

KONSTANTY OSTROGSKI AS AN OPPONENT OF THE TATARS IN THE EYES OF POLISH HISTORIANS OF THE 16TH CENTURY

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Abstract: *The paper discusses the narrative of 16th Century historians – Bernard Wapowski, Justus Ludwik Decjusz, Marcin Bielski, Maciej Strykowski, Stanisław Sarnicki, and Alexander Guagnini – on the fights of Prince Konstanty Ostrogski with Tatars from the end of the 15th century until the year 1527. It presents the style of the narration and description of the Hetman of Lithuania, the credibility of the recorded history, and the methods of building an image of a victorious leader, as a paragon for the readers contemporary to these authors.*

Keywords: *Konstanty Ostrogski, Tatars, Polish historians, interpretations, 16th Century, Lithuania, Moldavia.*

Rezumat: *Konstanty Ostrogski ca un oponent al tătarilor în viziunea istoricilor polonezi din secolul al XVI-lea. Articolul aduce în discuție narațiunile din secolul al XVI-lea, aparținând istoricilor Bernard Wapowski, Justus Ludwik Decjusz, Marcin Bielski, Maciej Strykowski, Stanisław Sarnicki și Alexander Guagnini, referitoare la luptele principelui Konstanty Ostrogski cu tătarii, de la sfârșitul veacului al XV-lea și până în anul 1527. Sunt prezentate stilul relatării și descrierea hatmanului lituanian, veridicitatea istoriei consemnate și metodele de construire a imaginii unui conducător victorios ca model de perfecțiune pentru cititorii contemporani cu acești autori.*

Résumé: *Konstanty Ostrogski comme opposant des Tatars dans la vision des historiens polonais du XVI-ème siècle. L'article ci-joint met en discussion les narrations du XVI-ème siècle – appartenant aux historiens Bernard Wapowski, Justus Ludwik Decjusz, Marcin Bielski, Maciej Strykowski, Stanisław Sarnicki et Alexander Guagnini – faisant référence aux luttes du prince Konstanty Ostrogski avec les Tatars, de la fin du XVème siècle et jusque l'année 1527. On y présente le style du récit et la description de l'hetman lituanien, la véracité de l'histoire consignée et les méthodes de construire l'image d'un dirigeant victorieux en tant que modèle de perfection pour les lecteurs contemporains avec ces auteurs-là.*

INTRODUCTION

Prince Konstanty Ostrogski, Castellan of Vilnius and Voivode of Troki, Grand Hetman of Lithuania in the first decades of the 16th century belonged to the leading figures of the public life of Lithuania and Poland¹. He also became known as a brilliant commander who, despite a staggering defeat in the Battle of Wiedrosha in 1500, did not cross over to the side of Muscovy, and established his reputation with a tremendous victory in the Battle of Orsha in 1514. He is also the most known for his struggles with Lithuania's eastern neighbour, which have slightly overshadowed his achievements in fights with a troublesome and dangerous enemy that were the Crimean Tatars. It is not truly surprising, considering the difference in the scale of the threat that both opponents were to Lithuania – and indirectly to Poland. Nonetheless, the actions of the Hetman of Lithuania as the enemy of the Tatars are also worthy of attention, especially since it is the fights with them that brought him the commanding experience and the position of the Hetman. In the fights with the horde, he experienced painful defeats (Sokal 1519) and superb victories (Vyshnivets 1512, Olszanica 1527).

Since the war fame, that Konstanty Ostrogski deservedly enjoyed, was not gained solely through his own actions but also through historians that wrote them down, this paper will be devoted to that topic. Hence, we will be interested in who and what was written about the struggles of Prince Ostrogski against Tatars: what was shown and what was perhaps omitted or added. If and in what way was the image of the Hetman consciously shaped into that of a courageous warrior, defender of the faith and simple folk against heathens thirsty for slaves? To what extent are those historical sources, like these Polish and Lithuanian contemporary and later chronicles², credible and reliable for our knowledge of history related to that aspect of life and activity of the Hetman?

This paper is a supplement to our previous deliberations on the shaping of the image of Prince Ostrogski in his confrontation with the Grand Principality of Moscow³. We maintain a similar work methodology and since we analyse mostly the

¹ Z. Wojtkowiak, *Ostrogski Konstanty (ok. 1460-1530)* [Ostrogski Konstanty (ca. 1460-1530)], PSB, vol. 24, Wrocław, 1979, p. 486-489.

² We use the term “chronicle” for the 16th century historical books in line with the convention of the epoch – sometimes finding its reflection in the title – aware of their differences in relation to medieval chronicles.

³ D. Milewski, *Konstanty Ostrogski jako przeciwnik Moskwy w oczach XVI-wiecznych dziejopisarzy* [Konstanty Ostrogski as an enemy of Muscovy in the eyes of the 16th

same sources, we wish to avoid repeating detailed information regarding the authors and their works. Hence, we refer you to the abovementioned study, focusing here on the analysis of basic information needed to conduct the planned analysis.

The object of our interest will, therefore, be recorded in the chronicles of the participation of Prince Ostrogski in fights against the Tatars in years: 1487, 1496-1497, 1508, 1512 (Battle of Vyshnivets), 1516, 1518, 1519 (Battle of Sokal) and 1527 (Battle of Lopushno). We will look at them through the lens of works by Bernard Wapowski⁴, Justus Ludwik Decjusz⁵, Marcin Bielski⁶, Maciej Strykowski⁷, Stanisław Sarnicki⁸, and Alexander Guagnini⁹. The character of Prince Ostrogski is completely omitted by Maciej Miechowita¹⁰.

