

# Business Misunderstanding or Diplomatic Pressure: a Note from Leopold von Talman, the Austrian Ambassador in Constantinople, to the Republic of Dubrovnik in 1737

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## Abstract

The paper examines a note from Leopold von Talman, the Austrian ambassador to Constantinople, addressed to the Republic of Dubrovnik on the eve of the Austro-Ottoman War of 1737. In June 1737, Talman was in Soroca, along the Dniester River, from where he sent this note to Dubrovnik. Talman was known for writing letters with conspiratorial themes, and it can be inferred that this letter served, among other purposes, as a warning to Dubrovnik to respect Austrian interests along the eastern Adriatic coast.

**Keywords:** Austria, Republic of Dubrovnik, diplomacy, Leopold von Talman, Austro-Ottoman War (1737–1739)

## Introduction

The agile Austrian diplomat Leopold von Talman (1700–1773) was in Soroca on the Dniester River in June 1737, just before the outbreak of the Austro-Ottoman War. He had served as the Austrian ambassador to Constantinople from 1728 to 1737. In the years leading up to the war between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, Austrian diplomacy intensified its efforts significantly, particularly as Austria prepared to enter the conflict.<sup>1</sup> This is evident from the fact that, just before Austria entered the war, Talman was in the conflict zone between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire, specifically at Soroca on the Dniester River. From there, he wrote a note to the Republic of Dubrovnik concerning a problem that had arisen in connection with the business dealings of Austrian and Dubrovnik merchants in Constantinople. The issue pertained to potential harm to the commercial interests of one of the leading Austrian merchants in the Ottoman

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1 Dalibor Elezović, *Rusko-austrijsko-turski rat: izvještaji pukovnika Žan-Žaka Bosobra*. (Kraljevo: Istorijski arhiv, 2023.), 13.

Empire.<sup>2</sup> However, the real purpose of his address to Dubrovnik can be understood in the context of Austria's imminent entry into the war against the Ottoman Empire and the projection of Austrian interests in the Adriatic and south-eastern Europe.

Historical research has shown that a significant portion of Talman's diplomatic correspondence was coded, particularly the letters written during his diplomatic service in Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> This letter can be understood as an indirect warning that the Republic of Dubrovnik was expected to align its policies with Austrian interests in the region. The letter was sent on 19 June 1737, just a month before Austria declared war, from Soroca, which lay in the demarcation zone between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire, with Austria acting as an ally of Russian Empire. Given Talman's secretive diplomatic communication style, it can be concluded that this matter was regarded as a higher priority at the time than a mere business misunderstanding.

Before Austria entered into war with the Ottoman Empire, a political climate was cultivated for the territory of Bosnia was to be transferred to the Habsburgs through preliminary negotiations, in line with broader plans to partition the Ottoman Empire. In the West, a belief emerged that Bosnia should belong to Austria, and it appeared to be merely a matter of formality. This perspective from the Austrian leadership, combined with reliable information regarding the impending war, significantly influenced the Dubrovnik state's approach to the upcoming events. Plans were revisited, and old ambitions were revived. While the Republic of Dubrovnik typically exercised caution, it clearly expressed its interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina, anticipating that these territories would eventually come under Austrian control. The Senate communicated its position to its representative in Vi-

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2 Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku (Hrvatska) HR-DADU-7.3. 8 Isprave i akti 18. stoljeće (Diplomata et acta). (further HR-DADU-7.3. 8), Letter from the Austrian ambassador Leopold von Talman to the Dubrovnik Republic dated June 19, 1737.

3 Talman's correspondence from Constantinople comprises nearly eight hundred letters, each averaging five pages in length. In these letters, he first describes his journey from Vienna to Constantinople, followed by accounts of his audience with the governor, vizier, and sultan, as well as political discussions, daily activities, and contemporary events. Many of his letters contain coded sections, with certain paragraphs or entire pages encrypted. The purpose of this analysis is to determine which topics he sought to keep secret, why he did so, and the methods he used for encoding. Talman reported on political events, negotiations, strategic maneuvers, and troop movements in these coded messages. Notably, he took a keen interest in the relations between the Sublime Porte and Persia, which he also conveyed in coded language. Additionally, we will briefly explore how Talman gained access to such sensitive information. Julia Kellner, "Spionageabwehr in der Frühen Neuzeit Verschlüsselung in der Korrespondenz des Diplomaten Leopold von Talman mit dem Wiener Hofkriegsrat", in: *Pota K Zgodovinskemu Spoznanju Nasega Časa = Wege Zum Historischen Erkennen Unserer Zeit*, ed. Sašo Jerše, Filip Pota Draženović (Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, 2020.), 133.

enna, Bianchi, on two occasions: 23 September and 27 October 1736. Additionally, it instructed him to express Dubrovnik's support for these Austrian proposals, but to do so in his personal capacity rather than as the official stance of the government in 1737.<sup>4</sup> Based on Ambassador Talman's diplomatic practice, it is likely that the letter written in Soroca contained a message promoting Austria's policy.

