu Siyavuş who was entrusted with the task of building ships in the Arsenal and casting cannons in the Foundry.

75 In 1578, frustrated of being overlooked in negotiations for an Ottoman–Spanish truce, Aurelio wrote a long letter from Naples to the translator (dragoman) of the Ottomans, Hürem Bey, denouncing the Spanish envoy Margliani as a swindler in an effort to sabotage his mission. He accused Margliani of keeping a part of the money he received from the king to buy presents for Sokollu, Hürem Bey and of course, himself. His main aim was to make sure he was involved in these negotiations; nonetheless, he still gave important information about the situation in Flanders, trying to convince the Ottomans that Philip would sign the truce at all costs. He urged Hürem Bey to put off Margliani and send him a capitulation signed by the Sultan with which he would go to the Spanish court to convince Philip of the willingness of the Ottomans and the feasibility of a truce. Thus he assures, the King would be willing to send more valuable presents. AGS, E 1076, fol. 45 (24 October 1577).
igation in Constantinople, that he could not be a Spanish spy, because he spied for the Ottomans (AGS, E K 1675, fol. 167b; 15 August 1592)? Second, for purposes of dis-information, the Ottomans may also have fed them with incorrect information to divert the attention of their enemies to other targets. Cardinal Granvela, always furious with Giovanni Maria Renzo and his friends, was amazed that they did not even care to use aliases and signed their reports with their own names. It was that either they were double agents, or the Ottomans tolerated their presence to feed the Habsburgs with incorrect information (AGS, E 1064, fol. 61; 23 December 1574). Third, another Habsburg officer, the *Commendador Mayor* of Castile was disappointed with the overall quality of the information they transmitted as well. The information they sent was inconclusive, imprecise, contradicting each other and therefore useless. They claim to have intercepted Ottoman correspondence and sent fake letters supposedly written by the Sultan. They were sending information about events that had already occurred by putting an old date on letters and then blaming the slowness of couriers. The only aim of Renzo, the “*gran palabrero y mentiroso*”, and his equally deceiving men was to extract money which they did not deserve; none of the information they sent was “worth a *tornes*”. “Better without them”, complained the *Commendador Mayor* and asked the Habsburg ambassador in Venice to look for men of quality there (AGS, E 1329, fol. 57; 2 June 1571; E 1061, fol. 3; E 1064, fol. 61; 21 September 1574; E 1140, fol. 97; 20 May 1573; fol. 98; 9 November 1571; E 1500, fol. 60; 12 June 1571).

In the end, the Habsburg network in Constantinople produced mixed results in information-gathering. All other Habsburgs projects in the Ottoman Empire were even more frustrated as their spies did not so much accomplish their plans of setting the Arsenal on fire, sabotaging the Ottoman fleet while in combat, bribing important Ottoman officials, such as the Grand Admiral Uluç ‘Ali and Mehmed Pasha,76 inciting a Christian rebellion in the Balkans and luring Ottoman castle commanders to surrender their castles to the Habsburgs. The Ottomans successfully managed to prevent such costly Spanish endeavors from bearing fruit.

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76 The Governor-General of Algeria (1567–1568) and the son of famous corsair Sâlih Reis who was also the Governor of Algeria between 1552 and 1556, Mehmed Paşa fell prisoner in the Battle of Lepanto and was ransomed with the agency of Bartolomeo Bruti with whom he conspired later.

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