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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2013

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Teszelszky, K., & Zászkaliczky, M. (2013). Bocskai's Revolt, European Information Networks and Print Culture (Political propaganda, diplomacy and news circulation between manuscripts and prints, 1604-1606). (pp. 1-12).

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*Bocskai's Revolt, European Information Networks and Print Culture
(Political propaganda, diplomacy and news circulation
between manuscripts and prints, 1604-1606)*

Joint presentation

Bocskai's revolt was the first political event in Hungary in which public political propaganda was an essential activity, which was discussed often and in detail in the early modern European press, and of which both posterity and historical research can get a picture mainly through the contemporary propaganda texts broadly defined, both printed and handwritten. On the one hand, our presentation attempts to outline the general problems of information history in relation to the revolt and its historical context of communication, primarily the communication and propaganda challenge posed by the propaganda machine of the Habsburg court. On the other hand, after summarizing what answers Bocskai's revolt gave to this challenge, it endeavors to show the role of printed propaganda material and its relation to manuscripts sources, and their functions and interaction. A special attention is paid to the question of which genre and which language were used addressing certain targeted groups of readership, as the languages of the propaganda material cover from Hungarian, German, Latin through French and English to Swedish. Third, it gives an outlook on the European reception of the rebellion's propaganda documents: channels, mediators, and media.

The political contexts of the Bocskai Rebellion¹

In the early 17th century, the cooperation between the Habsburg rulers and the dominantly Protestant Hungarian estates, which had been forced upon both sides during the 16th century by the permanent threatening presence and military advances of the Ottoman Empire, and which had led to mutual compromises, could not be maintained any longer.² The fifty-year war (1593-1608) had originally been fought to expel the Turks and reunite the country. By the end of the century, however, it had totally exhausted the country as well as the Habsburg government especially with regard to human and financial resources, and besides its unsuccessful progression, it apparently resulted in governmental measures to undermine “the noble constitution” and to extirpate Protestantism. The Habsburg Emperor and king of Hungary, Rudolf II (1572-1608) had put Transylvania under direct rule in 1601 and tried to wipe out Protestantism. This campaign was led by Count Giacomo Barbiano di Belgiojoso (1565-1626) who, after his military actions in the Netherlands, became imperial

1 For the Rebellion in general, Géza Pálffy, “Bündnispartner und Konkurrenten der Krone: die ungarischen Stände, Stefan Bocskai und Erzherzog Matthias 1604-1608” In Václav Bužek, ed. *Ein Bruderzwist im Hause Habsburg (1608-1611)* (Opera historica 14) (České Budějovice: Vyd. Jihočeská univerzita, 2010), 363-399; idem, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 209-233. For the most important source collections, see Árpád Károlyi, ed. *Monumenta comitialia regni Hungariae/Magyar Országgyűlési Emlékek történeti bevezetésekkel, vol XI.* (Budapest, 1899) (MOE XI); László Nagy, ed. *Iratok Bocskai István és kora történetéhez* (Documents for the History of István Bocskai and his Age), Debrecen, 2005.

2 Kálmán Benda, “Hungary in Turmoil, 1580–1620,” *European Studies Review* 8 (1978): 281–304.

commander and chief captain of upper Hungary in 1603. With help of his troops he brought from the southern part of the Low Countries, he seized St. Elizabeth's Church in Kassa (Kosice) from the Protestants and turned it over to the Catholics.³ He also dispossessed Protestant nobles in favour of Habsburg treasury. The politics of the Emperor provoked an uprising against Habsburg rule in 1604, successfully led by the Transylvanian aristocrat prince Stefan Bocskai (1557-1606).

The European context of the Bocskai propaganda

The Bocskai rebellion in Hungary and Transylvania between 1604 and 1606 was an important moment in the polarization of Europe and the polemics between the Catholic and Protestant camps. The uprising gained much attention in Western Europe, as it was the first successful anti-Habsburg rebellion in Central-Europe. Moreover, Bocskai requested and received military support from the Ottomans, the main treat of the German lands and an important theme of the Habsburg propaganda. With help of these troops, Bocskai occupied Transylvania and large parts of the Hungarian Kingdom and conducted military raids on Austrian and Moravian soil. Bocskai was elected as ruler of Hungary and Transylvania in 1605 and requested and received a crown from the Ottoman court.