OSTROGSKI'S FIRST FIGHTS AGAINST THE TATARS

First experiences in fights against the Tatar opponent were gained by prince Konstanty probably in the second half of the 80s of the 16th century. It was then when the protection of the south-east border was overseen by Prince John I Albert. The planned for 1487 regaining of Moldavian fortresses of Kiliya and Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, conquered by Turks, did not take place due to the Tatar diversion. Nonetheless, the horde was defeated in September in the Battle of

century historians], "Biblioteka Epoki Nowożytnej" [Library of the Modern Era], 3/II, 2015, p. 97-118.

⁴ B. Wapowski, *Kroniki* [Chronicles], ed. J. Szujski, in: *Scriptores rerum Polonicarum*, vol. 2, Kraków, 1874.

⁵ J. L. Decjusz, *Księga o czasach króla Zygmunta* [Book on the times of king Sigismund], team translation under the guidance of K. Kumaniecki preface T. Bieńkowski, Warsaw, 1960 (original in its entirety: *De vetustatibus Polonorum, liber I; De Iagiellonum familia, liber II; De Sigismundi regis temporibus, liber III*, Cracoviae, 1521). In books 1 and 2 the author does not recall the figure of K. Ostrogski.

⁶ M. Bielski, *Kronika Marcina Bielskiego* [Chronicle of Marcin Bielski], vol. 2 (books IV, V), ed. K. J. Turowski, Sanok, 1856.

⁷ M. Strykowski, *Kronika polska, litewska, żmudzka i wszystkiej Rusi* [Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitia, and all of Ruthenia], Królewiec, 1582 (the chronicle was translated by M. Malinowski in 1846 and reprinted from the Königsberg original in 1985). We are using the first edition of the book by M. Strykowski.

⁸ S. Sarnicki, *Annales sive de origine et rebus gestis Polonorum et Lithvanorum*, Kraków, 1587.

⁹ A. Guagnini, *Z Kroniki Sarmacyi Europejskiej* [From the Chronicle of the European Sarmatians], ed. K. J. Turowski, Kraków, 1860. On the co-dependence of the works by A. Guagnini and M. Strykowski, see Z. Wojtkowiak, *Aleksander Gwagnin i Maciej Strykowski: dwaj autorzy jednego dzieła* [Alexander Guagnini and Maciej Strykowski: two authors of one work], Poznań, 2014, passim.

¹⁰ M. Miechowita, *Chronica Polonorum*, Cracoviae, 1521.

Kopystrzyń. Henryk Lulewicz makes a guess on the participation of Prince Ostrogski in those fights¹¹. Chronicles we have analysed pass over the possible participation of Prince Ostrogski in that victory¹².

Certain information on the fights of Prince Ostrogski with the horde, we find in relation to the Tatar invasion of 1496. Sons of the Crimean Khanate Mengli I Giray ravaged Volyn at that time. Prince Ostrogski participated then in the defence of Rivne, having co-command over the local armies. The Lithuanians have lost the battle at the city with the horde and were pushed out of the castle. The city has been robbed and burned down while the horde left for Crimea unbothered and with prisoners. It has been a painful lesson for the future Hetman of Lithuania¹³.

A year after the defeat at Rivne, Prince Ostrogski took part in the retaliation against the Tatars. First, in the spring, with brother Michael, he successfully fought units of armed Tatars, rampant in the Volyn and Polesia. The brothers finally managed to hunt the Tatars down in the Bratslav voivodship, defeat them and recover the prisoners. Whereas, in August, Prince Konstanty participated in the expedition of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Alexander Jagiellon to Moldavia rushing to the aid of John I Albert. Sent in advance from Bratslav in the summer of 1497, Ostrogski entered Bessarabia and plundered it, securing the left riverbank of Prut for the developing Polish offensive. On the return journey, the Lithuanians encountered near Tulchyn a Tatar horde of 1000 men supported by Moldavians and Turks lead by son of the Khan, Mehmed I Giray. Ostrogski crushed the enemy and took the Tatar commander prisoner. The victory made a great impression on the Grand Duke of Lithuania, and he made Ostrogski the Grand Hetman of Lithuania¹⁴.

¹¹ H. Lulewicz, *Konstanty Ostrogski*, in M. Nagielski (ed.), *Poczet hetmanów Rzeczypospolitej. Hetmani litewscy* [Hetmans of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Lithuanian Hetmans], Warsaw 2006, p. 23. On the campaign of 1487 and the fights with the horde see M. Plewczyński, *Wojny Jagiellonów z wschodnimi i południowymi sąsiadami Królestwa Polskiego w XV wieku* [Jagiellonian wars with eastern and southern neighbours of the Polish Kingdom in the 15th century], Siedlce 2002, p. 94-97; L. Pilat, *The 1487 crusade: a turning point in the Moldavian-Polish relations*, "Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe", 2, 2010, p. 131-137.

¹² The victory, without mentioning K. Ostrogski is described by: B. Wapowski, *Kroniki* [Chronicles], p. 5-7; M. Bielski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 882-883; A. Guagnini, *Z Kroniki* [From the chronicle], p. 111-112; M. Strykowski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 663-664.

¹³ H. Lulewicz, *Konstanty Ostrogski*, p. 23; L. Kolankowski, *Dzieje Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego za Jagiellonów* [The history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the times of the Jagiellons], vol. 1: 1377-1499, Oświęcim 2014, p 388.

¹⁴ J. Ochmański, *Organizacja obrony w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim przed napadami Tatarów krymskich w XV-XVI w.* [Organisation of Defence in the Grand Duchy of

The chronicles pass over the participation of Prince Ostrogski in the fights in the years 1496-1497. Maciej Sryjkowski makes only a note of the nomination of Konstanty Ostrogski to the position of Hetman in 1497 not connecting it directly with the triumph over the Tatars – which he does mention – but with the backing of former Herman Piotr Iwanowicz Biały¹⁵.

