

Giovan-Maria Angiolello

Memoir

How, in 1468, I, Francesco, with Gio.-Maria, my brother, *f^o 1r*
of the Vicenzan family of the Angiolelli, left
Vicenza on the 5th day of August, bound for
Negropont, and what happened to us until|
our return. 5

On the 15th of August, on the day of the Madonna, we
departed from the harbor of Venice, but the following day
there arose a most mighty storm which lasted from Tuesday
night until Thursday. There came also a stroke of lightning,
which hit the ship's mainmast and killed the ship's cooper,
who was | standing watch. The sky was so dark that one could 10
scarcely tell day from night, but at last, with the aid of God, the

This translation was intended as part of a book which was never published, but which still maintains a phantom existence in web search engines as *A Fifteenth Century Venetian's Adventures in Ottoman Lands: The Memoir of Gian-Maria Angiolello* (Near Eastern Studies, University of Washington, 4) with an imaginary publication date of 1988, and even an ISBN. The series was terminated, and no other publisher has since shown an interest.

The translation is made directly from a facsimile of the Vicenza manuscript in the Biblioteca Bertoliana, and no change from the 1988 version has been necessary except for the correction of the name Hierolamo Calbo to Alvisè Calbo. For some indeterminable reason, the copyist of this manuscript substituted the name of Alvisè's son for that of Alvisè himself.

weather turned fair, and we returned to the afore-mentioned harbor to bury the dead man. Then we replaced whatever the ship had lost, and once again started out on our journey. In eight days we reached Modon, where we | remained nearly a month, after which we boarded a fast galley, commanded by Mess. Giacomo Nani. On the 26th of September we arrived at Negropont. When we had been about a year there, it was the time when Mess. Nicolò da Canal was captain of the fleet of St. Mark, and on the 12th of September he set out with the fleet, | which was well equipped and manned with *Stradiots*, some of whom had been recruited at Napoli di Romania, while others came from Turkey, and from Coron and Modon, and departed from Negropont. With this force they went out and took one of the Sultan's fortresses, which is called Ainos, sacked it and set it afire. Those who were captured at that place, both male | and female, were brought back to Negropont with great triumph and rejoicing from our side, and every sort of booty, such as carpets, gold, silver and jewels was sold off, most of it belonging to the Greek Christians, who were set free. The Turks who were brought to Negropont, and there were not many, were enslaved. |

When the Sultan heard of the damage caused by the Christians, he made plans to exact a cruel revenge for it and called his entire army together on land, and his entire fleet by sea. He himself commanded the land forces, and he made|| Mahmud Paşa, who was foremost among the Turks at that time, the captain of the fleet, which consisted of [100] fast galleys, four galleasses and other vessels up to the number of 300.

On the 8th of June, 1470, the Sultan's fleet arrived suddenly, | without any opposition, at a place called "Trocco" near the mouth of the harbor known as the straits of St. Mark, about a mile from the city. In that same hour, a force of 200 persons, including some on horseback, came forth from the city and killed a few Turks. They brought back 12 heads to the city,

while only one of the Christians | was killed, who had wanted 10
to stay after the others in order to despoil one of the dead
Turks. On the 13th of June, the Turks made a bridge of galleys
and longboats across the above-mentioned bay, that is, the
straits of St. Mark.

When the bridge was complete, on the 15th, the Sultan
arrived with a great army of foot and horse, and many camels
laden with the provisions | needed for such a force. The Sultan 15
crossed the bridge with part of his army, and distributed his
forces on an island and in various places about the city, and
put it under close siege.