The Bocskai uprising provoked a propaganda campaign from the Habsburg court in Prague. Several pamphlets were issued about the threat of the Ottomans and Hungarians to Europe, which was allegedly caused by the Transylvanian prince and his alliance with the Ottomans. As a reaction, the court of Bocskai started a propagandistic and diplomatic campaign from 1604 to gain support against the Habsburg emperor. Bocskai sent one of his envoys, Johannes Bocatius to Heidelberg in winter 1605, to meet the protestant German electors.⁴ The goal of this mission was to explain the reasons of the uprising and to gain support from the electors in order to force the Habsburg emperor to undersign the peace treaty with the Ottomans and the Hungarians. Bocatius (1568-1621) was the town judge of Kassa and one of the most important humanists in Hungary from the early 17th century.⁵

3 In 1596, the Turks occupied Eger, so the bishopric and the chapter needed a new residence. The diet assigned Kassa (Lat. Cassovia, Slov. Košice, Germ. Kaschau) as the sight of the new residence, but the free cities, with dominantly German-speaking Lutheran population, protested against this decision. Their action on Kassa's behalf was partially successful, as only a chapel was set up in the royal house of the city. In November 1603, on the occasion of a commemoration mass to be held for the Queen Mother Anna Mária, Rudolph issued an order that the St. Elisabeth Cathedral was to be handed over to the Catholics. As a result of this open conflict between the imperial forces and the German-speaking Lutheran population of Kassa became the *casus belli* of the rebellion.

4 We have found the documents in München which Bocatius left at Heidelberg and some copies in Dresden that were sent there from Heidelberg. Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv „Protestantische Korrespondenz“ (BayHStA, Kasten Schwarz 16711–16718).

5 For Johannes Bock (1569, Wetschau/Spreewald-1621, Uherský Brod), see Doris Teichmann, *Johannes Bock-Bocatius (1569–1621) – Sorabus Lusatus, Lëtopis*, vol. 52. (2005) 1: 48–72; idem, *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur der Niederlausitz im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Quellengeschichtliche Untersuchungen; Schriften des Sorbischen Instituts 16.) (Bautzen, 1998), 171–295. For his diplomatic mission, most recently, Kees Teszelszky and Márton Zászkaliczky, “Hír, információ és politikai propaganda a Bocskai-felkelés kapcsán az európai információhálózatokban (1604–1606),” *Aetas*, 27 (2012) 4, 49-120, and also Kees Teszelszky, “Diplomáciai iratok Németalföld és Magyarország között a Bocskai-felkelés alatt (1604–1606),” In Réka Bozzay, ed. *Debrecenről Amszterdamiig. Magyarország és Németalföld kapcsolata* (Debrecen, 2010), 59-89; idem, “Magyar misszió, Európai politika. Bocatius János diplomáciai tevékenységei,” In Ildikó Horn and Nóra G. Etényi, eds. *Színlelés és propaganda a kora újkori magyar politikában* (Budapest, 2010); idem, “Some international aspects of the Bocskay-insurrection: the Dutch–Hungarian connection,” In Teréz Óborni and Lila Krász, eds. *Tanulmányok Sahin-Tóth Péter emlékére* (Budapest, 2008), 273–280; idem, “Üzenet az utazótáskából. Kora újkori diplomáciai kapcsolatok Németalföld és Magyarország között a Bocskai-felkelés alatt,” In Ildikó Horn and Nóra G. Etényi, eds. *Portré és imázs. Politikai propaganda és reprezentáció a kora újkorban* (Budapest, 2008), 127–147.

The propaganda writings of the Bocskai rebellion

1.

*Letter to the nobility of Transdanubia (29th March 1605)*⁶

*Letter to Sopron county (2nd April)*⁷

Copey eines Sendtschreibens/ welches Stephan Botschkay/ (HAB)

2.

Querelae, Excusationes et Protestationes

3.

Déclaration des seigneurs et Estats du royaume de Hongrie, 1605

A declaration of the lordes and states ... Translated out of French. London: Printed by Ar. Hatfield for Iohn Hodgets, 1605.

Déclaration des seigneurs et Estats du royaume de Hongrie (manusript, 1606-08??)

4. *"Apologia of Bocskai": Apologia et protestatio legatorum et ecclesiarum Hungaricarum (Bartphae), 1606, 1608*

1.

In various letters, Bocskai's government tried to persuade the inhabitants of the Western region, then within the Kingdom of Hungary ruled by Rudolf, to join the cause. The position of these regions was rather delicate, as they lived under the lawfully elected king, even if many of them emotionally supporting Bocskai while being exposed to the military intrusions of Bocskai's Heyducks and the Turkish auxiliary forces. For this region Bocskai's court compiled several writings that go back to the same original draft.⁸

The first letter, dated on 29th March, addressed the local nobility of Transdanubia. This letter was also sent in a slightly different form to the estates of Sopron county, too. "Knowing," starts the letter, "that we are one nation and you are rowing in the same boat with us in our general defence of our pure life against the disturbing enemies of our faith and liberty," there was no need to inform them with many words as they already knew all. Accordingly, the Hungarians had to suffer the unbearable yoke of the German nation (*németség, Nemeth nemzet*) with great damage, and not considering the decay of our patria and the decay of our pretty cities and forts,

⁶ *Magnifici, generosi ac nobiles, fideles, nobis honorandi ! Salutem et benevolentiae nostrae commendationem ("Az Dunán túl való nemességnek és uraknak írt level") Szerencs, 1605. Március 29. A dunántúli nemességnek, Levelek Nr. 56. Levél a dunántúli nemességnek Thaly 1874, 78-82.*