Muscovite aggression of 1500 diverted the attention of Hetman Ostrogski from the Tatars, and the captivity after the defeat at Vedrosha made any activity in Lithuania impossible for a few years. The year 1508 brought Prince Konstanty Ostrogski the first chance to redeem himself when during the war with Muscovy, he defeated the overwhelming enemy forces in July in the Battle of Orsha¹⁶. The Tatar invasions, organized by Khan Mengli Giray as a diversion for Mikhail Glinski and Muscovy, has been somewhat overshadowed by those struggles. The first wave of invasion entered Volyn through Ukraine but ended in defeat, inflicted on the horde by the Great Hetman of the Crown Mikołaj Kamieniecki in the Battle of Voronovo. The autumn incursions into Slutsk and Mazyr also turned out unsuccessful. In the last area active was Hetman Konstanty Ostrogski, who recovered the city from the hands of Prince Glinski. Securing the passages there into Nowogródek Voivodeship, Ostrogski found himself in the path of the Tatars. In the next days, he crushed the units of armed Tatars approaching from the south, making it impossible for them to cross through Pripyat. It was another victory of

Lithuania against the attacks of Crimean Tatars in the 15th and 16th century], "Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości", 5, 1960, p. 365; H. Lulewicz, *Konstanty Ostrogski*, p. 23-24; L. Kolankowski, *Dzieje Wielkiego Księstwa* [The history of the Grand Duchy], p. 393-394; M. Plewczyński, *Wojny Jagiellonów* [The Jagiellonian wars], p. 139; I. Czamańska, *Mołdawia i Wołoszczyzna wobec Polski, Węgier i Turcji w XIV i XV wieku* [Moldavia and Wallachia towards Poland, Hungary, and Turkey in the 14th and 15th century], Poznań, 1996, p. 169.

¹⁵ M. Strykowski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 675-676. This information has been almost word-for-word repeated by K. Niesiecki, *Herbarz polski* [The Polish armorial], ed. J. N. Bobrowicz, vol. 7, Lipsk, 1841, p. 179-180. Of course, this is about Voivode of Troki Petras Jonaitis Mantigirdaitis - see A. Krupska, *Montygerdowicz Piotr Janowicz (zm. po 1497)* [Mantigirdaitis Jonaitis Petras (died after 1497)], PSB, Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków-Gdańsk, 1976, vol. 21, p. 675-676.

¹⁶ S. Herbst, *Wojna moskiewska 1507-1508* [Muscovite war 1507-1508], in: *Księga ku czci Oskara Haleckiego wydana w XXV-lecie jego pracy naukowej* [A festschrift in honour of Oscar Halecki published for the 25 years of his academic work], Warsaw, 1935, p. 40-53; M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość polska w XVI wieku* [Wars and the Polish army in the 16th century], vol. 1: *Lata 1500-1548* [Years 1500-1548], Zabrze, 2011, p. 174-177; R. Przybyliński, *Ród książąt Glińskich: bunt Michała Glińskiego: czasy, ludzie i miejsca* [Glinski noble family: the rebellion of Mikhail Glinski: times, people, and places], vol. 2, Zabrze, 2017, p. 142-148.

the Hetman of Lithuania over the Tatars, maybe not overly effective but valuable in terms of experience¹⁷.

The return of Prince Ostrogski to fighting with an old enemy has been noticed by three historians: Wapowski, Decjusz, and Strykowski (nota bene it is omitted by Guagnini, co-dependent with Strykowski). In accordance with a not very grand victory, the historians do not devote a lot of attention to it. Wapowski connects the operation of Prince Ostrogski with the Tatar invasion on Slutsk and informs that the Hetman has been sent by the king to face the horde at the head of the ride of 8 thousand men. According to Wapowski's narration, Ostrogski was victorious and chased the Tatars away from terrains they have plundered¹⁸. That report highlights the role of Prince Ostrogski – maybe to balance the omission of him in the more important Battle of Orsha, fought that year – nonetheless, here too Wapowski's tendency to emphasise the role of the king is visible (in this case, as an initiator of the operation against the Tatars, which Ostrogski carries out)¹⁹.

More modest in the evaluation of the Hetman of Lithuania – and at the same time closer to the truth – is Decjusz. He notes on the Tatar invasion, informing that a part of the horde has been defeated by Prince Konstanty, part by Polus (Cossack commander) and part by Łukasz Morawianin (Morawiec) at the head of a unit of 200 infantry²⁰. In a similar tone narrates Maciej Strykowski, informing of the king's departure to Vilnius with part of the army after making peace with Muscovy, whereas the remaining soldiers were taken by Ostrogski to Volyn. Strykowski aptly distinguishes three separate victories over the horde, achieved by Polus, Morawiec, and Ostrogski, although he seems to be implying – contrary to the truth – that the Tatars were defeated only at Volyn (where Ostrogski was

¹⁷ About the Tatar invasion of 1508, see *Stosunki z Mendli-Girejem chanem Tatarów perekopskich (1469-1515)*. [Relations with Mengli Giray, khan of the Perekopian Tatars (1469-1515) Documents and letters], ed. K. Pułaski, Kraków-Warsaw, 1881, p. 138-139; M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość* [Wars and the military], p. 121-122; R. Przybyliński, *Ród książąt Glińskich* [Glinski noble family], vol. 2, p. 155-157; H. Lulewicz, *Konstanty Ostrogski*, p. 28 (very briefly). The Hetman was victorious, already having in his hand the office of marshal of Volhynia and main starost offices in Podolia that made him the most important person responsible for the defence of Eastern borderlands against the Tatars - see J. Ochmański, *Organizacja obrony* [Organisation of defence], p. 389.

