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PALMAN OF LETINBERCH AND HIS TEUTONIC COMPANY**

Abstract: Palman of Letinberch earned his reputation as the leader of Teutonic mercenaries who served King and Tsar Stefan Dušan of Serbia (1331–1355). His achievements are documented in various sources, including multiple documents from the archives of Dubrovnik and Venice, the correspondence between Stefan Dušan and Pope Innocent VI, accounts from French soldier and diplomat Philippe de Mézières, and Byzantine Emperor and writer John VI Kantakouzenos. These sources offer an opportunity to explore Palman's turbulent career, spanning around three decades (ca. 1333–1363). They reveal that Palman was not only a mercenary commander involved in the Serbian-Byzantine conflict but also a resourceful and skillful diplomat, who played a critical role in Dušan's negotiations with the Habsburgs and Papal Curia. This article examines Palman's career in detail and sheds light on his mercenary company.

Keywords: Palman of Letinberch, Stefan Dušan, Serbia, Austria, Dubrovnik, mercenaries, 14th century.

Анотација: Палман из Летинберга истакао се као вођа тевтонских најамника у служби српског краља и цара Стефана Душана (1331–1355). Палманове активности забележене су у различитим изворима: у документима из Дубровачког и Венецијанског архива, у преписци Стефана Душана и папе Иноћентија VI, у списима француског војника и дипломате Филипа де Мезијера, као и у делу византијског цара и историчара Јована VI Кантакузина. Ови извори пружају прилику да се оцртају обриси Палманове динамичне каријере која покрива отприлике три деценије (око 1333–1363). Они показују да Палман није био само вођа најамничке компаније која је учествовала у српско-византијским сукобима, већ и вешти и искусни дипломата који је играо важну улогу у Душановим преговорима са Хабзбурзима и папском куријом. Овај чланак бави се Палмановом каријером и његовом најамничком дружином.

Кључне речи: Палман из Летинберга, Стефан Душан, Србија, Аустрија, Дубровник, најамници, XIV век.

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Palman, known as Palmannus de Letinberch in historical documents, is a fascinating figure who distinguished himself in the service of the Serbian king and (since 1346) tsar Stefan Dušan (1331–1355). He is no less intriguing than famous mercenary captains of fourteenth-century Europe, such as Roger de Flor or John Hawkwood, despite being much less known. Palman's activities cover a three-decade timespan between 1333 and 1363, coinciding with the period of the most remarkable territorial expansion of the Nemanjić state. They are recorded in various sources, including several documents from the Dubrovnik and Venice archives, correspondence between Stefan Dušan and Pope Innocent VI, and accounts by a French soldier and diplomat Philippe de Mézières, as well as Byzantine emperor and writer John VI Kantakouzenos (1347–1354). However, the available information is fragmentary and does not provide a comprehensive year-by-year account of Palman and his company's military activities. Moreover, despite valuable contributions by Konstantin Jireček, Mihailo Dinić, and other researchers aimed at illuminating aspects of Palman's involvement in particular events,¹ no scholarly study has fully encompassed his life and career, as well as the importance of his mercenary company. It is also worth noting that he is frequently and mistakenly referred to as 'Palman Bracht'; a mistake made by Serbian romantic historian Pantelija Srećković in the late 19th century, which has persisted to this day in popular literature.²

Although limited, the sources offer a glimpse into Palman's turbulent career as the leader of a mercenary company involved in the Serbian-Byzantine conflicts, as well as his diplomatic skills, including his role in Stefan Dušan's negotiations with the Habsburgs and the Papal Curia. In addition, some documents from the Dubrovnik archive mention his business activities. Palman's first recorded historical appearance was in Dubrovnik, where he arrived in October 1333 to collect the equipment of an unnamed

¹ Konstantin Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben* I, Gotha 1911, 375, 408, 412; idem, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien: Studien zur Kulturgeschichte des 13.–15. Jahrhunderts* III, Wien 1914, 73; Gavro Škrivanić, "O najamničkoj vojsci u srednjevekovnoj Srbiji", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 1 (1954) 86–87; Mihailo Dinić, "O vitezu Palmanu", *Zgodovinski časopis* 6–7 (1952–1953) 398–401; Andrija Veselinović, "Vojska u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 1–2 (1994) 409–410; Marko Aleksić, "Reforma srpske vojske u vreme Stefana Dušana", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 2 (2015) 9–16; Aleksandar Uzelac, "Foreign soldiers in the Nemanjić state: a Critical Overview", *Beogradski istorijski glasnik* 6 (2015) 78–80.

² Pantelija Srećković, *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, knj. druga, *Vreme kraljevstva i carstva (1159–1367)*, Beograd 1888, 440. Srećković thought that certain Serbian leader 'Brahtos' mentioned in the work of John VI Kantakouzenos was Palman. However, the person in question is Vratko, an alleged member of the side branch of the Nemanjić dynasty, cf. *Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije*, VI, Franjo Barišić & Božidar Ferjančić (eds.), Beograd 1986, 411.

mercenary in Stefan Dušan's service, which he was to deliver to the king's *medicus*, Antonius.³ Two years later, on October 19, 1335, Palman was again in Dubrovnik, promising to pay a certain sum of money unless Stefan Dušan's confidant, protovestiary Nikola Buća from Kotor (Cattaro), paid this debt instead of him.⁴ Evidently, at the time, Palman already established himself in the inner circle of the Serbian ruler.

As there is no information about the mercenary captain before 1333, it can only be guessed that he was born around the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is unknown whether he participated in the Battle of Velbužd (modern Kustendil, Bulgaria) in 1330, where the Serbian army, under Stefan Dušan's effective command, defeated Bulgarian tsar Michael III Šišman (1321–1331), who died on the battlefield.⁵ Certainly, the Serbian side employed many mercenaries in the battle, but they were mostly Catalan units (numbering some 1,000 horsemen), while the presence of Teutonic mercenaries is only vaguely attested.⁶ Palman's presence in the battle cannot be confirmed, and it is equally probable that he entered Stefan Dušan's service after 1331 when he overthrew his father Stefan Uroš III Dečanski (1321–1331) and became the ruler of Serbian lands.⁷ It is, however, certain that he was not a lone adventurer.

³ K. Jireček, *Staat und Gesellschaft* III, 73, n. 9.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ On the battle of Velbužd see: Ursula Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III. Palaiologos. Versuch einer Darstellung der byzantinischen Geschichte in den Jahren 1321–1341*, Amsterdam 1965, 72–77; Gavro Škrivanić, "Bitka kod Velbužda 28. VII 1330. godine", *Vesnik Vojnog muzeja* 16 (1970) 67–77; Dimităr Angelov & Boris Cholpanov, *Bălgarska voenna istoriya prez srednovekovieto (X–XV vek)*, Sofia 1994, 180–185.

⁶ The only information about the German mercenaries in the Battle of Velbužd is recorded by Kantakouzenos, who mentions '300 heavily armored Alamanni' on the Serbian side, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum libri IV*, I, Ludovicus Schopen (ed.), Bonnae 1828, 429 (=Johannes Kantakouzenos, *Geschichte* II, Georgios Fatouros & Tilman Krischer (eds.), Stuttgart 1986, 78). However, it has been noted that Kantakouzenos' account of these events was influenced by his own experiences during his stay in Serbian lands a little more than a decade later, when Palman's company, numbering 300 people, was evidently in Stefan Dušan's service, *Vizantijski izvori* VI, 338, n. 133. More trustworthy Nikephoros Gregoras speaks of 1,000 Celtic (Catalan) horsemen on the Serbian side in the battle, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* I, Ludovicus Schopen (ed.), Bonnae 1829, 455 (=Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhomäische Geschichte* II/2, Jean-Louis van Dieten (ed.), Stuttgart 1979, 237). On the Catalan and other mercenaries present in the battle of Velbužd see Mihailo Dinić, "Španski najamnici u srpskoj službi", *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 6 (1960), 15–28; Ursula Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III.*, 74, n. 3; Aleksandar Uzelac, "Katalanski najamnici Stefana Dušana", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 1 (2019) 14–16.