## Europe on the eve of the Austro-Ottoman War (1737–1739)

The Austro-Ottoman War was preceded by a conflict between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, which stemmed from tensions arising from the War of the Polish Succession and the incursions of the Crimean Tatars into southern Russian territories. The conflict that began in 1735 was fueled by the Russian Empire's long-standing desire to control the northern shores of the Black Sea. During this time, the Russian Empire faced significant challenges in the Caspian region, where it found itself on the defensive. The Ottoman Empire attempted to exploit this situation by positioning itself as a protector of Muslims in the Caucasus region. Additionally, according to the agreement with Russian Empire made in 1726, Austria was obligated to support its ally by providing an auxiliary army.<sup>5</sup> The Habsburg Empire was a multinational European state initially ruled by the Austrian branch of the Habsburg dynasty. From 1745 onward, it was governed by the successors of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty. Over time, the various nations and regions within the empire developed a shared cultural identity and a common economic framework. The unity of the Habsburg territories was mainly fostered by the imperial character and style of governance, as well as by a well-organized bureaucratic system.<sup>6</sup>

Austria and the Russian Empire formed an alliance, while France, beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, allied itself with the Ottoman Empire to counter the rising power of the Habsburgs. Over the years, France developed a sophisticated diplomatic service that effectively advanced its interests. French eventually became the dominant language of diplomacy and international communication, replacing Latin in that role. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, European powers engaged in peace negotiations

4 Miljenko Foretić, „Dubrovnik u vrijeme austrijsko-turskoga rata (1736–1739)“, *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti u Dubrovniku* 21 (1983), 44–45.

5 Elezović, „Rusko–austrijsko–turski rat“, 39–41; Zoltán Györe, *Habzburska monarhija 1526–1792*. (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, 2014), 282–283.

6 Ankica Strmota, Edi Modrinić, „Austrijski službenik u zagrljaju zakona, instrukcija, naputaka i dekreta“, *Vjesnik dalmatinskih arhiva* 2, 1 (2021), 409.

that showcased their diplomatic skills.<sup>7</sup> French diplomacy, in relation to its eastern policy, attempted to assert its dominance during the peace conferences in Karlowitz and Passarowitz but was only partially successful. It achieved a more substantial victory at the Belgrade Peace Conference in 1739. During the War of the Polish Succession, the allied efforts of Austria and the Russian Empire prevented the election of a French candidate to the Polish throne. Instead, they supported August Frederick of Saxony, who was crowned King Augustus III of Poland (1733–1763). This alliance between Austria and the Russian Empire brought them closer together on key European political issues, particularly regarding the resolution of the situation with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup> After forming an alliance, Austria and the Russian Empire sought to persuade Venice to join their side in the war. However, Venice firmly declined, having learned from the poor outcome of the previous war, in which it had suffered greatly because the Viennese court made peace without considering Venice's perspective.<sup>9</sup> In the context of business relations in Istanbul, Western European powers such as Venice, France, England, and the Netherlands negotiated treaties known as capitulations with the Sultan. These treaties governed the legal status of their citizens residing and conducting business in the Ottoman Empire, as well as defining the rights and responsibilities of their ambassadors. England and the Netherlands signed these treaties in 1580 and 1612, respectively. Throughout the 18th century, the regular renewal and extension of capitulations became a primary focus for Western European diplomats in Constantinople. These negotiations were characterized by competition among European nations, each striving to secure the most favorable trade conditions in the Levant. The discussions encompassed not only economic matters but also aimed to enhance the political influence of Western European powers at the Porte.<sup>10</sup>

## Republic of Dubrovnik and Austria

For Austrian politics, the Eastern Question has become topical and a priority since the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> Austrian policymakers in south-eastern Europe faced a significant dilemma characterized by two main questions: how to address the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the expansion of the Russian Empire. Three

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7 Jeremy Black, *A History of Diplomacy*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 74–75.

8 Elezović, „Rusko-austrijsko-turski rat“, 41.

9 Elezović, „Rusko-austrijsko-turski rat“, 50.

10 Christine Vogel, “Istanbul as a hub of early modern European diplomacy”, *European History Online* (2021). accessed 21/01/2021. <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/vogelc-2020-en>.