¹⁸ B. Wapowski, *Kroniki* [Chronicles], p. 82-83.

¹⁹ On excessive exposition by B. Wapowski of the role of the king at the expense of K. Ostrogski in the campaign of 1508 see D. Milewski, *Konstanty Ostrogski*, p. 105-106.

²⁰ J. L. Decjusz, *Księga o czasach* [Book of the times], p. 39. Morawiec has also been aided in defeating Tatars at Slutsk by hastily formed boyar cavalry -- see M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość* [Wars and the military], p. 122.

absent)²¹. Apparently, the summer invasion of the horde at Volyn merged for Strykowski into one with the later operations in Ukraine and eastern Polesia where the Hetman of Lithuania did fight.

THE TIME OF GREAT BATTLES

The next chance to face the horde was brought to the prince by the Tatar invasion in 1512. Significant forces – ca. 10 thousand men – led by the khan's sons, entered Ukraine through the Black Trail turned west towards Volyn. They attacked at the turn of March and April, taking the Poles and Lithuanians by surprise. The horde managed to gather a significant number of prisoners before Polish-Lithuanian armies set off against it. The Crown army was led by Hetman Mikołaj Kamieniecki (4 thousand), whereas Prince Konstanty Ostrogski led the Volhynian landed military units (1.5 thousand) gathered in Ostroh. He has also proposed the Polish and Lithuanian cooperation. The armies met on April 27 at Vyshnivets where they marched against Tatar camp in the direction of Lopushno. The next day, they reached the Tatar camp. Forces of both sides were equal – 6 thousand each – as part of the Tatar units did not return yet. Both sides readied for a battle as the Tatars decided to defend their hold on the prisoners. Conflicted with Kamieniecki, Ostrogski occupied the separate right wing of the Polish-Lithuanian armies. It was him that the overwhelming Tatar forces turned against. The Hetman of Lithuania defended himself skilfully; however, in the face of enemy dominance, he started to call for the Polish help. First arrived Wojciech Sampoliński with the court banner, then Kamieniecki began sending subsequent banners from the frontal regiment. As Tatars engaged all their forces into the fight with Ostrogski, the decisive strike of the Polish frontal regiment broke through the opponent line. One of the Polish regiments broke through to the prisoners, freed them, and they took up arms and attacked the Tatars. In the face of such a turn of events, the horde escaped from the battlefield²².

Battle of Vyshnivets (also called Battle of Lopushno) ended in a grand victory of Polish-Lithuanian armies. The actual leader of the joint forces was the Hetman of the Crown Mikołaj Kamieniecki. Prince Ostrogski bore the burden of withstanding the main strike of the Tatars and of making the enemy use up its

²¹ M. Strykowski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 716.

²² S. Herbst, *Najazd tatarski 1512 r.* [Tatar invasion of 1512], "Przegląd Historyczny" [Historical review], 37, 1948, p. 220-225 (the author indicates that K. Ostrogski has been the first to discover the Tatar invasion and warned the king about it); M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość* [Wars and the military], p. 124-135; K. Piwarski, *Stosunki z Mendli-Girejem* [Relations with Mengli Giray], p. 176-177.

reserves, which allowed Kamieniecki to perform the final attack. Hence, although the Herman of Lithuania has definitely been second to his Polish colleague, he did, however, deserved the attention of historians for his bearing. It is enough to say that everyone whose work we are analysing, has undertaken the topic of the participation of Prince Ostrogski in the Battle of Vyshnivets.

Chronologically the oldest – and the closest to the events – Bernard Wapowski overestimates the numbers of the horde, he estimated them on 24 thousand people; however, he provides credible data on the number of Polish and Lithuanian armies (4 and 2 thousand, respectively). He emphasizes the equal standing of commanders M. Kamieniecki and K. Ostrogski. To the latter, he credits stopping the retreating Volhynians and encouraging them to return to the fight. He agrees that the Polish reinforcement rescued the Lithuanians and sealed the victory. Then he mentions Prince Ostrogski among the bravest warriors²³. For the first time, Wapowski, who is next, issues an unambiguously positive evaluation of the actions of the Hetman of Lithuania and does not diminish his contribution.

Decjusz shows the role of the Prince Ostrogski a little differently. According to him, “Konstanty, mąż, który wśród współczesnych nie miał równego sobie wodza” [Konstanty, a man who among the contemporary had no equal as a leader], demanded the right of priority in the battle. He motivated that by his knowledge of the fighting style of the Tatars – if Poles, who might do it wrong, start the battle, they might lose the chance to win. The “impetuous Konstanty” also rejected the Polish project for maintaining the armies as a whole and, finally, let down, led the Lithuanians onto the hills, away from the Poles. Here, he has been attacked by the Tatars. He called the Poles for help, stopped the escaping Lithuanians, and pounced on the horde. Decjusz repeats at the end that Prince Ostrogski “nie miał sobie równego wśród współczesnych sobie wodzów” [did not have an equal among the contemporary leaders]²⁴.