⁷ On the overthrow of the old king Stefan Uroš III Dečanski and enthronement of Stefan Dušan in 1331 see: George Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium during the Reign of Tsar Stephen Dušan (1331–1355) and his Successors*, Washington DC 1984, 2–4; Božidar Ferjančić & Sima Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan, kralj i car (1331–1355)*, Beograd 2005, 41–48.

He was in the Nemanjić lands with his brother, Chiaran (Chiarane fratre Palmani Teutonici), who was in Dubrovnik in October 1336 as part of Dušan's delegation, which collected regular annual tribute from the local authorities.⁸ Palman's nephew, George (Giorgius nepos domini Palmanni Teutonici), likely Chiaran's son, is also attested in Dubrovnik in 1343 when he deposited a helmet with a coat of arms, a sword, and some of his personal belongings to a local merchant, receiving five ducats in return.⁹ This suggests that Palman's enterprise was a family venture and that some of his close cousins also joined him in the service of Stefan Dušan.

Formation of the Teutonic Company

While Palman had been present in the medieval Balkans at least since 1333, the formation of the Teutonic company under his leadership happened a few years later, and it was tied to a specific marriage project. In 1336, Stefan Dušan began negotiations with the Habsburg court in Vienna to marry Elisabeth, niece of Duke Otto of Austria and Styria (1330–1339), and daughter of the late Frederick the Fair (1308–1330), according to a report by Abbot John of Viktring.¹⁰ It is unclear why Stefan Dušan sent a marriage proposal to Austria, as he was already married to Bulgarian Princess Jelena. Historians have speculated that the proposal was motivated by the marital crisis at the Serbian court and Jelena's alleged inability to provide an heir to the throne.¹¹ However, a political factor also played a significant role: there was a state of war on the Serbian-Hungarian border in late 1334 and early 1335,¹² and

⁸ Konstantin Jireček, *Staat und Gesellschaft I*, 79, n. 7.

⁹ Ibidem, n. 8; Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, "Nemci u srednjovekovnom Dubrovniku", *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti u Dubrovniku* 18 (1980) 92–93.

¹⁰ *Iohannis abbatis Victoriensis Liber certarum historiarum II*, Fedorus Schenider (ed.), Hannoverae – Lipsiae 1910, 172, 202–203: 'Eodem anno infirmata est filia regis Friderici Elizabeth infirmitate, qua et mortua est; nam dum Servie regi diceretur matrimonialiter copulanda in tantum abhorruit hominis scismatici fidem erroneam, ita ut cottidianis Deum gemitibus exoraret, multius icuniis corpus affligeret, suam semper Domino pudiciciam commendaret...'. The information is repeated by later Austrian chronicler Thomas Ebendorfer (1388–1464). See Marko Gavrilović, "Srbi u delima austrijskog hroničara Tomasa Ebendorfera", *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 98 (2018) 13–14.

¹¹ Miodrag Purković, *Jelena – žena cara Dušana*, Diseldorf 1975, 8; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 66–67.

¹² *Monumenta ragusina. Libri reformationum*, II, Franjo Rački (ed.), Zagrabiae 1882, 356; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 59–60. The Serbian-Hungarian clashes of that time are also reflected in an unfinished hagiography of Stefan Dušan by an anonymous continuator of

Stefan Dušan's desire to establish an alliance with the Habsburgs against their common rival, Hungarian King Charles Robert of Anjou (1308–1342), certainly influenced his marriage proposal.¹³

The diplomatic mission to Austria probably began in early 1336. The leader of the embassy was Palman, whose leading role is revealed on the return trip during which he was accompanied by messengers of Duke Otto. On April 12, 1336, the local authorities in Dubrovnik allowed Palman and the Duke's messengers to travel safely to Stefan Dušan and transferred them on a galley to Kotor (Cattaro).¹⁴ Palman's leading role in the embassy does not come as a surprise considering that the marriage proposal was directed to his native lands, and it can be supposed that he also had some influence in steering Stefan Dušan toward closer collaboration with the Habsburgs.

Eventually, the negotiations were unsuccessful. Stefan Dušan's intended bride died prematurely on October 23, 1336, and was buried in the Carthusian Abbey of Mayerbach, near Vienna.¹⁵ According to John of Viktring, Elisabeth reportedly fell ill and died, overcome with grief upon hearing that she was to marry a schismatic ruler.¹⁶ It is more likely that the illness that caused her death was related to natural causes.¹⁷ Be that as it may, in the meantime, the marital crisis between Dušan and Jelena was resolved when she gave birth to the heir to the throne, Uroš, in 1336/37.¹⁸

In addition to carrying the marriage proposal, Palman also used the trip to his native Austria for another purpose – to establish a mercenary company that would serve Stefan Dušan in the years to come. This conclusion is also circumstantially confirmed by documentary evidence. On December 6, 1336, in Venice, a decision was made, at the request of the Serbian king, to allow the free passage of three hundred footmen whom he had enlisted as his bodyguard

Archbishop Danilo II (1324–1337), *Arhiepiskop Danilo i drugi, Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, Đuro Daničić (ed.), Zagreb 1866, 227–230.

¹³ M. Gavrilović, "Srbi u delima", 14–15.

¹⁴ *Monumenta ragusina* II, 365: '[...] quod ambaxatores magnifici viri domini ducis Austrie et dominus Palmanus miles teutonicus cum eorum familia possint ire super galea comunis, super qua ambaxatores Ragusii ire debent ad serenissimum regem Raxie ad partes maritimas de Cataro'; K. Jireček, *Geschichte* I, 375.

¹⁵ *Continuatio Claustro-neoburgensis VII*, Wilhelmus Wattenbach (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scriptorum IX, Hannoverae 1856, 756; Heinrich von Zeissberg, *Elisabeth von Aragonien, Gemahlin Friedrich's des Schönen von Österreich*, Wien 1897, 119–120.

¹⁶ *Iohannis abbatis Victoriensis Liber II*, 172, 202–203.

¹⁷ Some historians speculated that she died of tuberculosis, cf. M. Purković, *Jelena*, 8–9. Nonetheless, the sources do not provide the information to exactly establish the cause of her death.

¹⁸ Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, Sremski Karlovci 1927, 82–83, no. 131; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 67.

(pro securitate sue persone) and who were to cross Venetian territories.¹⁹ Although the origin of these mercenaries is not specified, they certainly came from Habsburg lands since they had to pass through Venetian territory en route to Serbia. Additionally, the figure of three hundred mentioned in the Venetian senate's decision matches the estimated strength of the mercenary company under Palman's command, recorded in other sources, as we shall see further on.²⁰ Recruitment probably occurred during Palman's stay in Austria in early 1336. However, it cannot be excluded that he once again returned to his native country during the summer for the same purpose.