11 Karl Roider, *Austria's eastern question 1700–1790*. (Princeton: University Press, 1982), 4–5.

alternatives emerged for Austria's response. First, Austria could form an alliance with the Russian Empire to expel the Turks from the Balkans and subsequently divide the Balkan territories between them. The second option was for Vienna to conquer Turkish territories in Europe independently. Lastly, Austria could aim to maintain the status quo by preventing the Russian Empire from gaining influence in the Balkans. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, policymakers in Vienna explored all these possibilities. However, the most feasible solution appeared to be maintaining the status quo, although Russian Empire's growing aggressiveness throughout the century made this approach challenging to implement.<sup>12</sup> The political, economic, and social circumstances confronted by the the Republic of Dubrovnik on the eve of the renewed war in the Balkans were quite complex. During this period (1737–1739), similar patterns emerged as in the previous two wars. The Dubrovnik government made diplomatic efforts to persuade Austria to support its demands, especially if the war turned out favorably for them. While economic considerations were paramount for Dubrovnik, political issues took a secondary role. One of Dubrovnik's primary goals was to establish itself as a potential port for the influx of Austrian goods.<sup>13</sup>

The Republic of Dubrovnik, significantly weakened by an earthquake, struggled to maintain its presence on the international political stage. Its primary patron, Spain, had diminished to a second-rate European power since the Thirty Years' War and had completely lost interest in the small Adriatic republic after the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the Habsburgs vacated its throne. In contrast, France, as an ally of the Ottoman Empire, held a privileged position and posed a threat to the trade interests of Mediterranean republics, including Dubrovnik.<sup>14</sup> With the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Dubrovnik turned towards Austria. Thus, on 20 August 1684, the Treaty of Višegrad was renewed in Vienna, aligning the Republic of Dubrovnik with the policies of the Habsburgs. The people of Dubrovnik stopped paying tribute to the Turks, and from 1686, they began paying it to Vienna. When the Austrians penetrated Macedonia and Kosovo in 1689, the people of Dubrovnik welcomed them with open arms because they had already prepared everything to become the main Austrian port on the Adriatic.<sup>15</sup> After the Peace of Passarowitz, the borders of the Republic of Dubrovnik were

12 Karl Roeder, „The Perils of Eighteenth-Century Peacemaking: Austria and the Treaty of Belgrade, 1739“, *Central European History* 5, 3 (1972), 6.

13 Foretić, „Dubrovnik u vrijeme austrijsko-turskoga rata“, 41.

14 Miljenko Foretić, *Dubrovačka Republika i Austrija*. (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2017), 20.

15 Josip Vrandečić, *Borba za Jadran u ranom novom vijeku: Mletačko – osmanski ratovi u venecijanskoj nuncijaturi* (Split: Filozofski fakultet u Splitu – Odsjek za povijest, 2013), 187; Foretić, „Dubrovačka Republika i Austrija“, 19.

officially confirmed. However, Venice continued to compete with Dubrovnik in trade by establishing relationships with merchants from Ottoman lands, as well as with officials in the Bosnian Eyalet and the Sanjak of Herzegovina. Additionally, Venice imposed restrictions that impacted Dubrovnik's trade activities.<sup>16</sup> Under these circumstances and given Austria's trade ambitions, Dubrovnik's commerce declined.<sup>17</sup> The Ragusans sought to negotiate more effectively with Austria to ensure that trade from Pannonia and northern Serbia would pass through their city rather than through Rijeka and Bakar. Dubrovnik's ambassador, Ivan-Feliks Sorgo-Bobali, engaged in discussions with the newly established Austrian Eastern Company in hopes of finalizing a trade agreement. However, it was determined that they could not sign the agreement because Dubrovnik lacked an official trade organization; instead, merchants operated independently. Subsequently, an initiative emerged from Dubrovnik to impose a 3% customs duty on goods exported through their city by the Austrian Eastern Company. Additionally, they proposed dividing spheres of interest, whereby Austrian merchants would be allowed to trade further east, toward Sofia. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached.<sup>18</sup>

## Context of Ambassador Talman's Diplomatic Note

Talman was an active diplomat before and during the war with the Ottoman Empire, working to enhance his country's position for a more favorable outcome. The French diplomat Jean-Jacques Beausobre, who served on the Austrian general staff during the Austro-Ottoman War (1737–1739), described Talman as a short, unattractive man—fat and very proud.<sup>19</sup> The European diplomatic elite in early modern Constantinople was marked by a notable plurality and competition. Envoys from various European powers operated under very different circumstances, particularly until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their status, scope of work, freedom of movement, and even their residential locations in the Ottoman capital were influenced by the relationship between their respective governments and the sultan.<sup>20</sup>

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16 For more details on Venetian politics in this period, see. Frederic Lane, *Venise une republique maritime*. (Paris: Flammarion, 1985), 549–552.