⁷ *Stephanus Bochkay de kys Maria Divina Princeps Transylvaniae, partium Regni Hungar. Dominus etc. Siculorum Comes, Spectabilis Mag. Generos. Egregii ac Nobiles domini, amici nobis honora., Salutem et benevolentiae n-rae Commen (Sopron vármegye rendjeihez írt level, ápr. 2.), Hurmuzaki 1882, 412-414.*

⁸ For the creation and a parallel presentation of the two letters: Nyakas Miklós, Nyakas, *Az ismeretlen szerencsi kiáltvány*, 2006, 11-16, 33-42.

the death of our cattle and the decrease of our nation due to the bloodshed, they are just standing before the enemy as shield and guards, continues the letter. Under the pretext of the Turkish wars the Germans wanted to completely lose us, so considering the real reasons of war, if many people bound their sword for their true Christian faith, the freedom of their patria and nation, their fight was not only just cause but also doubtlessly necessary. The main justification in their argument was that the “German nation” had become enemies of the Hungarians who, to the great surprise of the neighbouring nations, had patiently endured long persecution, the deprivation of their churches, and the expelling and murder of their ministers. Their “old freedom” was suppressed “by dissimulation and pretext of laws” and by the orders of the Holy See, and “it was experienced by everyone who had possessed something and were deprived of it, either money, cattle, or goods.” For this reason, they claimed, the nobility of the addressed region should join them in their just cause “in consideration of God, their faith for their salvation, and the freedom of their nation and sweet patria.” To emphasize their common interest and fate, Bocskai ended his letter by saying that he is also a just Hungarian, their fellowman and blood, “their member”, seeking their interests too, not only his, and the common good.

The letter was also published in German,⁹ addressing a fictional noble relative, and was allegedly meant to persuade the German-speaking population of the Western region that their uprising (*Auffstand*) was “a just defence against the disturbers of our Christian faith and freedoms.”¹⁰ The German text has more clarity by stating that Hungary was to serve as bastion of the German nation at the price of the destruction of the patria. For all this, however, the Hungarians did not even receive any thanks or gratefulness from the Germans who rather decided, saying that God did not show his mercy on Hungary, to push her into total corruption and destruction by eternal warring under the pretext of defence against the (Turkish) empire.

2.

*Querelae, Excusationes et Protestationes*¹¹

The most important political utterance of Bocskai’s movement was a manifesto written in 1605 to the Christian world about the causes of the rebellion.¹² The writing was habitually attributed to the diet of Szerencs held in April 1605, but it is very

⁹ *Copey eines Sendtschreibens welches Stephan Botschkay... 1605, 3. HAB Wolfenbüttel, A: 160.16 Quod. (18), also in Nyakas, Az ismeretlen szerencsi kiáltvány, 43.*

¹⁰ “*Justae defensionis*” “wider die Perturbatorn vnserer Christlichen Religion und Freyheiten”

¹¹ Copies: **HHStA**: Item quaerelae etc- *Excusationes et protestatio Regni Hungariae praesertim partium Superiorum coram Deo ac tot orbe Christiano et. Incipit: Agniscerte certe et fateri vicinos Hungariae Christianos oportet etc. Neben zu Ende angehengter Protestation in fol[io], 4 Bletter:* OPOE 472. = ÖStA HHStA UA. Fasc. 394. Konv. A. 1605, fol. 1r.-15v. **ÖNB**: Codex 8448 (Illésházy) Fol. 27r.-40r. **Querelae excusationes cum Protestatione** Regni Hungariae praesertim partium superior coram Deo et toto orbe Christiano. Idem, fol. 41r.-fol. 42v. (part of the second part). **MTAK**: K 75, Fábíán Kódex, fol. 31v.-39v. (XVII, after 1608). **MOL**: I. 47. 34. kötet. Fol. 123r.-139v. (XVIII.?) Kollár collection. **ELTE**: Leo 281. 1605. Querela et protestatio regni Ungariae, praesertim partium superiorum. In margina legitur nota: Transcript. ex quodam exempl. viciose scripto. Edit. A. Szilágyi. Mon. Hung., Leopold Beck Hist. XXX. 2. p. 295. ssq. (Coll. Szamosk.). **OSZK1**: Fol. Lat. 3606. Apparatus historicus Nicolai Istvánffy, Collectio litterarum diplomatum memorabilium, manuscriptorum selectissima. Early 17th c. ff. 33-41. “Querelae, excusationes cum protestatione regni Hungariae, praesertim partium superiorum coram Deo et toto orbe Christiano.” Anno 1605. **OSZK2**: Quart. Lat. 316. fol. 14r. [Illésházy, Stephanus]: Querelae, excusationes cum protestatione Regni Ungariae praesertim partium superiorum coram Deo et toto orbe Christiano. 1605. Partial. **OSZK3**: Fol. Lat. 520, fol. 30r.-42v. **OSZK4**: fol. Lat. 2359 Synactica quorumdam actorvm ad historiam tmvltvs Bocskaiani pertinentium. (18. sz.) Fol. 4r.-13r. **Querelae Excusationes cum protestatione**... Ex. Mss. Biblioth. Ant. Szirmay. **OSZK5**: Fol. Lat. 3411. Collectio diplomata, aliaque documenta cum primis articulos diaetales regni Hungariae respicientia e seculis XV-XVII. 19th c. copy. ff. 76-84v. “Querelae, excusationes et protestationes regni Hungariae, praesertim partium superiorum coram Deo et toti orbe Christiano.” Anno miserabilis desolationis 1605.” Also copies in Paris, Prague, Cambridge, München, Dresden, etc.