As soon as the artillery was unloaded, on the 17th, there
was a great barrage, but with many deaths among the gun
crews | who were firing, caused by the firing of our own 20
artillery during the day. Some of the guns were fired by night,
and some moved to other places where they could do greater
harm. First of all, in the name of the Sultan himself, there was
placed a battery consisting of a huge cannon and 3 mortars
which were extremely large, such that the shot which | issued 25
from them was 12 span in circumference. From these they
also shot incendiary bombs which threw the populace into
great terror, by reason of the uproar they caused. Many people
were unable to go in safety to their houses, but crowded in
against the walls of the city, since the firing for the most part
hit | the center of the city. Another four cannon were aimed 30
against a Redoubt called “the Narrows,” and these scoured the
wall face from the Bourkos up to the Temple.||

Five other pieces were placed in the region of Santa *f^o2r*
Chiara, and these answered to the Temple Redoubt and on
down to the mills at the drawbridge which led to the Castello.
Three others, placed on the mainland, which also answered to
the Temple | and on down to the Castello, and fired against 5
a part of the Castello as well. On the other side of the Castello,
near the harbor, were placed (three) more pieces, which an-

swered to the Arsenal and that flank of the Castello, and ranged
 down to the fish-market on the borders of the Giudecca. All
 these 11 pieces were placed in the name | of Murad Paşa, who 10
 was commander of all the Sultan's armed forces in Romania.

Next there were another eight large pieces, such that the
 shot which issued from them was 10 span in circumference,
 and these were placed on a point near the mouth of the
 harbor, where they answered to the Bourkos | Redoubt, which 15
 occupied the entire Giudecca, and these eight pieces were
 placed in the name of Mahmud Paşa, admiral of the Turkish
 fleet. Thus, the artillery surrounded the entire city, so the walls
 could not stand up against it, and were reduced in many places
 to ruins. The same was true of the | Bourkos Redoubt out at the 20
 limits of the Giudecca. Because there was so much artillery,
 and because the firing was so continuous, it was impossible to
 make lasting repairs, since so many of our men were killed
 by the gunfire which scoured the city both frontally and from
 the flanks. Our people could not avoid it, but died inevitably.
 Everywhere | the pagans pressed inward with mortars, siege- 25
 carbines and archery, and moved closer in to the ruined areas
 with ladders and siege cover, so as to be ready for an assault.
 On the night of Thursday, the 29th of June, about two hours
 before dawn, there was a great noise of snare and kettledrums,
 and many other instruments || such as are used in pagan lands. *f^o2v*
 With a great outcry, they ran shouting against the city in several
 bands, and a general battle began, which lasted from the said
 hour to the 14th hour of the day. The Christians defended
 themselves in good order, and | large numbers of Turks were 5
 killed and wounded, along with many Christians. Finally the
 Turks were repulsed. When the Sultan saw how many of his
 people were dead, he called off the assault, but the artillery
 continued firing and doing great damage to the Christians.

At this time the Bailo for Negropont was Messer Pollo Erizzo, the commander was | Messer Alvisé Calbo and the treasurer was Messer Andrea Zane. Mess. Zan Buondimieri was also there. He had been commander previously, and had been relieved a short while before the siege by the aforesaid Mess. Alvisé, but he was unable to leave. In addition Mess. Bertucci Barbaro was there, who had come as the appointed commander in his turn, and he too was only at Negropont in order to | return from there to Venice, nevertheless he could not leave. There were also other gentlemen who came from Venice, and some who were natives, in the said city of Negropont.

Tomaso Schiavo, captain of a force of 400 infantry, was a traitor as is related below. The place was well peopled with wealthy men | and great merchants, and was fully stocked with foodstuffs of every sort, such as bread, wine, meat, fish and game, so that it was in its greatest splendor and prosperity. Now you shall hear of the treachery of the afore-mentioned Tomaso Schiavo, captain of infantry.

Tomaso Schiavo was an able fellow personally, but no man for an | undertaking like that of Negropont, and since he had some relations on the Turkish side, when he found himself besieged by so great a force as the Turks had, he had misgivings, and decided secretly to send a messenger to the Sultan so that he might save himself and his family from death. His messenger was one of his Lieutenants, named Luca di Curzolla, | who had a brother named Francesco, whose leg had been broken by a lead ball. This lieutenant departed || with one of his household named Francesco da Ragusa.