17 Foretić, „Dubrovačka Republika i Austrija“, 81–82.

18 Foretić, „Dubrovačka Republika i Austrija“, 83–84.

19 Elezović, „Rusko-austrijsko-turski rat“, 72.

20 Before the 18th century, two distinct models of European diplomacy existed in Constantinople: the Western model, based on Venice's dual ambassador-consul role, and the Eastern model, which used high-level envoys for special missions and ordinary residents for daily matters. After 1700, this distinction began to disappear, indicating a shift in diplomatic practices. Christine Vogel, “Istanbul as a hub of early modern European diplomacy”.

Austrian diplomacy in Constantinople was influenced by the challenging circumstances of coming from an enemy country. Just a month before Austria entered the war against the Ottoman Empire, Ambassador Talman addressed the “very respected and exalted, highly esteemed gentlemen” of Dubrovnik. His note referred to a trade misunderstanding that had arisen in the dealings between Austrian and Ragusan merchants. Talman’s letter was written amidst complex international conditions and during Austria’s preparations to enter the war. Was the content of the letter solely focused on the business issues between Austrian and Ragusan merchants in the Ottoman Empire? It is likely that it was not. The business incident may have served merely as a pretext or a small part of a larger message. In reality, the purpose of the letter was likely to convey Austria’s intentions and plans regarding its policy on the eastern coast of the Adriatic to the Dubrovnik Republic.<sup>21</sup>

At the centre of the misunderstanding was the representative of the Austrian Eastern Company in Constantinople, Friedrich Hubsch<sup>22</sup>. His business and property were threatened by the actions of Dubrovnik merchants.<sup>23</sup> This company was founded shortly after the introduction of Austrian Habsburg rule in the southern Netherlands. Although the region had long been under the control of the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) led to the area falling into Austrian hands after a brief period of Anglo-Dutch rule.<sup>24</sup> The Austrian Eastern Company began operations in December 1722, and the company was founded on somewhat earlier principles. As early as 1715, entrepreneurs<sup>25</sup> began investing in trade with the East Indies, focusing on Mocha, Guinea, China, and the Malabar Coast in India. These expeditions were inspired by Dutch operations in East Asia. The first Austrian-financed expedition from the Southern Netherlands to India proved to be profitable, yielding a 100% return on investment. The more merchants entered the Indian trade market, the more local markets became flooded with exotic goods, putting pressure on profit margins. As a result, most merchants operating in India advocated for the establishment of a company

21 HR-DADU-7.3. 8 Letter from the Austrian ambassador Leopold von Talman to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737.

22 Friedrich Hubsch (1693–1765), was an Austrian diplomat and representative of the Austrian East Company in Constantinople. Marie de Testa, Antoine Gautier, *Drogmans et diplomates européens auprès de la porte ottomane*. (Istanbul: Les éditions ISIS, 2003.), 241.

23 HR-DADU-7.3. 8 Letter from the Austrian ambassador Leopold von Talman to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737.

24 Jelten Baguet, „Politics and Commerce: A Close Marriage? The Case of the Ostend Company (1722–1731)“, *TSEG - The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 12, 3 (2015), 55.

25 Trade between Austria and the Ottoman Empire, previously nonexistent, was then established directly. This development weakened Dubrovnik’s commercial position. Foretić, „Dubrovačka Republika i Austrija“, 82.

that would have a monopoly on maritime trade between the Southern Netherlands and India and China.<sup>26</sup>

The Austrian diplomat notes that he is addressing a request to resolve a business dispute between Austrian and Ragusan merchants. The injured party in this matter is Hubsch, the administrator of the Austrian Oriental Company in Constantinople. Last autumn, he granted a loan of 3,150 ducats in exchange for a large shipment of linen cloth—more than four hundred meters in total. Hubsch negotiated this business arrangement with the Ragusan merchant and dragoman, Andrea Magrini, back in November 1736.<sup>27</sup>

Magrini was a Dubrovnik native and a businessman who had extensive business contacts in Ottoman Empire, as well as with Dutch and Italian merchants.<sup>28</sup> He served as the Ragusan dragoman in Constantinople, and the Dutch ambassador Calkoen appointed him as his second dragoman.<sup>29</sup> Sources testify that Magrini had significant influence in the Dutch business community in Constantinople.<sup>30</sup> In the context of this business problem, it is important to note that in 1724, Dragoman Magrini's request to enter the service of the Austrian ambassador in Constantinople was rejected.<sup>31</sup> In Ottoman-Ragusan relations, Dubrovnik consuls and diplomats, along with dragomans—interpreters of the Ottoman Turkish language—played a significant role. Ragusan dragomans were skilled professionals, often self-taught merchants who learned Ottoman Turkish during extended business stays in the region. They frequently served as envoys to European countries and acted as liaisons with the Grand Vizier.<sup>32</sup>

A business incident occurred involving merchants from Austria and the Ragusan Republic, with prominent representatives from both communities participating. A note was sent from Soroca, which lies in a conflict zone between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire, adding complexity to the situation. In

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26 Baguet, „Politics and Commerce“, 56.

