

The Importance of the Vasvár Peace Treaty of 1664

On 1st August 1664, Christian armies in European collaboration (mostly with Austrian, German, French, Italian and Hungarian forces) won a major victory near Szentgotthárd-Mogersdorf over the Ottoman-Turkish forces which had occupied a great part of Hungary more than a century before. After losing the battle, on 10th August the chief of the retreating Turkish army, Köprülüade Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, made peace with the envoy of Habsburg Emperor Leopold I, Simon Reiniger von Renigen, near the town of Vasvár. The battle of Szentgotthárd was the first significant victory over the Ottoman-Turkish army forces previously reckoned to be invincible. The victory impressively represented the then emerging supremacy of the European defence technology and military science. The Peace Treaty of Vasvár was principally a treaty between the Ottoman-Turkish and the Habsburg Empire – and Hungary as part of it – but had a significant impact on European political conditions as well. Both the battle and the peace attracted considerable interest in Europe of its day because as a result of a European cooperation it became possible to expel the Turkish troops from Europe. Nevertheless, for Hungary the treaty was considered disadvantageous because the moment of the military success was not exploited and also because the status quo between the two empires was maintained. In fact, however, it launched the process which led to the liberation of Hungary in the decades thereafter. It held for about 20 years, until the beginning of the next Great Turkish War which began in 1683 with the second siege of Vienna.

On the local level, this period influenced also the development of the town of Vasvár. Located in the Western border of Hungary Vasvár was an important town in the Middle Ages as the centre of Vas County. However, as a consequence of the Turkish conquest the settlement started to decline, it was abandoned by its institutions and population, the buildings started to decay with the only exception of the Dominican monastery which had been converted into a fortress. At the time of the treaty the town was not more than a minor fortification, but that was also destroyed by the marching Turkish army. (The treaty itself was probably made in the Turkish camp, but local tradition connects it with an old town building.) It was only after the Turkish wars in the eighteenth century when the reconstruction of the town started, but it never regained its previous importance. The peace treaty made the name of Vasvár known both in Europe and Hungary; one of the few treaty sites which are located in the country today.

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