likely that it was written by István Illésházy during the diet of Korpona in November-December.¹³ The manifesto, aiming at a European audience, gives a detailed description of why arms had been taken up against their lawfully elected King and why a coalition had been made with the enemy of Christianity.¹⁴ As the overarching historical narrative starts, claims were made that the Hungarians had for a long time defended the neighbouring countries against the heathen to the East at the expense of their own flourishing and rich Kingdom. They suffered from the destruction of their patria, lost their bravest men and even their kings, and were treated by others as sheep for slaughter, but they remained strong and attached to the faith and choose death rather than peace with the Turks. Thus they kept the yoke of servitude away from the neck of their neighbours, and proved to be the bulwark of others and defenders of Christianity with all their strength.

The reasoning takes a twist here as they claim that this bronze wall of Christianity has collapsed. It was, however, not demolished by the enemy's cannons but by one who should have been her chief protector, whom they considered their defender and avenger, their elected and sworn king, Rudolf. Despite the fact that they had cheerfully elected him and he had enforced their rights and liberties, and there had been no king whom they had ever loved more, so much so that even the nobles, contrary to their liberties, paid taxes to him and joined his army, Rudolf had decided, they claimed, to totally destroy their weakened nation and make their country one of his provinces, subjugating it to Austria as a hereditary land, which it had never been.

The manifesto gives a detailed list of Rudolf's wrong-doings. He dismissed good councillors and appointed wicked ones, disregarded God, law and justice, ignored good advice, ruled arbitrarily with absolute power (*absoluta potentia*) claiming to be above the laws, and thus became a tyrant. However, they concluded, if he breaks the laws he not only deprives himself of his kingship but also places himself outside humanity as a second Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁵ In one form or other, the idea that tyrannical or unlawfully acting rulers automatically reduce themselves to the status of a resistible private person was widely used in early modern Europe, for instance, by the German imperial estates against Charles V and prominently in the writings of John Locke.¹⁶ There a king, in certain well-defined cases such as becoming an intolerable tyrant, failing to perform his duties, betraying his people and forcing them into the dominion of another nation, or exceeding the bounds of his office, can be resisted, or at least the people attacked by him can defend themselves, as he automatically loses his political authority. Here, even if only in the case of a breach of law and with a more radical sanction, the self-reduction of the king also became part of the justification for resistance to Rudolf, though the reasoning was not very refined.

The historiography usually claimed that the identification of „Rudolf's absolutism” with unlawful actions served to avoid alienating the absolutist sympathizers of Bocskai in Europe (France, German princes) with an openly estates-oriented statement. Apart from the fact that it would be anachronistic to attach the 19th

12 *Querelae, excusationes cum protestatione regni Hungariae, praesertim partium superiorum coram Deo et toto urbe Christiano* MOE, XI, 168-184. Szamosközy, IV. 295-308.

13 For this new interpretation, see Teszelszky-Zászkaliczky, 2012.

14 For the problematic of the “Turkishness” of Hungarian politics, see Kármán, „An Ally of Limited Acceptability: Johannes Bocatius and the Image of the Turk in Hungary”.

15 That identifying Rudolf with Nebuchadnezzar was a theological “own goal” was shrewdly noted by Rady, “Bocskai”, 64 since “Calvin had expressly written on why Nebuchadnezzar should have been obeyed” (Institutes, Ch. 20. Section 27.)