27 HR-DADU-7.3. 8 Letter from the Austrian ambassador Leopold von Talman to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737.

28 Ismail Hakki Kadi, *Ottoman and Dutch Merchants in the Eighteenth Century: Competition and Cooperation in Ankara, Izmir, and Amsterdam*. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 184.

29 Hakki Kadi, „Ottoman and Dutch Merchants in the Eighteenth Century“, 231.

30 Gerard Rudolf Bosscha Erdbrink, *At the threshold of felicity: Ottoman-Dutch relations during the embassy of Cornelis Calkoen at the sublime porte, 1726-1744*. (Ankar: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1975), 136, 192.

31 Vesna Miović Perić, „Dragomans of The Dubrovnik Republic: Their training and Career“, *Dubrovnik annals* 5 (2001), 90.

32 Vesna Miović, „Alexander Mavrocordatos Exaporite, Grand Dragoman and Secret Adviser to the Porte: Dubrovnik's Perspective“, *Dubrovnik annals* 27 (2023), 122; Miović Perić, „Dragomans of The Dubrovnik Republic“, 81.

the note, the Austrian diplomat warns the Ragusan Republic that the actions of its merchants could jeopardize relations with Austria.<sup>33</sup>

## The Goods Were Delivered by the Dutch Ship Concordia

The controversial part of Talman's letter is the section in which he states that the goods that were the subject of the dispute were delivered by a Dutch ship Concordia (*nave Concordia ollandese*). Researching the literature, we concluded that this name is used in Dutch maritime history to refer to a ship that was launched in 1696 and sailed for the Dutch East India Company. It was a ship of great capacity with a deadweight of about nine hundred tons.<sup>34</sup>

Much has been written in historiography about the Dutch ship Concordia, which sailed from the port of Batavia for the third and last time in 1708<sup>35</sup>, heading for the Netherlands. She carried a cargo of pottery and had more than two hundred passengers and crew on board. The Concordia was last seen in rough weather south of the Sunda Strait on 5 February 1708. Almost three weeks later, a wreck was sighted, which was believed to be the Concordia, and it has been listed as sunk ever since.<sup>36</sup>

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33 HR-DADU-7.3.8 Letter from the Austrian ambassador Leopold von Talman to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737.

34 Jaap Bruijn, Femme Gaastra and Ivo Schöffer, *The Dutch East India Company's shipping between the Netherlands and Asia 1595-1795. Outward Bound Voyages from the Netherlands to Asia and the Cape (1595-1795) II*. (The Hague: Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatien, 1979), 199.

35 Batavia was founded in 1619 as the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company in Asia and remained so until the late 18th century. It quickly developed into a hub of international trade. Located on the north coast of Java at the mouth of the Tjiliwung River, the city resembled a Dutch town set in a tropical environment, featuring walls, gates, windmills, and canals. The seafront was dominated by a large fortress that served as the seat of government, from which the Company administered its settlements across Asia for nearly a century. Batavia became the central hub for all activities of the East India Company in Asia, with almost all ships from the Netherlands arriving at this port. The old city extended just 1.5 kilometers in length and was enclosed by walls, while spacious residential areas outside the walls accommodated over one hundred thousand inhabitants. By the standards of more developed regions, the coastal area was notorious for its unhealthiness.. PH van der Brug, „Malaria in Batavia in the 18th century“, *Tropical Medicine & International Health* 2 (1997), 892-893.

36 Graham Seal, *The Savage Shore Extraordinary Stories of Survival and Tragedy from the Early Voyages of Discovery*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 228.

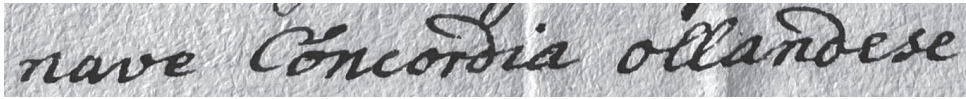


Figure 1 Detail from Leopold von Talman's letter to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737, referring to the Dutch ship Concordia. HR-DADU-7.3. 8. (photographed by Dalibor Elezović, 2023).