In the record of Marcin Bielski, we find similar motives. There is, hence, the description of the conflict between the commanders for the priority in starting the battle and the same arguments as in Decjusz: the better ordnance of the Poles, Prince Ostrogski counters with Lithuanian experience in the fight against the

²³ B. Wapowski, *Kroniki* [Chronicles], p. 107-108. On the real number of Tatar armies see K. Górka, *Liczebność Tatarów krymskich i ich wojsk* [The number of Crimean Tatars and their armies], “Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy”, 8, 1936, No. 2, p. 221-295 and recently B. В. Пенской, *Вооруженные силы Крымского ханства в конце XV – начале XVI вв.* [Military forces of the Crimean Khanate in the end of the 15th – beginning of the 16th centuries], w: *Средневековые тюрко-татарские государства* [Turk-Tatar states in the Middle Ages], vol. 2, ed. И.К. Загидуллин, Казань, 2010, p. 208-216.

²⁴ J. L. Decjusz, *Księga o czasach* [Book of the times], p. 64-68.

horde. Bielski shows the separate command of the Hetman of Lithuania over the right wing, the greater numbers of the Tatars, and the initiative of Prince Ostrogski in obtaining the Polish help and turning back the retreating Lithuania²⁵.

Alexander Guagnini, in his description of the Battle of Vyshnivets, follows faithfully the record of Marcin Bielski. We will not find any new elements here – if we do not count the wrong dating of the campaign to 1511²⁶

New accents can be found in Maciej Strykowski. In the Battle of Vyshnivets – to which he devoted the seventh chapter of his thirty-second book, written in a poem – Mikołaj Kamieniecki is barely mentioned. The whole attention is focused on Prince Ostrogski. The command over the Polish forces is by Strykowski assigned to Stanisław Lanckoroński who has just defeated the Tatars. After joining of the forces, the wise Hetman Ostrogski is giving advice to the Poles how to fight the horde. In the conflict about who should start the battle “kniaź Ostrogski mądrze radzi!” [the prince was speaking wisely]. As the battle came, the Hetman of Lithuania like Hector led the Lithuanians²⁷. The moving of the Lithuanian forces away from the Poles is explained not by a quarrel with M. Kamieniecki but by shouldering the defence and attacking the Tatars upwards through the hills. Strykowski is serving the reader with an image of the Hetman on the horse and in a plated mail, flinging the mace and encouraging the forces to fight. There was, of course, an appropriate speech to the knights. When the Tatars hit the Lithuanians hard, watchful Ostrogski noticed their greater numbers and called the Poles for help. Here M. Strykowski mentions only Wojciech Sampoliński, with whom Ostrogski attacked the horde even more bravely. The Tartars in response again descended upon Lithuania, understanding that if Ostrogski escaped, the Poles would not do anything without him. They did not manage to defeat the prince after all, and when the Poles came to help, Ostrogski encouraged the fighters for the third time. Finally, after the prisoners were freed from the camp and joined the battle, the Tartars were defeated. At the end, we read the beautiful praise of the Lithuanian leader: “w której [bitwie – D.M.] Constantin Iwanowic Ostroskie sławney a świętey pamięci xiążę Wielkiego Xięstwa Litewskiego hetman, naprzedniejszy dank odniósł, gdysz za jego sprawą y przywodem wszytek ten porządny triumph do skutku szczęśliwego Pan Bóg przywiódł” [in

²⁵ M. Bielski, *Kronika [Chronicle]*, p. 963-965.

²⁶ A. Guagnini *Z Kroniki [From the chronicle]*, p. 135-137.

²⁷ “zszykowali się prętko i stanęli w sprawie, / a kniaź Constanti naprzód jak Hector w postawie, / z buławą jeżdżąc wszystkich pocieszał wesoło, / a na prawy bok Litwę zszykował na czoło” [they prepared quickly and stood in formation, / and Prince Constantiny stepped forward like Hector in posture, / riding with the mace he comforted everyone cheerfully, / on the right side he prepared Lithuania to take the forefront] – M. Strykowski, *Kronika [Chronicle]*, p. 730.

which [battle - D. M.] Constantin Ivanovich Ostroski glorious and the late prince Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the greatest victory obtained, because thanks to him God has lead this decent triumph to a lucky outcome]²⁸.

In Stanisław Sarnicki, we find the dispute over priority in the attack in a veiled form, when the chronicler writes that Ostroski took the right wing as more experienced in the battles with the Tatars, although after long conversations with Kamieniecki. The Lithuanian move away from the Polish army is not hidden, although the Tatar's attack on Ostroski's subalterns was a surprise to him. Interestingly, when describing Ostroski's turning to Poles for help, Sarnicki refers directly to Decjusz. Nevertheless, he cites a different message ("scio alios tradere" [I know that the others say]), according to which the Lithuanian hetman deliberately moved away from the Poles to draw the attack of the Tatars, whom he bound in a fight and drove onto the blades of Polish spearmen²⁹. It seems, however, that Sarnicki did not believe this version, because he again appealed to Decjusz ("sed iustus illius seculi scriptor, contrarium tradit" [but iustus, the historian of this age, says the opposite]) and, in his footsteps, he says that the Hetman of the Crown, seeing that the Lithuanians were abandoned by luck, sent them reinforcements. Ostroski's contribution was stopping the fleeing Lithuania. In the following description, Sarnicki does not add anything new to the characterization of the Lithuanian Hetman, reporting accordingly on the defeat of the horde and the famous and not very bloody victory³⁰.

The Battle of Vyshnivets has provided the Polish historians with an opportunity to diversify their opinions on Ostroski. The unquestionable tactical mistake of the Hetman of Lithuania, which almost leads to a defeat, is mentioned by all the authors. None of them, however, unambiguously blames the prince, masking it with his bravery demonstrated on the battlefield. The strongest words on the matter were written by Decjusz and Bielski, emphasizing the overconfidence of Prince Konstanty and the rescue of the Lithuanians by the Poles. Wapowski is restrained, Guagnini is careful. Whereas Strykowski does not see any mistakes of the Hetman of Lithuania and provides his apologia. Sarnicki tries to tone down his statements and cites different opinions, balancing between Strykowski and Decjusz and leaning towards the version of the latter. All authors are unanimous in their praise of the bravery of Prince Ostroski.