16 Scheible, *Widerstandsrecht*, 25-29, Skinner, *Foundations II*, 199-202., Locke, *Second Treatise*, XIX, 235-239.

century concept, or even the content of the 17th century charge of absolutism, to the text, it is obvious that Rudolf abused his power, lawfully obtained through his election, by his ungodly, unlawful, unjust and arbitrary behaviour, and thereby he became a tyrant, which was unacceptable for every contemporary regardless of form of government or political ideology. For many, his absolute power would not cause too much problem, but the declaration emphasizes that he used it in an arbitrary and abusive manner and, more importantly against natural and divine law, and ratio.¹⁷ Interestingly enough, the declaration continues by saying that only the good and perfect God has absolute power (*absolutissima potentia*), He nevertheless governs our things with ordinary laws (*ordinaria lege*), so that the declaration rejects the idea of absolute political power. This is obvious as the text calls on Rudolf to keep to the law in everything, which would not be necessary for a ruler using his absolute power.¹⁸ At the same time, according to the declaration, Rudolf convoked the diet in the manner of old customs, pretending to hold „some hope of freedom”, where laws were passed as to the old customs (*de more*), but these were changed by the arbitrariness of the king (*pro regis arbitrio*) contrary to the morals of all nations and his promises (*contra omnium gentium morem, contra tot regias pollicitationes*). From this, it is obvious that the declaration represents an estates-oriented ideology and could not accept any absolute power even properly practised. It is very likely that this open rejection of absolute power was meant for a Polish audience; especially that it would have been enough to mention his tyrannical rule for the same effect.¹⁹

It is important to mention with regard to the theological background of the reasoning of the declaration, that while Melanchthon saw the foundations of political power in natural law and reason in addition to divine ordination, Calvin rejected his approach and focused only on the divine ordination. Contrary to the statement of the declaration, Calvin rejected the dichotomy of *absoluta/ordinaria potestas* about the power of God, as opposed to Luther and further Protestant theologians. Also contrary to the declaration, Calvin used the concept of *plena auctoritas*, a synonym of *plenitudo potestatis*, even if only once, but as “the majesty and authority of the magistrate ordained by God” („plenam venerandae maiestatis magistratum auctoritatem”, Inst. IV.20.31).²⁰ This might be relevant as to imply that the authors were rather Lutheran or Catholic than Calvinist since the erudition and theological background point into that direction.

The manifesto claims that one of the most important ancient liberties (*inter praecipuas libertates*) was that every noble can administer his lands freely without

17 Baldus stated that even a ruler with absolute power is subordinated to ratio, therefore it is not accident that the declaration and Illésházy refer to the „just ratio” in several times. Joseph Canning, *The political thought of Baldus de Ubaldis* (CUP, 1987) 72-79.

18 Cf. Benedek Varga, „The Term Libertas in 17–18th c. Hungary” *Studia Caroliensia* 2004. 3–4. 310-311.

19 Cf. *Responsum ab ordinibus Transylvaniae ad Leg. Reg. Pol.* 1605 Mayo 30. State Papers, 88/2: 131-139. Modern kiadása megtalálható az *Elementa ad fontium editiones VI.* „Ex quo igitur sacratissima Caesarea Ma-tas absolutum Regni Hungariae apprehendit, statim jura libertatesque Hungaroae labefactari coeperunt ... legum et consuetudinum nostrarum oblit, ... tyrannide ... contra injurias Suae Ma-tis praesertim in libertate religionis et patriae, armis se defendere. ...” Cf. Magyarország története 3/1. 743-744, and Sinkovics, 294.

20 David Steinmetz, “Calvin and the Absolute Power of God” in Idem, *Calvin in Context*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2010, 40-52., Francis Oakley, *Politics and Eternity: Studies in the History of Medieval and Early-Modern Political Thought* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought) Brill, 1999. Cf. Inst. IV.20.31. It might be also of some importance with regard to the theological sources of the declaration that the story of the three young men escaping from the wrath of Nebukadnezzar, was an important Biblical locus in the scholastic description of God’s absolute and ordinary power, which was taken over by many theologians in the 16th century (Mair, Erasmus, Luther, Melanchthon, Eck, Suarez, Ames).

any intervention, and not even the king or the prelates can invest a priest in his lands, and that this liberty can be enjoyed by the magnates, nobles, lords, and free cities altogether as members of the Hungarian Crown (*membra Coronae Hungariae*). The manifesto frequently invokes the ancient liberties of the nobility and makes them even stronger by referring to the fact that they not only have an individual character, so that each and every noble can enjoy them individually, but also a universal and corporative character, so that the nobility also enjoys them collectively. This corporative view of the liberties and community of the Hungarian elite was enhanced by the notion that they were all constitutive members of the Crown, which was of the country and not of the king.

The manifesto discussed the issue of religious freedom too. The main justification of their protestation for their religious freedom was that natural reason (*naturalis ratio*) demonstrates that the human heart and soul can be educated only by teaching and instruction, and not by violence, and that “freeborn religion is to be propagated freely”²¹ by persuasion, doctrines, wonders and honest life, totally contrary to Rudolf’s example in his alliance with the pope. In addition, Rudolf was fraudulently giving the hope of freedom and dishonestly convoking the diets according to the old custom, but the Hungarians were in vain protesting for their religion and freedoms destroyed by the unlawful occupation of their churches and the arbitrary modification of the law.