Talman's listing of the Concordia twenty-nine years after its official sinking is a controversial piece of information.<sup>37</sup> Numerous intriguing stories surrounding the ship Concordia have captured the attention of historians. It is reported that a Dutch port captain in Java received news about the Concordia; however, these claims lack supporting documentary evidence. Several historians have explored the intriguing question of what happened to the Concordia and its passengers. In his book, distinguished historian Graham Seal examines reports about the Concordia that emerged in the 19th century. These reports, published in the press, claimed that the descendants of the castaways from the Concordia made their way to the northern territories of Australia and settled there. There were also local indigenous stories about red-haired individuals with long, fair hair who survived by fishing in a river that had been dammed. Numerous unverified accounts spoke of the mysterious fate of a ship associated with these tales. Historians faced many questions, and finding answers in historical sources proved challenging. Nevertheless, the enigmatic fate of the Concordia continues to captivate historians, who are still trying to uncover its secrets.<sup>38</sup> The detail in Talman's letter stating that the goods in dispute were brought by the Dutch ship Concordia is intriguing. It initially leads us to consider the possibility of another Dutch ship with the same name as the famous Concordia from 1708. However, we have not found any evidence in the literature to support the existence of such a ship. Our second assumption is that the ship's name might have been mistakenly recorded. A third possibility is that Talman intentionally mentioned this ship's name as a warning to the letter's recipient, which aligns with his reputation for being conspiratorial.

37 HR-DADU-7.3. 8 Letter from the Austrian ambassador Leopold von Talman to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737.

38 Seal, „The Savage Shore Extraordinary Stories“, 228.

## Business Misunderstanding Between Austrian and Dubrovnik Merchants

Talman explained the reasons for writing a diplomatic note to the Republic of Dubrovnik, detailing the circumstances surrounding this business misunderstanding. To secure the loan, a mortgage was established on the goods in question, meaning that once the goods were sold, the majority of the proceeds would be used to repay the debt. In addition to Hubsch, the contract was signed by Dubrovnik merchants Frano son of Mato di Ghetaldi and Ivo Marinov di Gozze, making them joint and several co-debtors in relation to the mortgage.<sup>39</sup> Both were members of prominent Dubrovnik noble families.<sup>40</sup>

It soon became clear, however, that Ghetaldi and Gozze had retained part of the canvas in order to settle their own outstanding claims against the commission agent. They intended to give Hubsch only what remained after they had recouped their invested money. Talman deemed this a clear violation of standard commercial practices. He emphasized that the pledge had to be settled first; only then could the debtor or the guarantors dispose of the remaining portion of the goods. Talman explained the logic of the contract in detail, reminding everyone that the guarantors had committed to settling the mortgage with the “first proceeds from the canvas.” The Austrian diplomat cautioned in his note that until the guarantors had settled the mortgage, they had no right to use the mortgaged goods to pay off previous debts. Talman’s note took on the nature of a formal diplomatic intervention. The Austrian diplomat asked the Ragusan government to instruct Ghetaldi and Gozze to act in accordance with “civil and commercial practices,” ensuring that Hubsch would not suffer any harm. While the tone of the note remained polite and diplomatic, the arguments presented were firm and legally sound. The Ragusan government was urged to resolve the issue promptly in order to maintain good business relations and prevent potential damage. The conclusion of Talman’s note is concise but can also be interpreted as somewhat conspiratorial. He warned the Ragusan authorities that the actions of their merchants could result in the blocking of a portion of the assets of the Austrian Oriental Company. An even more severe consequence could arise from the loss of confidence in the business community,

39 HR-DADU-7.3. 8 Letter from the Austrian ambassador Leopold von Talman to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737.

40 “Getaldić”, *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža* (2013), accessed 04/06/2025. <https://enciklopedija.hr/clanak/getaldic>; “Gučetić”, *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža* (2013), accessed 04/06/2025. <https://enciklopedija.hr/clanak/gucetic>.

which would lead to significant damage to the entire Levantine trade.<sup>41</sup> The last part of the note was in fact a clear warning to the Dubrovnik government. The message not only aimed to influence the business conduct of its merchants but also to clearly delineate its policies in accordance with Austrian interests.

## Conclusion

Ambassador Talman's note to the Dubrovnik Republic highlights the increasing activity of Austrian diplomacy on the eve of Austria's declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire in 1737. Viennese diplomats took measures regarding the conflict between their ally, the Russian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, closely monitoring the situation and facilitating the adoption of effective political and military strategies. One of Austria's strategic interests in this war was to gain control over Ottoman territories in the eastern Adriatic hinterland, specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In these complex political circumstances, just a month before Austria officially entered the war, the ambassador wrote a note from Soroca on the Dniester to the Republic of Dubrovnik. The reason for Talman's correspondence with Dubrovnik was a business misunderstanding between Austrian and Ragusan merchants in the Ottoman Empire. However, the motivation behind this letter and the pressure on the Republic of Saint Blaise ran deeper. The Austrian diplomat aimed to convey a message to the Ragusan government to act with caution and to carefully consider their decisions amid the complex circumstances in Southeast Europe. Dubrovnik was urged to keep Austrian interests in mind when formulating its policies. Talman suggested that Vienna would play a significant role in determining the region's near future, and expressed hope that the Ragusan Republic would take this into consideration.