Members of the Company

Another set of documents from Dubrovnik dating from 1337 and 1338 is important for understanding the activities of Palman and his followers. In early September 1337, they were engaged in trade activities, promising to sell a large quantity of grain from the interior of the Serbian lands to Dubrovnik. For this purpose, Palman and his followers took out a credit of 800 and 400 hyperpera, respectively, guaranteeing its payment with their property.²¹ As of July 1338, the first debt was not paid.²²

Besides the record of the business activities, these documents reveal Palman's place of origin, as well as the names and origins of his most prominent followers. The leader of the company is mentioned as 'Palmannus de Letinberch'.²³ This intriguing placename remained unidentified, but in our opinion, it is probably medieval Littenberg, which is the modern town of Ljutomer in Slovenia, east of Maribor and Ptuj. Littenberg historically belonged to southern Styria. It is undisputedly attested as the town in a charter

¹⁹ Sime Ljubić (ed.), *Listine o odnošajih između južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke republike II*, Zagreb 1870, 11, no. 17 (= *Magyar diplomacziái emlékek az Anjou-korból I*, Gusztáv Wenzel (ed.), Budapest 1874, 346, no. 341): 'Quod ad petitionem domini Regis Raxie concedatur, quod vsque ad III centum pedites, quos intendit facere soldizari extra Venetias, possint transire per nostrum Districtum ad suas partes; quos, vt dicit, vult pro securitate sue persone'.

²⁰ This has been already noted by Gavro Škrivanić, "Organizacija srednjovekovne vojske u Srbiji, Bosni i Dubrovniku", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 1 (1967) 153, and by A. Veselinović, "Vojska u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji", 409. An opinion that these mercenaries were from Lombardy is unfounded, cf. Đurđica Petrović, "Oružje Srbije i Evropa XII–XIV vek", in: *Evropa i Srbi*, Slavenko Terzić (ed.), Beograd 1996, 155.

²¹ M. Dinić, "O vitezu Palmanu", 399–400, nos. 1–4; D. Dinić-Knežević, "Nemci", 92.

²² M. Dinić, "O vitezu Palmanu", 400–401, no. 5.

²³ *Ibidem*, 399, 400, nos. 2, 4.

of Duke Frederick II Quarrelsome from 1242 (under the name Lûtenwerde),²⁴ while in the documents of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is frequently recorded as Lutenberch, Lotenberch, Lutenperch, and so on.²⁵

Palman's supposed origin from southern Styria is in accordance with the information related to his followers attested in the documents, and to whom we also have to turn our attention. Most intriguing among them is a certain 'comes Federicus de Ortinburgo'.²⁶ The place mentioned here is undoubtedly Ortenburg in Carinthia, northwest of Villach.²⁷ Therefore, considering his place of origin and title, it is certain that this Frederick stemmed from the family of Ortenburg counts. In our opinion, 'comes Federicus de Ortinburgo' can be safely identified with Frederick, one of the sons of Count Albert II (who died in 1335),²⁸ because, at that time, he was the only living member of this family who carried this name. Like his brothers, Frederick bore the title of count, but only as an honorary one, since he was not the eldest son and heir of Count Albert II. Nevertheless, his affiliation with the highest nobility is evidenced by the fact that, in the document from early September 1337, he is listed as the first among the mercenaries, even before Palman himself. It seems that he did not stay as a mercenary for long. Already on January 13, 1338, he was mentioned with his brothers in a document testifying to the purchase of Sternberg Castle in Carinthia for 1,100 Aquileian marks. This possibly indicates that, by that time, he had already returned to his homeland.²⁹ Frederick of Ortenburg later married Margaret, the daughter of Count Ulrich V of Pfannberg. As Ulrich's son-in-law, Frederick of Ortenburg was first attested to in a grant from 1354. He died around 1360, while his wife died after 1374 when she was last mentioned alive. The couple had no children.³⁰ Obviously, Frederick's stay in Dubrovnik and the Serbian lands remained just a short and passing episode in his life.

²⁴ *Urkundenbuch des Herzogthums Steiermark* II, Josef von Zahn (ed.), Graz 1879, 515–516, no. 402.

²⁵ Joseph von Zahn, *Ortsnamenbuch der Steiermark im Mittelalter*, Wien 1893, 320; Fran Kovačič, *Ljutomer: Zgodovina trga in sreza*, Maribor 1926, 116–125.

²⁶ M. Dinić, "O vitezu Palmanu", 400, no. 4.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 398.

²⁸ Cf. Karlmann Tangl, "Die Grafen von Ortenburg in Kärnten. Zweite Abtheilung von 1256 bis 1343", *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 36/2 (1866) 181–182.

²⁹ Ignaz Tomaschek, "Regesten zur Geschichte Kärntens", *Archiv für vaterländische Geschichte und Topographie* 9 (1864) 115; K. Tangl, "Die Grafen von Ortenburg", 149.

³⁰ Rudolfus Coronini, *Tentamen genealogico-chronologicum promovendae seriei comitum et rerum Goritiae*, Viennae 1752, 195; *Notizenblatt: Beilage zum Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichtsquellen* I, Wien 1851, 346, no. 126; Karlmann Tangl, "Die Grafen von Pfannberg", *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* 18 (1857) 190, 297.

The rest of the company members, known by name from the same documents, are knight Dietrich from Vienna (Detergius de Vienna miles), Raf from Steyr (Rafus de Stayro), Craftin from Waldenberg (Craftinus de Valtinberch), or Lipniški grad in Carinthia, and a certain Gregor Paulich (Gregorius Paulig), who was, judging by his name, not of Teutonic but of Slavic origin. He may have also been from Waldenberg, as he is mentioned after Craftin but without a place of origin.³¹ Unlike Frederick of Ortenburg, other Palman's followers did not leave other traces in documentary sources but based on the material at our disposal two important conclusions can be drawn. First, Palman's Teutonic company consisted of men from the Habsburg lands of Styria, Carinthia, and Austria. Second, it included people of both German and Slavic origin. The members of the company originated from regions where in the fourteenth century both German and Slavic language were in use. Taking into account the mutual closeness of South Slavic dialects of this time, it may be supposed that they did not face a linguistic barrier when they arrived in medieval Serbian lands.

At the Battlefield against Byzantium

The Teutonic company was formed during a period of temporary reconciliation in Serbian-Byzantine relations, culminating in the meeting of Stefan Dušan and Emperor Andronikos III (1328–1341) in 1336.³² However, its employment also coincided with strained relations with Hungary, leading to another full-scale war between Stefan Dušan and Charles Robert in 1338.³³ Fragmentary documentary sources on the Hungarian side attest to this conflict but do not provide any evidence about the composition of the Serbian army. As a result, it remains uncertain whether the Teutonic mercenaries took part in it. Naturally, this possibility cannot be excluded.

The first undisputed information about the activities of the Teutonic company comes from an eyewitness of the highest rank, Byzantine aristocrat,

³¹ M. Dinić, "O vitezu Palmanu", 398.

³² *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* I, 475 (=Johannes Kantakuzenos, *Geschichte* II, 107–108). On the date and circumstances of the meeting between Stefan Dušan and Andronikos III see: G. Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 9–10, 166–167, n. 52; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 78–80. On the place of the meeting, which has been frequently identified as Radovišta in Macedonia, *Vizantijski izvori* VI, 352, n. 169; Sima Ćirković, "O sastancima cara Andronika III i kralja Stefana Dušana", *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 29–30 (1991) 208–211.

³³ B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 81.

and future emperor John VI Kantakouzenos. In the summer of 1342, following the death of Andronikos III and his defeat in the struggle against the regency in Constantinople ruling on behalf of minor John V Palaiologos (1341–1390), Kantakouzenos was forced to seek refuge at Stefan Dušan's court, where the two men concluded an alliance.³⁴ According to Kantakouzenos, at that time, Stefan Dušan and his wife Jelena had two mercenary groups – the 'Germans' (evidently, Palman's company), who were under the direct control of the Serbian king, and the 'Latins' (in fact, the Catalans), who formally belonged to the queen.³⁵ The Serbian royal couple gave both mercenary groups to Kantakouzenos, who, from the Serbian territory, renewed the war against the interim government in Constantinople. Aided by the mercenaries, in April 1343, he managed to capture the important city of Veroia, west of Thessaloniki.³⁶ It is unknown whether Palman personally participated in the campaign. When a split occurred between Dušan and Kantakouzenos in 1343, the Byzantine pretender managed to win over the Catalans led by Joan de Peralta for his cause. Still, the Germans remained loyal to the Nemanjić ruler. Despite this, Kantakouzenos explicitly stated that he remained in cordial relations with them and that they informed him about Dušan's intentions to break their mutual alliance and even escorted him to safety.³⁷

³⁴ *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* II, 636–642 (=Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhömische Geschichte* III, 76–80); *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* II, 257–277. (=Johannes Kantakouzenos, *Geschichte* III, 163–177); G. Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 14–18; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 105–110; Radivoj Radić, *Crno stoleće. Vreme Jovana V Paleologa (1332–1391)*, Beograd 2013, 138–144.