The manifesto also enumerated the offences committed against them by Rudolf in the last two years and concluded that he had acted as a “Tyrannus” and not as a king. They found it important to notice that the laws of Hungary allow freedom of speech and rebellion²² against a king who violates the laws of the kingdom, and in that case the inhabitants (*regnicolae*) are absolved from their bond of fidelity and homage.²³ But people were patient until they became weary of the tyranny of the king, so that when they saw God give the occasion they joined Bocskai to defend their patria.

The manifesto also tried to excuse Bocskai himself whom they followed that he did not initiate the conflict. The king should have settled this tumult (*Tumultus hic bellicus*) but he rather intensified it. Consequently, it was his tyranny that forced Bocskai, who was urged by the extreme necessity and not by previous consideration, to request the help of the Turks for defense because he believed that the natural enemy was more benign and just than the emperor of the Christians. (Since the Christians could not move the Heaven, so the Hungarians had to mobilize the Acheron the hell, the enemy from whom they had suffered so much, but Necessity is a hard weapon.) The rights and liberties Hungary had Rudolf took away, what gold and silver it had he spent all, so the manifesto concluded by begging for the princes and kings and Christian peoples that they should not attribute their secession from their king to the Hungarians’ fault but to Rudolf. And if they help get rid of his tyrannical rule they

21 ... ideo religio libere nata libere propagata est...

22 “...leges Hungariae ... admittant liberam contradictionem et insurrectionem...” Cf. Trip 1.9: “resistendi et contradicendi”.

23 Even if the term inhabitant (*regnicola*) usually meant the politically active or land-owning (not necessary noble) part of the population from the late Medieval period, it seems typical that the manifesto did not attribute this right to the nobility only although it was an indirect reference to the fourth liberty (“resistendi et contradicendi”) of the nobility (“De libertatibus nobilium”) in the Golden Bull and the Tripartitum.) See Glossary in DRMH IV-V and Latin-Magyar Törvénykezési szótár (1845): “regnicola” - országlakó, országlakos (“inhabitant of the country”), Mediae latinitatis lexikon minus: “regnicola – citizen, citizen”. But: “Tabula Regnicolarum, seu Statuum et Ordinum” (“Tabula Inferior” - the lower Chamber of the diet)

will fight with them, but if not, the bloodshed will be not their fault but Rudolf's.

Their final argument to win the support of the Christians was that Rudolf was endangering not only Hungary but also other Christian countries. "So they demonstrate before God and the whole Christian world that they will defend themselves against the *Tyrannus Rex* to their last breath because according to the natural law (*jure naturalis*) in danger self-defence is allowed to even dull animals (*brutis animalibus*)."

The natural law-based right to self-defense was used here without exact references, but it is very likely that István Illesházy, the later palatine borrowed this idea as it occurred pretty often in his own writings and letters. The formerly strong wall and bastion of Christianity towards the East (*murus et antemurale ad orientem*) had been forced by Rudolf to join the Turks, continues the text. This was an extreme necessity since, if Hungary was defeated, Austria, Moravia, and the Polish and Czech Kingdoms would no longer be safe. And if Rudolf were not stopped, he would do to other rulers and other nations what he was doing to his subjects when he wanted to make Hungary a new colony of Austria (*novam Austriacam coloniam*). Rudolf was acting out of his disease of melancholy (*morbo melancholiae*) and his lust (*Melancholiae totus et libidini suae*), he rejected the fear of God and justice and his duties, and he led an immoral extra-matrimonial life. Therefore, for the sake of *Respublica Christianae*, the Christians should help Hungary. "And if you help Hungary you help yourselves," because we (the Hungarians) are "ready and promise to not spare their life, blood and the remnants of their country and to endure everything for you, the religion, the faith, the peace, security and tranquility of Christianity."

The manifesto was to be circulated in Latin, and, according to the traditional view in the historiography, there were other versions translated into German, French and English. As it turned out recently, the French and English versions were translations of distinct Latin letter written by the Szerencs diet in April 1605. It is also very feasible that the publication of the French and English translations cannot be attributed to Bocskai's propaganda. The English version (*A declaration of the lordes and states of the realme of 1605*)²⁴ claimed to be a translation of a French version, which is a line by line translation of the Latin letter written for the Silesian and Czech estates²⁵, which was distinct from the Szerencs manifesto. It is also obvious if we consider that the English version quotes in a greater scale *the Golden Bull* and the "Tripartite Worke" (*Tripartitum*) with special regard to the right of resistance in both texts, quotes only referred to in the *Querelae*.²⁶ The English version was later partially

24 *A declaration of the lordes and states ...* Translated out of French. London: Printed by Ar. Hatfield for Iohn Hodgets, 1605.

25 *Acta in Ungarn, Böhmen und Schlesien. 1604–1609*, Biblioteka Cyfrowa Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, MF 9961, 121–126. Even before the discovery of the original Latin version in this collection, the French-English version seemed to have been phrased for the Bohemian and Moravian estates as its addresses are "ancient neighbours", Silesia is often mentioned and such as "neighbourhood", or "inheritance of the realme of Hungary", and the text claims there is "our ancient league of amitie" and says there is no intention to wage war against the kingdom of Bohemia, Silesia and Moravia, while Bocskai is Earl of Sicilia (sic!) (Silesia in fact).