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41 HR-DADU-7.3.8 Letter from the Austrian ambassador Leopold von Talman to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737.

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Illustrissimi ed Eccellentissimi Sig.<sup>ri</sup> Sig.<sup>ri</sup> Col.<sup>mi</sup>  
 Per mancanza di soggetto non ho avuto in passato La sorte  
 di corrispondere coll' Eccell.<sup>me</sup> ora però che mi s'appresenta questo  
 motivo non tralascio di attestarle la mia divozione e raccoman-  
 dare alla loro equità un affare del Sig.<sup>o</sup> Hübsch amministratore  
 della Cis.<sup>a</sup> Compag.<sup>a</sup> Orientale in Costantinopoli. Egli avendo nel  
 Novembre dell'anno passato convenuto col Sig.<sup>o</sup> Andrea Magrini  
 l'adopsatosi un'ipoteca di codesti ducati tre mille cento e cinquan-  
 ta, insieme colli loro Interessi sopra 400. e più Cant.<sup>re</sup> di lino cossi  
 portato dalla nave Concordia ollandese, doppo aver scritto alli Sig.<sup>ri</sup>  
 Franco Matteo di Gheraldi e Gio. Mar.<sup>o</sup> di Gorge accettatosi dell'  
 hipoteca, viene ad intendere, che detti S.<sup>ri</sup> avendo esitato parte  
 di detti lini, andauano coprendosi per alcuni Loro crediti col com-  
 missionante, e pagati che saranno del tutto intendono rimettere  
 il residuo delle lino alle voglie del Sig.<sup>o</sup> Hübsch, se tal cosa è  
 vera, stante che l'acceptare dell' hipoteca è stata de' loro  
 fatta, a condiz.<sup>o</sup> di pagarle dal prodotto delli p.<sup>ri</sup> lini venduti,  
 come cossa dalle loro Lett.<sup>re</sup> detti S.<sup>ri</sup> sono tenuti in ogni modo pa-  
 garla dal primo ritratto d'essi lini, ne deuono, ne possono im-  
 bossare cosa alcuna dalle detti lini prima, che l'hipoteca  
 sia pagata, e tanto meno pretendere di soddisfare li vecchi crediti  
 col prodotto dei lini, che sono vincolati unicam.<sup>te</sup> e solam.<sup>te</sup> all'  
 hipoteca suetta, e perche giudico che all' Ecc.<sup>ze</sup> V.<sup>re</sup> sarà noto il  
 peso di questa ragione vengo a raccomandare alle Medesime nella  
 più efficace maniera La Sua esecuzione, pregandole di ordinar  
 a detti Sig.<sup>ri</sup> accio si contenghino sul couere, e che conviene  
 alla ragione estile mercantile, e che l'Interessi del pref.<sup>to</sup>  
 Sig.<sup>o</sup> Hübsch doppo lunghe dilazioni, non soffrano simili incon-  
 venienti. con che ho l'onore di raffermarmi  
 Di Loro Eccellenze  
 Torrocha 19. Giugno 1737.  
 Humiliss.<sup>imo</sup> et Devotiss.<sup>imo</sup> Fed.  
 Le barone di Talman

Figure 2 Letter from Leopold von Talman's to the Republic of Dubrovnik dated 19 June 1737.  
 HR-DADU-7.3. 8. (photographed by Dalibor Elezović, 2023).

## Poslovni nesporazum ili diplomatski pritisak: nota austrijskog veleposlanika u Carigradu, Leopolda von Talmana, Dubrovačkoj Republici iz 1737.