The Bailo and the commander were advised of the flight of the afore-mentioned Luca with his companion, so they ordered that his brother Francesco be arrested and put to the torture. Francesco had not expected this, | and being only a youth, he confessed the entire treason, and above all he said it was true that Tomaso Schiavo had sent his brother to the Sultan to tell him that he should make another assault at night on

Thursday, and that Tomaso would find a way to let him into the city and that he offered up himself and his household| as willing subjects. 10

The government, having made note of what the aforementioned Francesco had said, put him to death in secret, and made no further move on that day nor on the next following, so as not to arouse the suspicions of Tomaso, for they were afraid that having the support of his company he might cause some trouble. | Then, on the morning of the third day, the Bailo, 15 the commander, all the gentlemen from Venice and certain of the local citizenry assembled in the loggia, and all together planned to kill Tomaso. They gave orders secretly to twelve strong men who hid in the Chancellery, which was next to the | aforesaid loggia, and after this they ordered Tomaso to 20 be sent for, saying that they wanted to consult with him there about certain matters concerning the welfare of the city. He arrived along with about forty of his following, their weapons charged, in full body armor with swords girt, although it was illegal to appear there in that manner with such a following.| But because the occasion was unusual, they had expected that 25 he would come prepared, being wary in the knowledge of his own fault. When Tomaso Schiavo came into the loggia, all those present rose to their feet, feigning by their cheerful aspect to do him honor and to consult with him and, with their friendly bearing, | pretending that they were unaware of 30 his dealings with the Turks. The Bailo, among others, said, *f^o3v* “Captain, be assured that I hope to see you made commander of marines in the Fleet of St. Mark,” and thus they continued in various conversations for about two hours until at last, when it seemed to the Bailo that Tomaso had | discarded his 5 suspicions, he turned to the men-at-arms who had come along with Tomaso and said, “Good men, take a turn about the city and see how well the posts are manned, so that we do not take any losses.” On his part, Tomaso said, “Go, and then return.| I shall await you here.” 10

When Tomaso's following had left, the Bailo took the said Tomaso by the hand, pretending that he wished to speak with him secretly. He made him sit down first, but then he led him toward the Chancellery, in which were the 12 men earlier mentioned. He got him around with his back turned, and the 12 men came out quietly and laid hands | on Tomaso Schiavo 15 from behind, and on two of his household who had remained with him. They were taken quickly up over the loggia, where criminals were put to the torture, and by the command of all those present, they were at once struck down, and hung up by| the foot in the middle of the city square. Immediately there- 20 after, the Bailo mounted his horse and went about announced by the sounding of a trumpet to comfort the people. The townsfolk broke into an uproar, claiming that there were many troops involved in the affair of Tomaso, and demanded at all costs that they should be taken and put to death. | The 25 governing council, to avoid a riot, had some forty of them brought to prison. Among these, there was one named Pollo da Trani, a lieutenant, and another named Piero dalla Simia, and a third was Andrea Albanese the monk; all these had the reputation of worthy men, and there were many others as well, quite enough indeed for a city making a desperate defence.||

The governing council then called a constable named Fiorio di Nardo, and turned over to him the meagre remnants of Tomaso's company, making him all sorts of offers and promises. But the Turks pressed on in every way with all their resource and strength to bring | destruction on the city. A 5 week after that previous Thursday, another general battle was begun, cruel and hard-fought, in which many good men were killed but in the end the Christians were victorious and broke the Turkish assault. Because of the above-mentioned affair of Tomaso Schiavo, however, the local townsfolk and the detachments from Candia | hated the mercenaries, ascribing to them 10 the treachery of Tomaso and also that of Fiorio di Nardo. For he, seeing that the affairs of the city were desperate, and that himself and his company were in bad odor with the townsfolk,