³⁵ *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* II, 354 (=Johannes Kantakouzenos, *Geschichte* III, 230). Frequently expressed, but unfounded, opinion is that Kantakouzenos uses both names – Germans and Latins – for the same mercenary group, Stojan Novaković, *Stara Srpska vojska*, Beograd 1893, 86–87; *Vizantijski izvori* VI, 439, n. 262. On the identification of the 'Latins' as Catalans, see A. Uzelac, "Katalanski najamnici", 17–19.

³⁶ *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* II, 654–656 (=Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhömische Geschichte* III, 88–90); *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* II, 354–355. (=Johannes Kantakouzenos, *Geschichte* III, 230); G. Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 18; R. Radić, *Crno stoleće*, 145.

³⁷ *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* II, 355–357 (=Johannes Kantakouzenos, *Geschichte* III, 230–232). The name of the leader of Catalan mercenaries, Joan de Peralta, who joined Kantakouzenos during his short stay in the Serbian lands is later revealed by the Byzantine pretender and emperor himself, *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* III, 302. On him see: Anthony Luttrell, "John Cantacuzenus and the Catalans at Constantinople: 1352–1354", *Martinez Ferrando archivero, miscelanea de estudios dedicados a su memoria*, Barcelona 1968, 265–277; Raúl Estangüi Gómez, "Joan de Peralta: un catalán encargado de la restauración de Santa Sofía y gobernador de Constantinopla durante el reinado de Juan VI Cantacuzeno (1347–1354)", *Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Bizantinística* 12 (2012) 14–18; A. Uzelac, "Katalanski najamnici", 19–20.

Less than a decade later, Kantakouzenos, now an emperor in Constantinople, provided further information about these “Germans,” or Teutonic company, in the service of Stefan Dušan. In the autumn of 1350, Kantakouzenos led Byzantine forces to Veroia, which had been taken over by the Serbs around 1345.³⁸ The German mercenaries entrenched themselves in an improvised fortress near one of the city gates and staunchly defended the town. Despite their efforts, the city eventually fell. Kantakouzenos, remembering the Germans’ previous services to him, showed his generosity by endowing them with money and allowing them to retreat with their weapons and horses to the Serbian ruler.³⁹ At the end of the same year, John Kantakouzenos and Stefan Dušan met personally once again, and during their conversation, the Byzantine emperor reminded his counterpart of the services provided to him by the German mercenaries, who had safely escorted him from Veroia to Thessaloniki in 1343.⁴⁰

According to the decision of the Venetian Senate from 1336, Stefan Dušan intended to use the mercenaries as his bodyguard. Nonetheless, the report by Kantakouzenos shows they were given various other assignments, including possessing fortresses, such as Veroia. Their presence in other theatres of war is not attested, although it is noteworthy that in October of 1345, Stefan Dušan expressed his readiness to send 500 of his best troops ‘armed in a Teutonic manner’ (*theotonice iam armatos*) to his Venetian allies in the struggle against Zadar (Zara).⁴¹ To this information and its importance for the assessment of the influence exhibited by the Teutonic company, we will return later.

Status of the Company

The use of mercenaries or foreign soldiers was a long-standing tradition in Serbian lands. From the time of King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321), foreigners such as Turcoples, Alans, and Tatars were occasionally employed. However, Western mercenaries were not present in large numbers, and sources attest to only a few individual cases, such as Simone Rossi from Florence and Francesco de Salomone from Treviso during the reign of Milutin, as well as certain Bernardo de Masserano during the reign of Milutin’s son

³⁸ B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 146; R. Radić, *Crno stoleće*, 201.

³⁹ *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* III, 120–121, 124–125; G. Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 44–45; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 248–250.

⁴⁰ *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* III, 145.

⁴¹ S. Ljubić, *Listine* II, 279, no. 463 (= *Magyar diplomacizai emlékek* II, 112, no. 103).

and Dušan's father Stefan Dečanski.⁴² As previously stated, the presence of large foreign contingents from the West is attested in the Battle of Velbužd in 1330. Moreover, Stefan Dušan was the first and only ruler of the Nemanjić dynasty who was able to employ two large mercenary groups: the Catalans led by Joan de Peralta (until 1343 when they switched their allegiance to John Kantakouzenos), and the Teutonic company headed by Palman.

The Teutonic company consisted of elite troops who served as both foot soldiers and cavalry. In the decision of the Venetian Senate, they are recorded as footmen in 1336, and their role in defense of the fortress in Veroia indicates that they fought as foot soldiers. However, according to Kantakouzenos, they also possessed horses, suggesting that they also fought as cavalry. In 1333, Palman acquired the equipment of an unnamed mercenary in Dubrovnik, which included two cuirass breastplates, three barbute helmets with chain undercaps, three large helmets with crests (cum cimariis), a pair of leg and thigh armor, two tunics, a horse cover, and three saddles.⁴³ This equipment list provides further evidence of the employment of mercenaries as cavalry troops, and is the earliest recorded mention of barbute helmets in the region.⁴⁴ Interestingly, the equipment of Palman's nephew, George, a decade later, also included a helmet with the crest (unum elmu cum cimaria).⁴⁵ Based on these intriguing notices about the helmets with heraldic emblems, it has been speculated that Palman and his men greatly influenced the spread of knightly concepts and German heraldry in the Serbian lands.⁴⁶

Stefan Dušan took great care to supply the mercenaries in his service, as well as other soldiers, with the most modern military equipment of that time. The practice of buying military equipment in Venice was established during the reign of Milutin, with the first shipment recorded in 1313 consisting of nine dozen swords.⁴⁷ The practice continued in the following decades, but in small quantities,⁴⁸ until it was intensified during the second decade of Dušan's reign.

⁴² Gavro Škrivanić, "O najamničkoj vojsci u srednjevekovnoj Srbiji", *Vojnoistoriski glasnik* 1 (1954) 81–82, 84, 87; A. Uzelac, "Foreign Soldiers", 70–77. On Francesco de Salomone see K. Jireček, *Staat und gesellschaft* I, 79; on Simone Rossi: Aleksandar Uzelac, "Papa Bonifacije VIII, magnus miles Simon Rosi i kralj Stefan Uroš II Milutin", *Beogradski istorijski glasnik* 5 (2014) 93–103; on Bernardo de Masserano: M. Dinić, "Španski najamnici", 22–23.

⁴³ M. Aleksić, "Reforma srpske vojske", 10.

⁴⁴ Đurđica Petrović, *Dubrovačko oružje u XIV veku*, Beograd 1976, 120–121.

⁴⁵ M. Aleksić, "Reforma srpske vojske", 14.

⁴⁶ Gregor Čremošnik, "Doslej neznani južnoslovenski pečati", *Zgodovinski časopis* 12–13 (1958–1959) 55–56; Vujadin Ivanišević, "Razvoj heraldike u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji", *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 41 (2004) 217.