### Sažetak

Rad analizira diplomatsku notu austrijskog veleposlanika u Carigradu, Leopolda von Talmana, napisanu Dubrovačkoj Republici uoči rata s Osmanskim Carstvom 1737. godine. U lipnju 1737. Talman je bio u Soroci na Dnjestru i odatle je poslao notu Dubrovačkoj Republici u vezi s trgovačkim incidentom između austrijskih i dubrovačkih trgovaca. Talmanova nota Dubrovačkoj Republici ne spominje izričito nadolazeći rat, iako je Austrija u njega ušla manje od mjesec dana kasnije. U noti se govori o problemima koje su dubrovački trgovci uzrokovali austrijskoj poslovnoj zajednici u Carigradu. Možemo pretpostaviti da je Talmanova nota zapravo bila svojevrsno upozorenje Dubrovčanima da pomnije pogledaju austrijske interese, čiji je fokus bila istočna jadranska obala i šire zaleđe, tj. Hercegovina i Bosna. Austrija je polagala pravo na to područje. Talman je inače bio poznat po pisanju diplomatskih pisama konspirativnog sadržaja, a ovaj primjer njegove diplomatske korespondencije također se može protumačiti na taj način. Rat je započeo između austrijskog saveznika Ruskog Imperija i Osmanskog Carstva 1735. godine. Postojala je dugogodišnja želja Ruskog Imperija da proдре u crnomorsku regiju i preuzme kontrolu nad sjevernim obalama Crnog mora. Austrija se pridružila ratu 1737. kao saveznica Ruskog Imperija.

Uoči Austro-turskog rata (1737. – 1739.) Dubrovačka Republika uložila je diplomatske napore da Austrija prihvati njezine zahtjeve u slučaju povoljnog ishoda rata. Dubrovačke nade bile su usmjerene na ekonomski aspekt, dok su politička pitanja bila sporedna. Glavna težnja Dubrovnikana bila je postati moguća luka za priljev austrijske robe. Austrijski diplomat u svojoj bilješci naglašava da je razlog njegova obraćanja bio zahtjev za rješavanje poslovnog problema između austrijskih i dubrovačkih trgovaca. Oštećena strana u ovom sporu bio je Friedrich Hubsch, upravitelj Austrijske orijentalne kompanije u Carigradu. Prethodne jeseni odobrio je zajam od preko tri tisuće dukata za veliku pošiljku lanenog platna – više od četiristo metara. Hubsch je dogovorio ovaj poslovni aranžman s dubrovačkim trgovcem i dragomanom Andreom Magrinijem u studenom 1736. Magrini je bio Dubrovčanin i poslovni čovjek koji je imao opsežne poslovne kontakte u Osmanskom Carstvu kao i s nizozemskim i talijanskim trgovcima. Talman je objasnio sve okolnosti ovog poslovnog nesporazuma u vezi s razlogom pisanja diplomatske note Dubrovačkoj Republici. Kako bi se osigurao zajam, na predmetnu robu uspostavljena je hipoteka, što je značilo da će se, čim se roba proda, najveći dio prihoda prvo usmjeriti

na otplatu duga. Osim Hubscha ugovor su potpisali i dubrovački trgovci Frano Matov di Ghetaldi i Ivo Marinov di Gozze te su tako postali solidarni sudužnici u vezi s hipotekom. Obojica su bili članovi istaknutih dubrovačkih plemićkih obitelji. Međutim, ubrzo se ispostavilo da su Ghetaldi i Gozze zadržali dio platna kako bi namirili vlastita stara potraživanja. Hubschu su planirali predati samo ono što je trebalo ostati nakon što sami namire uloženi novac. Talman je to nazvao jasnim kršenjem dobrih trgovačkih običaja. Zalog je prvo morao biti plaćen, tek tada su dužnik ili jamci mogli raspolagati preostalim dijelom robe. Talman je detaljno objasnio logiku ugovora i podsjetio na to da su se jamci obvezali otplatiti hipoteku „prvim prihodom od platna“. Dubrovačka vlada zamoljena je da bez odgode riješi ovaj problem kako bi se održali dobri poslovni odnosi i spriječila šteta. Kraj Talmanove note je sažet, ali se može protumačiti i kao konspirativan. Na kraju upozorava dubrovačku vladu da bi takve akcije njihovih trgovaca mogle dovesti do blokade dijela imovine Austrijske orijentalne tvrtke. Još gori učinak mogao bi se očekivati zbog gubitka povjerenja u poslovnoj zajednici, što bi prouzročilo ogromnu štetu cijeloj levantinskoj trgovini. Zaključujemo da je povod ovog Talmanova predstavljanja Dubrovniku bio spomenuti poslovni nesporazum između austrijskih i dubrovačkih trgovaca. Međutim, uzrok slanja note i pritiska na Republiku Svetog Vlaha bio je dublji. Austrijski diplomat poručio je dubrovačkoj vladi da bude oprezna i razmisli o postupcima u vezi sa složenim okolnostima u kojima se nalazila jugoistočna Europa. Dubrovačka vlada upozorena je na to da uzme u obzir austrijske interese u regiji i u skladu s tim kreira svoju politiku.

**Ključne riječi:** Austrija, Dubrovačka Republika, diplomacija, Leopold von Talman, Austro-turski rat (1737. – 1739.)