The war with Muscovy, revived in 1512, which led to the loss of Smolensk two years later, as a side effect brought a change in the hostile policy of the Crimea

²⁸ M. Strykowski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 734. The description of the entire battle: p. 728-734.

²⁹ It is a version promoted by M. Strykowski.

³⁰ S. Sarnicki, *Annales*, p. 383-384.

against the Jagiellonian states. New - from 1515 - Khan Mehmed I Giray even invaded Muscovy and formed an alliance with Sigismund I the Old in 1520-1522³¹. Nevertheless, before the Tatars completely changed their front, in the first years of the new Khan's rule, they have still attacked the Polish and Lithuanian lands.

The first large invasion took place in the summer of 1516. The Hetman of Lithuania did not take part in the fighting at that time. He got the opportunity in late autumn when the horde again attacked Podolia. This time, the Hetman sent units of the Volhynian landed military service under the command of his grandson Roman. The latter joined Stanisław Lanckoroński the Field Crown Guardian who led the defense and successfully stopped the Tatars. Young Ostrogski died in one of the skirmishes. Although the old hetman did not take part directly in fighting off this invasion, he suffered a severe loss in it³².

Most of the chroniclers noticed the role of Prince Ostrogski and his grandson. Wapowski, describing the summer invasion of the horde, widely overestimated the role of the Hetman of Lithuania, stating that he ordered the Volhynian to join the Poles, what forced the Tartars to retreat (in fact, Prince Ostrogski did not send the Poles any help). At the autumn invasion, Wapowski recalls the death of Prince Roman Ostrogski³³. Bielski noted that the king ordered the Hetman of Lithuania to protect Volhynia and support Poles if necessary, he makes a note of the death of Prince Roman in battle as well³⁴. This record was repeated by Alexander Guagnini, omitting - and rightly so - Ostrogski when describing the first Tartar invasion, while Maciej Strykowski noticed only the death of Prince Roman during the autumn invasion of the horde³⁵. Stanisław Sarnicki finally describes the victory of Podolia voivode Marcin Kamieniecki, achieved during the summer invasion, passing over both the Hetman of Lithuania and his grandson.³⁶

³¹ On the change in the Crimea policy see L. Podhorodecki, *Chanat krymski i jego stosunki z Polską w XV-XVIII w.* [Crimean Khanate and its relationship with Poland in the 15th – 18th century], Warsaw, 1987, and broadly D. Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania. International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th – 18th Century). A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by Annotated Documents*, Leiden-Boston, 2011, p. 44-61.

³² On the subject of Tatar invasions of 1516 see M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość* [Wars and the military], p. 136-140.

³³ B. Wapowski, *Kroniki* [Chronicles], pp. 144, 146-147.

³⁴ M. Bielski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 992. Sigismund I the Old gave the mentioned order to Prince Ostrogski after the summer invasion of the horde – M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość* [Wars and the military], p. 138.

³⁵ A. Guagnini, *Z Kroniki* [From the chronicle], p. 141-143; M. Strykowski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 752.

³⁶ S. Sarnicki, *Annales*, p. 388. The participation of Ostrogski in the events of 1516 has also

The small role of the Hetman of Lithuanian in the campaign of 1516 was duly assessed by historians - except for Wapowski who this time wrote an apologia. Prince Ostrogski contributed more two years later when he actively fought off the invasion of the horde and prevented it from invading Kievan Rus' - the Hetman at that time defeated a unit of nearly a thousand Tartars³⁷. Despite the greater involvement of the prince in the fight, it was noticed only by three historians: Wapowski, Bielski, and Guagnini. The first of them distinguishes two Tatar raids – in August on Moldavia and in October on Poland, where the remains of the horde were to burst in, defeated by Ostrogski and Ostap Dashkevych³⁸. That information is repeated by Marcin Bielski³⁹ and in his footsteps by Alexander Guagnini⁴⁰. All reports are short and consistent in the message. The evaluation of the actions of Ostrogski is nowhere to be found directly; however, we can easily guess it from the results he achieved.

The reports on the subsequent invasion of the horde, memorable due to the staggering defeat of the Poles and Lithuanians on August 2, 1519, at Sokal are much richer in content. Prince Ostrogski had then the high command over the Polish-Lithuanian army, estimated at 7,000 soldiers. He did not manage to lead the battle as planned that is to attack the Tatars on a crossing over the Bug. Insubordinate Polish troops crossed the river to meet the enemy head-on. The horde took advantage of its greater numbers and rate of fire of the bows to drive the Poles to the riverbank. The strike of a thousand Volyn cavalry, led by Ostrogski, at the flank of the Tatars improved the situation for a moment, but it did not change the fate of the battle. The Poles had to retreat to the right bank of the Bug, at the price of great losses, many great knights fell, and Ostrogski barely managed

been omitted by Decjusz who ended his narration on that year.

³⁷ M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość* [Wars and the military], p. 140. The autumn Tatar invasion turned mostly against Moldavia whom the Poles helped to defeat the horde – P. Koziół, *Stefan IV Młody – nieznana karta z dziejów relacji polsko-mołdawskich w XVI wieku* [Stephen IV of Moldavia – unknown page of the history of the Polish-Moldavian relationship in the 16th century], “Saeculum Christianum”, 24, 2017, p. 109.

³⁸ B. Wapowski, *Kroniki* [Chronicles], p. 157. The identification of the conquerors of the horde is correct.