⁴⁷ S. Ljubić, *Listine* I, 266, no. 419.

⁴⁸ Đ. Petrović, "Oružje Srbije i Evropa", 147–149.

According to documents from Venetian archives, from 1341 to 1349, there were five major shipments of military equipment, totaling 1,700 cuirass breastplates (coracias), 800 barbute helmets, 500 sets of chain shirts with a covering for the head and neck, 800 mail collars, 1,000 pairs of greaves, 600 pairs of metal gloves, 700 shields, of which 400 were “in the Slavic manner,” 100 sets of weapons for horsemen, and many other items of armament, in addition to one small shipment of 75 cuirass armors.⁴⁹

Notably, the procurement of military equipment in November 1345 mentions 300 cuirass breastplates, 300 barbute helmets, 300 mail collars, 300 shin guards, and 300 shields,⁵⁰ which matches the number of soldiers under Palman’s command. In May 1347, a larger quantity of equipment was requested, including 300 pairs of armor pieces, 500 barbute helmets, 500 mail collars, and 500 shin guards, indicating the formation of a new unit similarly equipped with 500 soldiers.⁵¹ Two years prior, in 1345, Stefan Dušan had offered to send a unit of 500 soldiers equipped in Teutonic style to aid Venice in Dalmatia, which could have been either an expanded Teutonic company or a separate unit organized similarly. The latter possibility seems more probable: an elite Serbian unit of 500 men is recorded as defending the town of Servia in northern Thessaly from Byzantine forces in 1350, which may be the same unit mentioned in Venetian documents five years earlier.⁵² Apparently, through procuring large quantities of equipment from Venice and possibly other centers in northern Italy, Stefan Dušan intended to organize additional military units in the same way as the Teutonic company.⁵³

It is also worth noting the legal status of the members of the company. Although often considered mercenaries in sources and modern historical studies, their prolonged stay in Serbian lands resulted in a more precise definition of their position. Stefan Dušan’s Code of Law, enacted in 1349 and expanded with new articles in 1353/54, aimed to equalize the responsibilities and obligations of domestic aristocracy and foreign soldiers in military service. According to Article 173 of the Law: “Greater or lesser nobility who come to

⁴⁹ S. Ljubić, *Listine* II, 111, 118, 144, 289, 453, no. 185, 196, 247, 482, 713; S. Ljubić, *Listine* III, 133–134, no. 202 (= *Acta Albaniae Veneta saeculorum XIV et XV*, I, Joseph Valentini (ed.), Panormi 1967, 120, 126, 127, nos. 133, 141, 144); Đ. Petrović, “Oružje Srbije i Evropa”, 153–154; M. Aleksić, “Reforma srpske vojske”, 16. Marko Aleksić, “Srednjovekovno viteštvo u epohi cara Dušana”, *Novi glasnik* 2 (2016) 160–161.

⁵⁰ S. Ljubić, *Listine* II, 289, no. 482 (= *Magyar diplomacziak emlékek*, II, 120, no. 11): ‘trecente curatie, trecenti schencheli, trecenta colaria, trecente barbate et trecenti clipei...’

⁵¹ S. Ljubić, *Listine* II, 453, no. 713; M. Aleksić, “Reforma srpske vojske”, 18.

⁵² *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* III, 131; M. Aleksić, “Srednjovekovno viteštvo”, 161.

⁵³ M. Aleksić, “Reforma srpske vojske”, 18–20.

the court of the Tsar, whether Greek, German, Serb, or any other nobleman, if he brings with him a brigand or a thief, that master shall be punished in the same way as a thief and brigand.”⁵⁴ The mention of the Germans in the article refers to the members of the Teutonic company since no other German nobles were present in Serbian lands at the time.⁵⁵ Thus, it may be concluded that the mercenaries that constituted the Teutonic company were equated with domestic nobles, in particular those educated for state and military service, i.e., the “nobility that always stands in the emperor’s house,” as defined by the Code in Article 177.⁵⁶

Papal Emissary at the Court of Stefan Dušan

Palman’s influential political and diplomatic role again comes to light at the end of Dušan’s reign, during the negotiations of the Serbian ruler with Pope Innocent VI (1352–1362). The most characteristic aspect of these negotiations was Stefan Dušan’s plea to be named as the captain of the Christian army against the Turks, promising in return that he would accept the Church Union. In this unique case of a ‘schismatic’ ruler who pleaded with the Pope to become a Crusade leader, a short introduction is needed. Namely, the negotiations had their due prehistory. Dušan entered into contact with the Papal Curia several years earlier, soon after he was proclaimed emperor in 1346.⁵⁷ Moreover, according to a later source, in 1351, he investigated the possibility of securing a daughter of the French king as a bride for his son, through his trusted emissary Nikola Buća from Kotor. Nothing came out of this project allegedly because

⁵⁴ Đorđe Bubalo (ed.), *Dušanov zakonik*, Beograd 2010, 113: ‘Властелъ и [в]ластеличыкы кои гредоу оу дворъ царевъ, или Грькъ, или Нѣмьць, или Сръбинъ, или властелинъ инъ кои любо, аште доведе съ собом гоусара или тати, да се внзи господаръ каже како тать и гоусаръ’. See also Srđan Šarkić, “Pravni položaj stranaca u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji”, *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta Novi Sad* 45/3 (2011) 54–55. The fact that this article of Stefan Dušan’s Code is related to German mercenaries was noted long ago by S. Novaković, *Stara srpska vojska*, 85–86.

⁵⁵ Saxon miners who were present in the Serbian lands since the mid-thirteenth century did not belong to the nobility and had their own special legislation; From the legal point of view, including Stefan Dušan’s Code of Law, they are never referred to as Germans (‘Nemtsy’), only as Saxons (‘Sasy’), cf. M. Dinić, “O vitezu Palmanu”, 398–399.

⁵⁶ Đ. Bubalo, *Dušanov zakonik*, 114; A. Uzelac, “Foreign Soldiers”, 81–82.

⁵⁷ *Vetera monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia* I, Augustinus Theiner (ed.), Romae 1859, 734, no. 1102; K. Jireček, *Geschichte* I, 407–408; Miodrag Purković, *Avinjonske pape i srpske zemlje*, Gornji Milanovac 2002, 49–50; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 297.

the French side expected Dušan to convert to the Roman faith.⁵⁸ Next year a new motivation for rapprochement with the Roman Curia came, although from an unexpected side. When a civil war erupted in Byzantium between John V Palaiologos and John VI Kantakouzenos, Stefan Dušan opted to support the young emperor, while his former ally secured help from the Ottoman Turks. The involvement in the civil war led to an ominous defeat of the Serbian cavalry expeditionary corps against the Ottomans at the battle near modern Didymoteicho (Demotika) in Thrace in October 1352.⁵⁹ Following the military disaster, Stefan Dušan gradually realized the magnitude of the threat from the East. Consequently, in the spring of 1354, he sent a delegation to Innocent VI, consisting of a court judge Božidar, Nestongos, the governor of the city of Serres, and nobleman Damian from Kotor ('Bosidaius Iudex tuus generalis et Nestegus Zephalia Serenus ac Damianus de Catara Civis Catarensis'), whose aim was to propose and negotiate the political and military project aimed at the expulsion of the Ottomans from the European soil.⁶⁰ Besides the Ottoman threat, the growing Serbian-Hungarian tensions also played an important role in the decision of Stefan Dušan to open the negotiations. According to the *Vita* of Innocent VI, he turned to the Papal Curia in order to thwart the attack of Hungarian King Louis the Great (1342–1382), son of Charles Robert.⁶¹

The delegation traveled via Venice where, on June 16 of the same year, the Venetian Senate sent letters to the Pope recommending Serbian representatives.⁶² The Pope received the delegation in his summer residence of Villanova near Avignon (Villeneuve-lez-Avignon), sending a reply to the Serbian ruler on August 25. The papal response reveals that Dušan previously promised in his letter, sealed with a golden seal, that he would recognize the Pope as the father of Christianity and the successor of St. Peter, and that he would improve his relationship with the Roman Catholic population in his

⁵⁸ Mauro Orbini Rauseo, *Il Regno de gli Slavi hoggi corrotamente detti Schiavoni*, Pesaro 1601, 266–267. Stefan Dušan previously had other plans for his only son. Uroš was initially betrothed to a sister of John V Palaiologos (in 1343) and later planned to marry an unnamed cousin of Hungarian king Louis the Great (around 1346–1348), Sima Ćirković, "O jednoj srpsko-ugarskoj alijansi", *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 44 (2007) 411–421.