26 "Now if either we or any one of our successours in any time whatsoever, go against this our pleasure, we licence our subjects and giue them all power to contradict and resist us, so as afterward they may never be branded with any note of treason or infamy for the same." (1222:31), and also quoting the Ninth title of the *Tripartitum* "Let this be the fourth and absolute liberty, if any of the Kings or Princes happen to derogate from the freedom of the Noblemen etc. ... (... every king of Hungary, before his coronation is bound and accustomed to sweare the obseruance of the same conditions: to wit,) To permit and consent that men rise up in armes against him without any note of treason, in such cases: as when he goeth in any thing about to restraine from them their libertie.

translated into Dutch and the text enjoyed high popularity as it was published in collections of historical texts (E. van Meteren, *Historie*).

3. The so-called “Apologia of Bocskai was one of the few propaganda writings which was printed by the supporters of Bocskai. Interestingly enough, a Swedish translation was also published in the same year of the original publication.²⁷ In 1608, Albert Szenczi Molnár also published this work more than once.

The Dutch and the Bocskai Revolt

In fact, Hungarian soldiers fought against Dutch troops in Belgiojoso’s army on the territory of the Hungarian kingdom. It were further reasons as well that the Dutch elite became more and more involved with international politics after the beginning of the revolt. This can be explained by the characteristics of this conflict. At the outbreak of this revolt, the war was fought between two unequal powers. The Dutch, as the weakest part, were frantically searching for allies and support from outside by skilfully using their diplomatic contacts, communication channels, commercial networks and printing press. The Calvinist ideology was an important trump card. The Dutch searched for adherents in other countries willing and ready to go to the aid of their fellow religionists elsewhere. The southern Habsburg part of the country did likewise by their Catholic allies. The Low Countries gradually developed into a pole of political and religious ferment in Europe and its war tended to exert an influence on all other conflicts in Europe. The war between Spain and the Dutch rebels played thus a crucial role in the polarization of international politics, both inside and outside Europe, into two hostile camps.²⁸

As we know, Bocatius left us many sources about his diplomatic mission to the German princes, such as his memoires, letters and poems.²⁹ According to him, the envoy of the Dutch in the German lands, Pieter Brederode played an important role in his mission. Brederode supported Bocatius during his negotiations with the Germans. They also discussed politics together, especially the Transylvanian alliance with the Ottomans, which turned out to be the main source of German distrust of the Hungarians. This exchange of information between Bocatius and Brederode turned out to be an important moment for the development of the image of the Hungarians in the Dutch Republic. Brederode wrote in one of his missives that he received several important documents about the rebellion in Hungary, of which at least one political treatise is preserved in the State Archive in The Hague.

An important work from the point of view of the image of the Hungarians is a history about the Dutch revolt, written by Emmanuel van Meteren and published in 1599 for the first time. Van Meteren was born in Antwerp and a

27 *Apologia et protestatio legatorum et ecclesiarum Hungaricarum* (Bartphae), 1606: Göttingen, H HUNG II, 5200, 1608: HAB A:160.16 Quod (21), S: Alv.: Lh 176 (6), A: 240.18.1 Quod. (24). En försvarelseskrift och protestation, som församlingerne uti thet konungerijket Vngern och theres utskickede sendebudh, hafue giordt moot munke jesuiternes osanfärdelige förwiltelser ...: Afsatt af latijnen vppåswenske ... Stockholm: (Andreas Gutterwitz), 1606.

28 G. Parker, “The Dutch Revolt and the Polarization of International Politics” in *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by G. Parker and L. M. Smith (London, Henley and Boston 1978), 58.

29 *Bocatius János, Öt év történetben (1606-1610)*, trans. Ferenc Csonka (Bibliotheca Historica) (Budapest, 1985).

nephew of the famous cartographer Abraham Ortelius. After he studied theology, he became a merchant like his father and moved to London. In his free time, he wrote a voluminous history of the Dutch uprising, based on his meetings with politicians, diplomats and merchants from Holland and other countries in London.

Van Meteren wrote a patriotic history of the Dutch revolt seen from the perspective of divine Providence. The image of the Dutch and the others is constructed as a part of a divine plan, in which all events in world history are linked to each other and are part of Gods plan with humanity. Van Meteren legitimates the Dutch rebellion against Habsburg rule by referring to it as a part of a cosmic war of Good against Evil. On one side stand the protestant Dutch as elected nation supported by Providence, and on the other side the Catholic Habsburgs and the Pope. He divides the people and rulers of the world according to their assumed place in the Divine plan and their supposed attitude towards Protestant Religion.