made a pretence one night of going out to repair an area where the artillery had brought down the walls, and on that occasion, the good Fiorio escaped to the Turkish side. The townspeople and the | Candiots, seeing that four of the mercenaries had fled—the first was a certain Zorzi Bellafante, of whom no particular notice had been taken, since he was a sorry wretch anyway, the second was Luca da Curzolla, along with one of his household, and the fourth was Fiorio di Nardo—seeing this the afore-mentioned townspeople and Candiots gathered together in opposition to many of the other mercenaries,| and since these townsfolk and Candiots were the strongest party, the governing council could not refuse them, and rather against their will they sent several more mercenaries to prison. Moreover, wherever the two parties encountered one another throughout the city, they fell to fighting, wounding and killing each other as deadly enemies, | which was all a great injury to us, and a loss of manpower, by reason of the said blunders.

The afore-mentioned council and the other gentlemen were very distressed, being unable to remedy this damage, but they hoped to receive some assistance from Mess. Nicolò da Canal, Admiral of the Fleet of St. Mark, | as he had promised them by messenger. The Sultan, uneasy about this matter, had a number of *fustas* dragged across the island, with which he had a second bridge built across the [narrows] near Santa Chiara, that is to say, above the city, and about a mile distant from it. As a result of this we could get no news of our fleet from either direction. As they waited thus, uncertain | about what might happen, they were nonetheless kept informed by certain Albanians who knew how to deal with the Turks, and who were sent by the governing council with letters to the aforesaid Mess. Nicolò da Canal, from whom they hoped for resolution with regard to the siege. He sent our messengers back with letters offering great comfort and hope of immediate | relief, but the enemy artillery was meanwhile causing great damage throughout the city, and not a day passed but many Christians were killed and wounded by it. On Tuesday, the 10th of July

of the afore-mentioned year, the said Mess. Nicolò da Canal
arrived with the fleet, which he held off at a distance | of about 15
a mile and a half from the above-mentioned bridge.

The Sultan, seeing the Christian fleet, was very uneasy,
and wanted to break camp and depart, but Mahmud Paşa,
commander of the Turkish fleet advised him not to go, and
undertook to make every effort to deliver Negropont up to
him. Then the Sultan joined him on | horseback and, all that 20
day, they went through the camp from tent to tent, reassuring
his warriors that they should not be willing to suffer such
shame as would come from the abandonment of so great an
undertaking and that this was, moreover, against his will. He
wanted only the walls of the city, whereas the plunder, the
gold, the silver and the slaves would go to whoever took them.|
Thus the order was given that on the next day, the 11th of the 25
said month, on Wednesday, all should be ready to move back,
on the ensuing night, into the siege shelters, which is to say,
right under the walls of the city, in order to make the third
assault. Consequently, each man declared himself ready to do
all that was assigned to him and to give | complete obedience.|| 30

Very few remained in the city, since the majority of the *f^o5r*
able-bodied men had been killed or wounded in the first two
assaults. We were therefore fearful of what might happen,
since we were obviously not enough to defend so large an
area, and even less one so ruined for, on the | city side, there 5
were no safe places because of the great damage that the enemy
artillery had done. Nonetheless, we hoped for relief from our
fleet, and signals were made to indicate our weakness, so that
aid might arrive before the beginning of the Turkish assault.
Torches were lit and then extinguished; the standard of St.
Mark was | displayed to them and then thrown down. Since 10
the fleet did not move on these signals, in the end a great
crucifix, the size of a man, was constructed and carried along
the side of the city facing toward our fleet, so the commanders

of the fleet might be moved to have some pity on us in ways
that they could well | imagine for themselves. 15

Mess. Nicolò da Canal and the others in the fleet were quite well able to understand that such signals indicated that the city was in direst extremities and in danger of being lost and there was no reason for their being unable to bring us help. They had a favorable wind, and valorous| and willing men, some of whom had wives, children and other 20 relatives in the city of Negropont. These pleaded with the aforesaid commanders that they might be granted a single large ship, saying that they had spirit enough to break the bridge and save the city, and that there were indeed many such in complete readiness, who were entirely sufficient, with| such a wind, to break something much stronger than that 25 bridge. One of these was granted to them, and raised sail, but as she was on her way, she was commanded by gunshot signals to drop sail, and so laid to, wasting time.