⁵⁹ *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* III, 180–182 (=Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhomäische Geschichte* V, 146–147); *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum* III, 246–249; G. Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 49–51; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 288–291; R. Radić, *Crno stoleće*, 242–245.

⁶⁰ *Vetera monumenta*, II, 8–9, no. 16; M. Purković, *Avinjonske pape*, 59–61.

⁶¹ *Vitae paparum avenionensium* I, Étienne Baluze and Guillaume Mollat (eds.), Paris, 1916, 333; Norman Housley, "King Louis the Great of Hungary and the Crusades, 1342–1382", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 62/2 (1984) 195.

⁶² S. Ljubić, *Listine* III, 264, no. 397.

lands.⁶³ On Christmas Eve, December 24, 1354, the Pope sent a new letter to the Serbian ruler, in which he expressed his joy at Dušan's desire to return to the fold of the Roman church and his wish to be appointed as the commander of the Crusader army against the Turks (et excitans potentiam regie dignitatis desiderabas ab eadem ecclesia matre tua contra Turchos ipsos Capitaneus ordinari). The Pope also emphasized that he had sent as his messengers to Serbia the learned men Peter Thomas (1305–1366) from Périgord, the newly appointed bishop of Patti and Lipari in Sicily, and Bishop Bartholomew of Trogir (Trau).⁶⁴

Simultaneously, the Pope sent letters to other prominent figures at the Serbian court: Tsaritsa Jelena, Young king Uroš, Patriarch Joannikios (who died on September 3, 1354),⁶⁵ and, among others, Palman, commander of mercenaries in the service of the Serbian ruler (Palmanno Theutonico capitaneo gentis armigere ad stipendia regis Rassie), recommending his messengers and expressing hope that they would help the success of the negotiations for the Church Union.⁶⁶ The list of persons included shows that the Pope was well-informed about the centers of power in Serbia and the internal conditions of its royal court. Considering that Palman was one of the addressees, as well as his previous diplomatic efforts on behalf of the Serbian ruler, it is possible that he influenced the decision to send a delegation to Avignon in 1354. The Pope's expectations that Palman would be one of those who could ensure the success of the apostolic mission to Serbia were not without foundation.

The adventures of Peter Thomas in Serbian lands were recounted by his disciple Philippe de Mézières (1327–1405), chancellor of Cyprus, on two occasions – first in the *Vita* of Peter Thomas, written in the late 1360s, and then briefly in a letter to his nephew.⁶⁷ Both accounts are mutually dependent and full of details that can hardly be accepted at face value, especially considering that Mézières was not an eyewitness to the events and recounted the story told to him by the main protagonist many years later.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, in the absence of other sources, the vivid report by Mézières deserves full attention.

⁶³ *Vetera monumenta* II, 8–9, no. 16.

⁶⁴ *Vetera monumenta* II, 11–13, no. 20.

⁶⁵ Arhiepiskop Danilo, *Životi*, 379.

⁶⁶ *Vetera monumenta* II, 13–16, nos. 21–24.

⁶⁷ The letter is published by Nicolas Iorga, "L'épître de Philippe de Mézières à son neveu", *Bulletin de l'Institut pour l'étude de l'Europe sud-orientale* 8/3–4 (1921) 31–40. The critical edition of the *Vita*: Philippe de Mézières, *The Life of St. Peter Thomas*, Joachim Smet (ed.), Rome 1984.

⁶⁸ At the time of the mission of Peter Thomas to Serbia, Philippe de Mézières was in France, far from the oriental events, Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 28; Philippe Contamine, "Entre Occident et Orient. Philippe de Mézières (vers 1327–1405): itinéraires maritimes et spirituels",

The mission traveled by sea from Venice, encountering several dangers along the way, including a Turkish pirate ship in the southern Adriatic Sea which they avoided thanks to the fog.⁶⁹ After landing, the apostolic messengers traveled for several more days before reaching the court of Stefan Dušan, probably in late February or early March 1355.⁷⁰ It is assumed that the meeting took place in Krupišta, on the shores of the Bregalnica river, where it is known that Stefan Dušan stayed in the spring and summer of 1355.⁷¹ For Peter Thomas, the meeting with Dušan, who according to Mézières, “was physically bigger than all other people in the world and had a terrifying appearance,”⁷² turned out to be a much greater trial of his faith than the tribulations on the Adriatic. A particular problem arose because, in this kingdom, the author claims, there was a custom to kiss the feet of the ruler when appearing before him (Mézières here describes a Byzantine custom of proskynesis or prostration). Outraged by the custom, the papal emissary refused to perform this act, although many advised him to do so as he could be put to death in the case of refusal. No real danger existed as Peter Thomas was protected by his diplomatic status, but the refusal to prostrate in front of the ruler provoked tension, which grew stronger as the negotiations continued. Dušan was eventually so angered by the stubbornness and disrespect of Peter Thomas that he forbade anyone at his court from attending the mass that the papal emissary intended to perform, under the penalty of blinding, according to the *Vita* (or death penalty, according to the letter).⁷³

As Mézières further relates, many Teutonic nobles and other mercenaries were at Stefan Dušan’s court.⁷⁴ These Teutonic mercenaries, 300 of them in number, and other Christians of various nations ignored the ruler’s request and went to the mass performed by Peter Thomas (fuerunt autem ad missam praedictam trecenti Theutonici...).⁷⁵ After Dušan found out what happened, he called for them and reminded them of his decree and the punishment. However,

in: *Philippe de Mézières and His Age: Piety and Politics in the Fourteenth Century*, Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski & Kiril Petkov (eds.), Leiden–Boston 2012, 23. Therefore, the opinion that Mézières possibly followed Peter Thomas on his voyage to Serbian lands is unfounded, cf. B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 300.

⁶⁹ Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 66–67.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, 195.

⁷¹ B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 300.

⁷² Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 67: ‘ad presenciam regis Racie pervenit, qui quidem rex inter omnes homines, mundi suo tempore maior erat corpore et terribili facie’; N. Iorga, “L’épître”, 34: ‘...qui quidem rex statura magnus, quasi ultra omnes homines mundi’. Stefan Dušan’s striking body size is attested in other sources, Mauro Orbini Rauseo, *Il Regno de gli Slavi*, 260.

⁷³ Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 68; N. Iorga, “L’épître”, 34.

⁷⁴ Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 68.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, 69.

one of them, the Teutonic captain (whose name, Mézières admitted, he had forgotten,⁷⁶ although there is not the slightest doubt that the man in question was Palman) responded in the following way: “My lord, it is true that we have heard your decree, but we fear God more than we fear you. How could we leave our father celebrating alone without us? You know well that we are all Catholics and faithful to the Roman Church, and since you wish to take our eyes away from us, know that we are ready not only to have our eyes plucked out but to die defending the Catholic faith”.⁷⁷ Hearing this, Stefan Dušan’s anger suddenly passed and he began to laugh, marveling at such a great constancy of both the Apostolic messenger and his Teutonic mercenaries. The capital punishment was immediately revoked,⁷⁸ and from that moment, according to Mézières, his attitude towards Peter Thomas changed and he treated him with honor and reverence.⁷⁹ Naturally, one can doubt the full veracity of this anecdote, but one detail in the story is undoubtedly true – that Palman and his men during their long stay in Serbian lands remained staunch Catholics.