³⁹ “Po temże [tj. klęsce w Mołdawii – D.M.] Tatarowie w miesiącu październiku chcąc się zemścić klęski swej, odpoczynawszy nieco pod czarnym lasem, wtargnęli na Wołyń, których Konstancy ubił do ośmi set, a Ostafi starosta czerkaski trzysta” [After this [i.e. defeat in Moldavia - D. M.] the Tatars in the month of October wanting to take revenge for their defeat, rested somewhat at the black forest, invaded the Volhynia, whom Konstancy thinned to eight hundred, and Ostap the starost of Cherkasy to three hundred] – M. Bielski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 1004.

⁴⁰ A. Guagnini, *Z Kroniki* [From the chronicle], p. 145. The story of A Guagnini is a faithful repetition of M. Bielski's record.

to break through the enemy line and save his own life⁴¹.

Such a serious defeat drew the attention of Polish historians, among whom Wapowski, Bielski, Strykowski, and Guagnini wrote about Ostrogski. The first of them reports on the battle in detail, crediting the Hetman of Lithuania with the initiative to strike at the Tatars escaping with the spoils. Ostrogski persuaded the Poles to follow, however, upon seeing the greater numbers of the horde, he wanted to postpone the clash until the arrival of Lithuanian reinforcements. Praised by the chronicler “vir rei bellicae experientissimus”, “vir fortissimus” [the man experienced in war, the most valiant man] was, however, shouted down by young Poles, accusing him of wanting to fight the battle on the Volhynia riverbank for his own glory. When they disobediently crossed the river, they were surprised by the horde and despite the energetic action of Ostrogski, who went to help the Poles, the battle was lost. Wapowski without hesitation indicates the Poles as guilty of the defeat⁴².

Marcin Bielski also left an extensive narrative on the defeat at Sokal. Ostrogski appears on the pages of the Chronicle as an experienced commander who, facing the greater numbers of the Tatars, advises to set up the army somewhere between the waters, so that the Tatars could not extend their forces, and to not cross the Bug under any circumstances but to wait for the Tatars and beat them when they will be crossing the river in smaller units. After the rejection of this advice by the Poles, the Hetman of Lithuania advised to postpone the battle for one day, because “był wtorek, który on sobie zwykł być mieć za podeźrzany” [it was Tuesday, which he perceived as too suspicious] (an interesting mention of Ostrogski's superstition); besides, he expected reinforcements. However, since the Poles did not listen again and started the battle, Ostrogski went to help them, having crossed over in a better place. In the battle, “Konstantyn biegając upominał, wołał serca tak Polakom jako Wołyńcom dodawając” [Konstanty encouraged both the Poles and the Volhynians]. Finally, seeing the inevitable defeat, together with the Polish commanders, he broke through to the Sokal castle “na lepszy się czas R.P. chowając” [to hide and wait for a better time for Poland]. Bielski sums it up succinctly: “Tę porażkę upór ludzi młodych, a niesłuchanie starszych uczyniło” [This defeat was caused by the stubbornness of the young people and by not listening to the elders]⁴³.

Aleksander Guagnini repeated this description of the battle after M. Bielski, presenting and evaluating the actions of Konstanty Ostrogski⁴⁴. Shortly, because

⁴¹ M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość* [Wars and the military], p. 142-145.

⁴² B. Wapowski, *Kroniki* [Chronicles], p. 162 (the entire battle, p. 159-162).

⁴³ M. Bielski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 1007-1008. The author overestimates the forces of the horde, estimating them at 80 thousand against 5 thousand Poles and Lithuanians.

⁴⁴ A. Guagnini, *Z Kroniki* [From the chronicle], p. 145-146.

only in one paragraph, the battle is told by Maciej Strykowski, blaming the defeat on not listening to the advice of Ostrogski⁴⁵.

As we can see, all the stories are consistent in relation to the causes of the defeat and all absolve Ostrogski of any guilt. Sokal not only did not hinder the building of the image of a capable leader but even strengthened him, pointing to the disastrous consequences of disregarding his advice. The method of leading and the issue of the insubordination of Poles towards the Lithuanian leader, who could not or was unable to enforce obedience, remains a separate matter - however, none of the historians approaches it.

Prince Ostrogski avenged the defeat at Sokal with the grand victory at Olsha, won at the end of his life, in the winter of 1527. Despite the formal Polish-Tatar alliance and the reform of the borderland defense system, in the 20s of the 16th century, the Tatars frequently attacked Ukraine and Rus, what corresponded with the Cossack attacks on Tatar lands. The Tatar invasion in 1524 was particularly painful. In the era of Suleiman the Magnificent's campaign in Hungary in 1526, the Sultan wanted to keep Poland away from the Danube affairs. For this purpose, he commissioned a diversionary commotion, which began in December 1526. Tatars in the strength of about 10 thousand men passed through frozen Polesia mud and plundered the lands of Chełm and the Lublin Voivodeship. Prince Ostrogski, rightly expecting the return of the horde with the prisoners through Volhynia, was gathering forces in Ostroh. He did not manage to intercept the Tatars, but he followed them caught up with them in Ukraine, near Olszanica. The Lithuanians approached the Tatar camp at night and struck at dawn on 21 January 1527 taking the horde by surprise. The enemy had no chance to prepare the horses for battle, and after a short fight, the Lithuanians won. Those Tatars, who managed to escape, were caught in Zwinogródek and defeated again. Ostrogski himself took 700 prisoners of war at Olszanica and liberated all the slaves, estimated at an exaggeration at 40,000 people. After the victory, he triumphantly entered Krakow, beautifully ending his career as a leader⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ "Bo nie chcieli służyć zdrowej rady kniazia Constantina hetmana litewskiego sprawnego, który był z Litwą i z Rusią na ratunek Polakom przybył" [For they did not want to listen to the right advice of Prince Constantin the successful Hetman of Lithuania who came with Lithuania and Rus to aid the Poles] - M. Strykowski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 753.