The author devoted a lot of attention to the Bocskai uprising and the Ottoman support in the enlarged edition of his work, which was issued in 1608. He describes in detail the important events of the uprising, quotes the rebel propaganda of Bocskai and even mentions the diplomatic mission of Bocatius. It is quite possible that he received this information directly from Brederode or from another Dutch source.

Van Meteren saw a common base between the events in Hungary and the Dutch Republic. In his eyes, both rebellions are analogous events, as the Hungarians and the Dutch are guided by Providence against the Habsburg powers. He strengthens this providential analogy, by pointing to the fact the Hungarian uprising was also lead by a “father of the fatherland”, the term by which William the Silent also denoted. The author devotes also much attention to the explanation of the ideological background of the Hungarian rebellion, which is in his eyes similar to the Dutch revolt. He draws this information from one of the political treatises, which Bocatius brought with him to Germany. According to Van Meteren, the uprising in Hungary and Transylvania was motivated by the tyrannical rule of the king, the infringement on the liberties of the estates and the freedom of religion of the Hungarians done by the emperor, just like he described the background of the Dutch uprising.

Van Meteren revives the old myth of the Hungarian-Dutch kinship by turning it the other way around. The Saxons, who are living in Hungarian towns like Kassa (the home town of Bocatius where the revolt started), were the kinsfolk of the Dutch, because the Saxon people also live in the east of the Netherlands. This idea is not exceptional, as Dutch writing of providentialist historiography on the basis of supposed ethnic relations was quite popular in this time.³⁰ Even Native Americans were described as from Dutch descent, due to their resistance against the Spanish dominion. The rebels from Hungary and Transylvania were no foreign “others”, but in fact kin people from Dutch descent, living under Ottoman rule, who fight in the East of Europe for a similar cause like the Dutch. Van Meteren presents the successful Hungarian rebellion as a providentialist mirror of the Dutch uprising. All the similarities he described have to prove the providential background of both wars against catholic tyranny and in favour of protestant religion. The political success of the Hungarian and

the Transylvanian estates did also legitimate the political goals of the Dutch estates.

Still, there remained one important difference between these two events, as the success of the Hungarian revolt was also due to the considerable Ottoman support. Besides, the Calvinist Prince Bocskai was accepted a vassal of the Ottoman Emperor, and his principality became again a vassal state under Ottoman rule. This was a very sensitive and a much disputed theme in Catholic and Protestant circles in Europe in that time and the main source of the negative image of Bocskai and the Hungarians in Europe. Van Meteren does not share the negative attitude towards the Ottomans or the Hungarians of Transylvania at all. According to him Ottoman rule is to be preferred above that of the Catholic Habsburg tyranny. He described in detail how the Ottomans presented Bocskai the crown of Hungary, the age old sign of royal authority in the Hungarian Kingdom. According to Van Meteren, the Ottomans had found it in Buda, when they occupied this town in 1540. In fact, Bocskai received a Turkish crown jewel; the real crown of the kingdom of Hungary was kept safely in Prague. The description of the crowning of Bocskai in the book is meant to underscore that the protestant prince Bocskai had the power of any other Christian king in Hungary, only that he received his authority from the Ottoman sultan.

We cannot underestimate the influence of this book on the image of Hungary and the Hungarians in the Netherlands. As the work of Van Meteren was the most widespread book in early modern Dutch households after the Bible and the moral works of Jacob Cats, it has been the most widely read history book in the Netherlands. In this way, it must have had a considerable influence on how Dutch people perceived their own recent history and their place in the world towards the Other. The content of the work of Van Meteren about Hungary was quoted till the 18th century in other works, most notably that one of Hugo Grotius.

In our presentation, we will not undertake to reconstruct the whole text and information cycle of the sources mentioned above, mainly because there are not enough archival sources available. In addition, there are quite a few factors that are not clear yet, including the circumstances around the genesis of some texts, the channels of their dissemination as well as the relationship between the various texts and text variants. Thus, our presentation primarily endeavors to map the information and publication network through which the texts were spread, and in the case of the Dutch prints it can provide a more detailed description of information channels (authors, printers, readers) in which the texts and the political messages carried in them were received.

Márton Zászkaliczky would like to shed light on the most important aspects of the production phase of the printed and manuscript material and their “travel” from Hungary toward the Holy Roman Empire (Heidelberg, Dresden) and Poland, including Wroclaw. A very important question is how the Bocskai rebellion used the media of print publication and how this role was complemented by the “traditional” communication means spread in manuscripts. A further question is if distinct propaganda targets were addressed differently with regard to both political communication and argumentation as well as the media channels and

the way in which they were used.

Kees Tszelszky would like to draw the attention to the reception and reproduction phase of these texts and the influence on the development of the early modern image of the Hungarians and Ottomans in the printed culture of the Dutch Republic. Which information did reach the Dutch Republic and how was it used and reused in the Netherlands? What was the political background of this information flow? How did the publication of this information change the image of the Ottomans in the Dutch Republic?