Usually, in literature, the mission of Peter Thomas is presented as a failure due to the hardships that the papal emissary initially encountered at the Nemanjić court.⁸⁰ However, such an assessment seems premature. On the contrary, Mézières reported that despite Dušan’s ‘perfidy’, the apostolic emissary stayed in Serbian lands for a long time (possibly a full year),⁸¹ during which he allegedly managed to convince many local church centers to return to the union with Rome.⁸² If this report is true, such a proselytizing action

⁷⁶ Ibidem: ‘Teutonicorum vero quidam miles et strenuus omnium aliorum Capitaneus, cuius nomen obliuioni dedi...’

⁷⁷ Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 69: ‘Domine bene verum est, quod edictum vestrum audiuimus, sed magis timemus Deum quam vos. Et quomodo talem patrem solum celebrantem sine nobis dimissemus? Bene scitis quod nos omnes Catholici et fideles Ecclesiae Romanae sumus, et ex quo oculos nostros velletis eruere, non solum oculos, sed nos omnes mori pro fide Catholica defendenda parati sumus.’ Shorter, but no less dramatic response by Palman is recorded in the letter, N. Iorga, “L’épître”, 35: ‘O rex, militiam tibi debemus, sed Deo fidem catholicam; nobis autem oportebat Deo magis obedire quam hominibus. Ecce paratimus mortem aut carcerem pro nomine Jhesu pati; fac de nobis quod vis.’ (“Oh king, we owe you military service, but we owe the Catholic faith to God. It is more necessary for us to obey God than men. Behold, we are ready to suffer death or imprisonment in the name of Jesus. Do with us what you will.”).

⁷⁸ As explicitly stated in the letter: N. Iorga, “L’épître”, 35.

⁷⁹ Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 69.

⁸⁰ N. Housley, “King Louis the Great”, 196; G. Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 57; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 301.

⁸¹ As rightfully noted by J. Smet, Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 195.

⁸² Philippe de Mézières, *The Life*, 69–70: ‘Tempore intervallo rege obstinato et in perfidia sua nihilominus remanente, Dominus frater Peter Thomas multas ecclesias metropolitanas et alias illius regni ad unionem ecclesiae Romanae reformavit, quae prius schismaticae erant. Et multis

certainly would not have been possible without the tsar's approval. Another important fact circumstantially attesting to the influence of Peter Thomas is that during his stay in Serbian lands, Stefan Dušan arranged a peace treaty with King Louis the Great of Hungary (in May 1355).⁸³ Such an agreement between the two bitter rivals could hardly have been achieved without the mediation of the papal emissary present at the scene. Probably, during this time, Peter Thomas and the Serbian ruler discussed at length the details of the upcoming crusade, and it can be supposed that Palman, who appears in the report by Mézières, actively participated in their negotiations. However, their ambitious plans were not meant to be, due to the untimely death of Stefan Dušan on December 20, 1355.⁸⁴ Peter Thomas left Serbian lands only after that when it became clear that the crusade would not materialize. After a brief stop in Hungary, he arrived in Venice shortly before March 25, 1356.⁸⁵

Palman's Last Campaign

In the autumn of 1355, a new crisis in volatile Serbian-Hungarian relations was already looming. Dušan's half-sister, Jelena, was widowed by Mladen III Šubić, Lord of Dalmatia, who died in 1348. She was determined to defend her possessions for their underage son but was met with increasing pressure from Hungary. In the meantime, Venice, Hungary's rival, sought to take over Jelena's strongholds of Klis (Clissa) and Skradin (Scardona), but Jelena instead turned to her half-brother for help.⁸⁶ Although he signed a peace treaty with King Louis of Hungary, Stefan Dušan opted for a limited military engagement. Namely, he agreed to send two military contingents to aid Jelena and defend her two key strongholds. The first contingent, led by Đuraš, son of

et inficis periculis et insidiis a rege cautelose ordinatis, cum difficultate Deo adiuvante a regno Raciae ipse nuntius papalis Dominus frater Petrus sanus recessit, et in curiam reversus est.⁷

⁸³ S. Ljubić, *Listine III*, 270, 272, 273, nos. 407, 411, 413; G. Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 57.

⁸⁴ G. Soulis, *The Serbs and Byzantium*, 58; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 307. The exact date of the death of Stefan Dušan is attested both in Serbian and Byzantine sources. See Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi*, 82–83, no. 130; Démétrius Cydonès, *Correspondance I*, Raymond J. Loenertz (ed.), Città del Vaticano 1956, 175, no. 8.

⁸⁵ S. Ljubić, *Listine III*, 312, no. 463 (= *Magyar diplomacziái emlékek II*, 467, no. 375): 'Cum habite et obtente sint littere a domino Rege Hungarie, per quas secure mitti potest nostra ambaxata ad ipsum, et ipse Rex videatur satis bene dispositus ad pacem et concordiam, prout habetur ex verbis et relazione istius Episcopi Pactensis et Legati ab ipso noviter redeuntis'.

⁸⁶ S. Ljubić, *Listine III*, 276–282, nos. 417–421 (= *Magyar diplomacziái emlékek II*, 452–454, no. 364); Ruža Ćuk, *Srbija i Venecija u XIII i XIV veku*, Beograd 1986, 65–66.

Ilija, a prominent noble and member of the Serbian military elite,⁸⁷ was sent to Skradin. The second one, led by Palman and likely consisting of members of the Company, was sent to Klis, probably via the sea. It arrived at its destination in mid-November 1355.⁸⁸

Palman took over the defense of Klis together with certain Mersota, who was probably leading the local forces.⁸⁹ Soon, however, the defenders were besieged by the forces of Nicholas (Miklós) Bánffy, the Ban of Croatia, from the Hahót kindred.⁹⁰ By early December, the besiegers were in control of the town outside the city gates and part of its defensive structures, but the citadel remained firmly in Palman's hands.⁹¹ Meanwhile, negotiations between Venice and Stefan Dušan took place in an attempt to prevent the fortresses from falling into Hungarian hands. The Venetians offered to pay the Serbian ruler for the takeover of two strongholds, with a larger sum for strategically more important Klis than for Skradin.⁹² However, the negotiations proved unsuccessful, due to the death of Stefan Dušan.

News of the death of the Serbian ruler likely reached Dalmatia in early January 1356, having a devastating effect on the morale of the defenders of Skradin and Klis. Voivode Đuraš, who, per Stefan Dušan's orders, had to hold Skradin unless his position became untenable, transferred control of the fortress to the Venetians on January 10, 1356.⁹³ Palman probably held Klis for a little longer, but he was also forced to surrender before March 1356, when it became known in Venice that the fortress was in Hungarian hands.⁹⁴

* * *

Palman survived the siege of Klis, but little is recorded about him in sources after these events. However, he was certainly still alive in 1363, as a prominent merchant from Dubrovnik, Menče Menčetić, left him 40 hyperpera

⁸⁷ On him see: Gordana Tomović, "Đuraš – treći vitez u cara Stjepana", *Boka. Zbornik radova iz nauke, kulture i umjetnosti* 24 (2004) 108; B. Ferjančić & S. Ćirković, *Stefan Dušan*, 32, 88, 99.

⁸⁸ S. Ljubić, *Listine III*, 288, no. 431; R. Ćuk, *Srbija i Venecija*, 66.