⁴⁶ On the Tatar invasions in the 20s of the 16th century and the Battle of Olszanica see M. Plewczyński, *Wojny i wojskowość* [Wars and the military], p. 309-320; D. Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate*, p. 64-67 (in the context of Crimean fights for power after the death of Mehmed I Giray). In those years, the fame of Ostap Dashkevych as an organizer of expeditions to the Black Sea borderlands grew.

The campaign of Olszanica of Ostrogski is described by the same chroniclers who reported the earlier on Sokal, that is Wapowski, Bielski, Strykowski, and Guagnini. The first of them traditionally overestimates the Tatar forces, counting them at 26 thousand. Returning with their spoils, they were attacked by Ostrogski, who defeated them, took 700 prisoners and released 40,000 captives. Wapowski expresses great joy at the victory, praises the Hetman of Lithuania and his triumphant entry into Krakow, combined with the transfer of Tatar prisoners and battle banners to the king⁴⁷.

The narrative of Wapowski corresponds to the narrative of Bielski, who agrees with his predecessor regarding the number of the horde and the prisoners of war and liberated slaves and prisoners taken at Olszanica. Bielski writes about the commanding abilities of the Hetman of Lithuania, who “na świtanie na nie uderzył i tak na nie ugodził, że im ani do koni przyść nie dopuścił” [struck at them at dawn and did not let them get to their horses]. Having briefly described the victory, he refers directly to the previous battle: “i powetował Konstantyn sokalskiej bitwy przegranej” [and Konstantyn avenged the defeat in the Battle of Sokal]⁴⁸.

The report by Marcin Bielski is repeated by Alexander Guagnini⁴⁹. Maciej Strykowski does not add any new details, but rather introduces some deceiving information. According to him, the Lithuanian lords led by the hetman gathered in Kiev and, hence, they chased the horde for 40 miles to Olszanica, wherein a bold battle they crashed 34 thousand Tatars. As a result of the battle, 24 thousand Tatars were to die, while the liberated slaves were estimated by Strykowski at 80,000 people⁵⁰. As we can see, the exaggerated data only increases the war fame of Prince Ostrogski.

The Battle of Olszanica was the last victory - and, in general, the last military act - mentioned by the historians, whose works we are analysing here. It should also be added that Aleksander Guagnini devoted a separate paragraph to Prince Ostrogski, praising him as a brave man, persevering in adversity and winning many fights against both Muscovy and the Tatars⁵¹.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we can say that Prince Ostrogski appears in the discussed chronicles fairly regularly, in the context of the fight against the Tatars, but only

⁴⁷ B. Wapowski, *Kroniki* [Chronicles], p. 218-219.

⁴⁸ M. Bielski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 1040.

⁴⁹ A. Guagnini, *Z Kroniki* [From the chronicle], p. 153-154.

⁵⁰ M. Strykowski, *Kronika* [Chronicle], p. 754-755.

⁵¹ A. Guagnini, *Z Kroniki* [From the chronicle], p. 192-193.

since 1508. His participation in previous battles with the horde was not confirmed by any of the historians and, in this respect, their work is not enough to retrace the combat experiences of Prince Konstanty. This is certainly due to his relatively low position before 1497 and the manner of assigning victories to monarchs or members of the royal family.

When Ostrogski appears on the chronicles' pages, his presentation as an enemy of the Tatars is parallel to his image as an adversary of Muscovy⁵². We do not observe any strong criticism of him in any of the works, even in the face of such obvious mistakes as can be seen in the setup of the Lithuanian troops for the Battle of Vyshnivets. This is, in fact, the only time when the chroniclers - and in particular Decjusz - allow themselves to suggest that the "avaricious" hetman made any mistakes. However, even then, they cover it up quickly with the praise of his bravery, and Maciej Strykowski does not notice any faults at all in Prince Ostrogski's actions. The subsequent campaigns and battles - even the Sokal one - are becoming an opportunity for the writers to praise the wisdom and bravery of the Hetman of Lithuania.

The creation of the image of Ostrogski as an enemy of the Tatars is directed towards imagining a lucky and wise leader, who in the time of need spares no strength and health, taking a personal part in the fight. Therefore, Prince Ostrogski finds himself on the border between two eras, combining the ethos of a medieval knight who fights the opponent, with the advantages of a commander who can effectively manage a fight. In our opinion, the Knights' ethos prevails even in the image of the hetman, and in a way corresponds to his character. Interestingly, at the end of the 16th century, Prince Ostrogski will enter into the literature as an experienced commander, instructing on the methods of fighting against the horde and condemning the effeminacy of the later nobility⁵³. This is probably also the result of the work of the Old-Polish historians who, without exception, promoted the military contribution of Prince Ostrogski in his battles with the horde.

⁵² D. Milewski, *Konstanty Ostrogski*, p. 116-117.

⁵³ This is the role in which the Hetman of Lithuania appeared in attributed to Walenty Herburt *Rozprawie przygody starego żołnierza* [The story of the adventure of an old soldier], Kraków 1595 – see R. Ryba, *Literatura staropolska wobec zjawiska niewoli tatarsko-tureckiej. Studia i szkice* [Old-Polish literature on the phenomenon of the Tatar-Turk slavery. Studies and essays], Katowice, 2014, pp. 122, 136.