As the news went through the city of the fleet's lack of ardor, our spirits | sank, and were left with almost no hope 30 of salvation, || for the Turks could be seen coming closer to the ruined parts of the city with all their persistence and resource, so that a demonstration by our fleet was yet more urgently longed for. The Turks too understood that it would be an easy matter to bring aid to the city, and for this reason they were not willing to | put off the assault until the night of Thursday, on 5 the eve of Friday, as was their normal custom in giving battle.

Wednesday night, about four hours before the dawn of Thursday morning, which was the 12th of July of the aforesaid year, the Turks assaulted the city and began a battle even more cruel than the two previous, | that lasted until the 5th 10 hour of the day. First a great rabble was thrown against the city, so many that even if they had made no resistance, the Christians would have been exhausted before they had killed half of them. During this action, a part of the Turkish fleet came into the harbor, and sailed in against the city giving | battle, so 15 that the city was surrounded on every side by hard and cruel

assailants. Thus, the Christians were for the most part killed and wounded, while the Turks were so numerous that however many were killed, yet more of them arrived, and since the battle was so continuous and hard-pressed, the Christians could not stand, what with their losses of killed and wounded, and their exhaustion, and so they were | broken in the region to- 20
 wards the Bourkos, so that the Turks stormed into the city in a furious assault, such that the very air seemed to be shattered, so great was the outcry on all sides. The Christians called for assistance and the Turks, roaring, carried them backward, making no distinction of young or old, men or women—all were| 25
 killed. Babies were torn from their mothers' arms, and thrown against the walls, and their mothers were slaughtered. There was most terrible cruelty and great ferocity such as is the custom in pagan lands. So they ran through the streets, bringing cruel death on whomever they met in their fury, until they had| 30
 conquered the entire city save the Castello. Then they began entering the houses and taking prisoners. They bound husbands and || wives, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters all *f^o6r*
 together by the neck with their hands tied behind them. Then they loaded up the best booty that they chanced to find, and piled it up in the midst of the prisoners, old and young, who were bound by the neck. Others | hunted people down from 5
 behind as if they were wild beasts. Great numbers of dead bodies were seen scattered through the city, especially where they had run into strong resistance from our Christian forces. The blood was so abundant that it seemed to flow from running springs, and there were places choked with dead bodies where one could not pass, for | they were piled one on another in 10
 hillocks. Some of the Christian forces tried to escape from the slaughter into the Castello, and so loaded down the drawbridge that the chains which held it broke, and the larger part of them plunged into the sea, where some drowned and others were taken prisoner by | the Turks. Later, about noon, the Castello 15
 surrendered on terms, which were not observed, and it was the same for those within, and for their affairs, as it was for the

others taken throughout the city. In this way the unhappy city of Negropont was taken and sacked.

In this disaster were killed or taken many fine and noble men. First there was Mess. Pollo Erizzo, Bailo of the city, who was killed in the first onslaught, that is, at the defence of the Bourkos. Then Mess. Alvisè Calbo, commander of the said city, who was killed in the church of St. Mark near the main square, since he was the warder of the square. Mess. Andrea Zane, the treasurer, was killed in the church of St. Bastiano; Mess. Zan Buondimiero, commander at the Temple Redoubt, was wounded there and taken prisoner by the Turks; Mess. Bertucci Barbaro was killed in his house, and his wife and household taken prisoner, and many other gentlemen, townfolk and merchants died, among whom | was a brother of mine, Francesco, who was killed at the Bourkos.||