⁸⁹ S. Ljubić, *Listine III*, 292, no. 435.

⁹⁰ On him see Éva B. Halász, "Hahót Miklós szlavón báni működése (1343–1356)", *Középkortörténeti tanulmányok* 6 (2010) 7–12.

⁹¹ S. Ljubić, *Listine III*, 289, no. 432.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 294–297, 299–300, nos. 438–439, 442; R. Ćuk, *Srbija i Venecija*, 66–67.

⁹³ S. Ljubić, *Listine III*, 305–306, no. 448; R. Ćuk, *Srbija i Venecija*, 67.

⁹⁴ S. Ljubić, *Listine III*, 312–313, no. 463 (= *Magyar diplomacziak emlékek II*, 467, no. 375). On the various dates proposed in historiography on the fall of Klis, between January and March 1356, see R. Ćuk, *Srbija i Venecija*, 67–68, n. 79.

in his testament (anchora siaco di Palman, soldato che fo in Slavonia pp. XL).⁹⁵ It is possible that he continued to maintain close contact with the Dubrovnik elite and even resided in the city at that time. More probably, following the events at Klis, he may have returned to Serbian lands and continued to serve Dušan's son, tsar Uroš (1355–1371). Be that as it may, after 1363, there is no further mention of the knight from Styria in the sources. In this way, Palman of Letinberch left the historical stage in silence, at a time when the power of the Nemanjić tsardom, to whose rise he and his company considerably contributed, inevitably began to crumble.

⁹⁵ Mihailo Dinić, "Sitniji prilošci za srpsku istoriju", *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* 13/1–2 (1933) 76; D. Dinić-Knežević, "Nemci", 92.

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**ПАЛМАН ИЗ ЛЕТИНБЕРГА И ЊЕГОВА ТЕВТОНСКА
КОМПАНИЈА**

Резиме

Палман из Летинберга (*Palmannus de Letinberch*) истакао се као вођа тевтонских најамника у служби краља и цара Стефана Душана (1331–1355). Палманове активности забележене су у документима из Дубровачког и Венецијанског архива, у преписци Стефана Душана и папе Иноћентија VI, у списима француског војника и дипломате Филипа де Мезијера, као и у делу византијског цара и историчара Јована VI Кантакузина. Ови извори пружају прилику да се оцртају обриси Палманове динамичне каријере која покрива отприлике три деценије (око 1333–1363) и уједно показују да он није био само вођа најамника, већ и вешти и искусни дипломата који је играо важну улогу у Душановим преговорима са Хабзбурзима и папском куријом, као и пословни човек.

По свему судећи, Палман је потицао из редова ситнијег штајерског племства и родио се на прелазу XIII у XIV век. Његово место рођења – у дубровачким документима забележено као *Letinberch* – вероватно треба идентификовати као Литенберг, односно данашњи Љутомер у североисточној Словенији. Палман се јавља у изворима почев од октобра 1333. године када је забележено да је требало да у Дубровнику преузме опрему неименованог најамника у служби немањихког владара. Већ у том тренутку припадао је најближем окружењу Стефана Душана. Као Душанов посланик ишао је почетком 1336. године у Аустрију, са намером да уговори династички брачни пројекат – женидбу српског владара са хабзбуршком принцезом Јелисаветом. Иако овај пројекат није реализован, услед преране смрти Душанове несудбене невесте, Палман је пут у домовину искористио у још једну сврху – да образује најамничку Тевтонску компанију (како је она позната у изворима), састављену од људи германског и словенског порекла из Штајерске, Корушке и Аустрије.

Поред Палмана, познато је по имену још неколико припадника компаније који су оставили трага у дубровачким документима између 1336 и 1343. Међу њима су били Палманов брат Кјаран и синовац Георг, затим витез Дитрих из Беча, Раф из Штајра, Крафтин из Валденберга

(Липнишки град), као и Грегор Паулич који је, чини се, потицао из истог места. Најугледнији припадник ове дружине био је извесни „гроф Фридрих из Ортенбурга“. По свему судећи реч је о Фридриху, једном од синова ортенбуршког грофа Алберта II који, међутим, није остао дуго времена у српским земљама и убрзо се вратио у Аустрију.

Учешће Компаније у српско-византијским борбама током пете деценије 14. века посведочено је у неколико наврата. По Душановом налогу њени припадници су помогли византијском пребегу Јовану Кантакузину да 1343. године преузме контролу над градом Веријом. Седам година касније, у време када се Кантакузин усталичио као василевс у Цариграду, срчано су бранили исти овај град од његових снага. Кантакузин је и сам у повољном светлу говорио о овим најамничким одредима у неколико наврата. Присуство најамника имало је значајног утицаја на Душанове покушаје да модернизује војску према западним узорима и да образује друге војне јединице по угледу на Тевтонску компанију. Претпоставља се и да су његови најамници из хабзбуршких земаља утицали на ширење витешких обичаја и западне хералдике. Такође, може се поуздано закључити да су током свог дугог боравка у српским земљама, припадници Компаније законски изједначени са локалним племством, превасходно оним дворског карактера, о чему сведоче поједини чланови Душановог законика.

Палман и његови најамници играли су не малу улогу и приликом Душанових преговора са папом Иноћентијем VI, као и током посете папиног емисара Пјера Томе српским земљама 1355. године. Ови преговори, који су се тicali покретања крсташког рата против Османлија, били су такође подстакнути тадашњим угарским притиском на српске земље. Душан је, да би био именован за заповедника крсташке војске, заузврат нудио да преведе своју земљу на Унију. Уочи доласка Пјера Томе, папа је писао виђенијим личностима на Немањинском двору међу којима се налазио и Палман. Према добро познатој анегдоти из пера Филипа де Мезијера (који, додуше, сам није био учесник ове мисије), када је између папског посланика и цара Душана дошло до зађевица, тевтонски најамници оглушили су се о цареву заповед да нико на његовом двору не сме присуствовати миси коју би служио Пјер Тома, под претњом ослепљења или смртне казне. Међутим, Душан је Палману и његовим најамницима опростио огрешење о ову заповест, а догађај је утицао је да се односи између српског владара и папског представника поправе. Штавише, чини се да мисија Пјера Томе није сама по себи била неуспешна. Папски представник остао је годину дана у српским земљама,

напустивши их тек након Душанове смрти и превевши за то време, према Мезијеровој тврдњи, бројна локална црквена седишта на унију. Такође, маја 1355. године, очигледно уз посредништво папског посланика, дошло је до склапања мира између Стефана Душана и угарског краља Лајоша Великог. Мало је места сумњи да је у преговорима српског владара и папског представника који су се тицали предстојећег крсташког рата против Османлија активно учествовао и Палман.

Међутим, већ у јесен 1355. године дошло је до нове кризе у српско-угарским односима, када је Стефан Душан одговорио на позив своје полусестре Јелене Шубић и послао два војна контингента да бране њена упоришта Скрадин и Клис од угарских снага предвођених хрватским баном Миклошем Банфијем. Одбраном Клиса у зиму 1355–1356. године руководио је Палман. Међутим, недуго после Душанове смрти, у неком тренутку између јануара и марта 1356, он је био приморан да преда Клис. Палман се последњи пут помиње као жив у тестаменту једног дубровачког трговца из 1363. године. Може се претпоставити да је после догађаја под Клисом наставио да служи Душановог сина и наследника Уроша. Вероватно је преминуо недуго након овог, последњег спомена у изворима, у време када је почело неумитно слабљење и цепање Душановог царства, чијем су снажењу он и његова најамничка компанија претходно допринели у не малој мери.

Оригиналан научни рад

Примљен: 16.3.2023.

Коначно прихваћен за објављивање: 29.5.2023.