A FORGOTTEN SIEGE: MIKLÓS ZRÍNYI'S 1557 ATTACK ON ČAZMA[1]

ZABORAVLJENA OPSADA: NAPAD NIKOLE ZRINSKOG NA ČAZMU 1557[1]

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RÉSUMÉ

Hungarian historiography did indeed forget the events of the unsuccessful siege of Čazma, though the campaign was planned and prepared for months. The unsuccess of the Christian army was caused that the Christian soldiers didn't have got suitable artillery, enough ammunition and food. Moreover Péter Erdődy, Miklós Zrínyi and Hans von Lenković lacked the sufficient numbers in infantry.

Key words: Čazma, Miklós Zrínyi, Péter Erdődy, Hans Lenković, Kostajnica, Ákos Csányi
Ključne riječi: Čazma, Miklós Zrínyi, Péter Erdődy, Hans Lenković, Kostajnica, Ákos Csányi

When discussing the events of 1557, Miklós Istvánnfy's historiography mentions that after twelve years of service, Miklós Zrínyi resigned from his office as the Croatian-Slavonian ban. The »Livy of Hungary« then provides details on how the Bosnian bey Ali captured Kostajnica when the captain abandoned the stronghold to attend a wedding. He also mentions that king Ferdinand appointed Péter Erdődy as ban, then relates that Ali bey challenged Zrínyi to a duel, and that Hans Lenković, the *Obrist* of the Slavonian-Croatian borderland armies triumphed over Turkish raiders in Bosnia.[2] József Bánlaky (Breit) also based his compilation of military history on Istvánffy's work.[3] Beside the fact that Zrínyi served as ban for fourteen years, from 1542 to 1556 December,[4] the »Livy of Hungary« was mistaken in other matters as well. King Ferdinand's letter to his envoys in Istanbul (Antal Verancsis, Ferenc Zay and Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq), dated August 15 1556, informs that Kostajnica and Novi were captured by the Bosnian Turks.[5] This suggests that the events must have taken place in the course of the July of 1556. Joseph von Hammer, a key figure of Austrian Orientalism used Ferdinand's letter as source in his work on the Ottoman Empire: he dated the Ottoman attack to July of 1556 as well. However, it must be noted that he writes about the capture of Krupa, not of Novi,[6] though Krupa was in Christian control even in 1557. On April 23, 1557, Zrínyi wrote to Ferenc Batthány from Čakovec that his men scattered a group of Turkish raiders near Krupa.[7] Hammer also mentions Lenković's victory and Zrínyi being challenged to duel by Ali bey, without providing even an approximate date for the events,

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2 Istvánffy 2003. 268-270.

3 *Bánlaky* 1940. 428-429.

4 *Salamon* 1865. 415.; *Varga* 2016. 135., 155.

5 *Miller* 1808. 155.

6 *Hammer* 1828. 358-359.

7 *Barabás* 1898. 457.

though.[8] Ferenc Salamon and more recently Szabolcs Varga both relate the losing of Kostajnica and Novi, but they omit Lenković fighting the Turks.[9] Thus it is difficult to reconstruct the 1556-1557 events at the Slavonian-Croatian borderlands, not to mention Zrínyi's role in these. Losing the two castles to the Turks probably happened in 1556, while the duel challenge and the skirmish must have taken place in 1557.

As to the period between Zrínyi's resignation as Croatian-Slavonian ban and his assignment to captain the castle at Szigetvár, Salamon relates the following in his work 'Az első Zrínyiek' (The first Zrínyis): »During the time of the relative cease-fire, no newer military deeds are recorded about Zrínyi, though the Turkish raids kept coming from time to time. From 1557 on, there are no major facts known about his life and work for about four years.«[10] However, material in various archives do inform that Zrínyi was not left without skirmishes in 1557 either, as he participated in the siege of *Čazma*. *This strategically important stronghold had been captured by the Ottoman*s in August 1552.[11] On October 13 of the same year, Zrínyi asked help from the king to retake Čazma.[12] The Ottoman troops based in the castle kept raiding the Christian-held Slavonian territories. On August 25, 1556, Zrínyi wrote to the palatine, Tamás Nádasdy, that Turks from Čazma attacked the lightly fortified town of Gradec and took sixty people with them, while losing 35 men.[13]

It is no wonder that Erdődy, Zrínyi, and the *Obrist* of the Slavonian-Croatian district troops all considered the recapture of the castle essential, in order to secure the surrounding territories. The siege was preceded by serious preparations and planning, as inferred from Lenković's letter to the emperor (dated July 13, 1557) in which he stated that since Erdődy assumed the office of ban, they should require two *Singerin*[14] wallbreaker cannons from the emperor and the Styrian nobles, along with suitable munition and war equipment. With these and Zrínyi's cannons combined, they would capture *Čazma, which kept threatening the whole* district on an everyday basis.[15]

Erdődy, Zrínyi and Lenković met in Csáktornya on July 5 and discussed that the campaign should begin as soon as possible.[16] Lenković's report even informs about the numbers and constitution of the Christian army. According to this, the ban brought 600 light cavalry (*geringe Pferd*) and 400 haramia troops[17], while Zrínyi led 400 light cavalrymen and 200 haramias into battle.[18] Zrínyi was the royal master of the treasury, able to raise this army by summoning his soldiers from his castles in the southern Dunántúl. Thus he demanded that Bálint Magyar should lead the palatine army to Csurgó, to protect the cattle and provisions. Ákos Csányi, the high prefect of the Nádasdy-Kanizsai estates even advised the palatine lieutenant to guard at Kanizsa with the troops, his opinion being that this castle faced greater danger.[19]

In addition to Erdődy's and Zrínyi's troops, Lenković also planned to join the battle with a massive force. According to the list attached to his July 13 report, his intention was to bring a nearly 380-strong heavy cavalry (*geräuste Pferd*) to the siege, along with 900 light cavalry and 800 haramias from the

8 *Hammer* 1828. 359.

9 *Salamon* 1865. 414-415.; *Varga* 2016. 155.

10 *Salamon* 1865. 430.

11 *Barabás* 1898. 169-172.

12 *Barabás* 1898. 186-187.

13 *Barabás* 1898. 405-406.

14 The Singerin cannon was also known as a half- (or 24-pound) *kartány* cannon. *Iványi* 1927. 7–9.; *Domokos* 2003. 31–32.

15 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA) Kriegsarchiv (KA) Alte Feldakten (AFA) 1557-7-4.

16 The discussion is also mentioned by Péter Erdődy in his letter to Kristóf Batthányi, also mentioning that the king's army was already at Csáktornya. Péter Erdődy's letter to Kristóf Batthyány, Csáktornya July 5, 1557. Hungarian National Archives, Document Archive (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Oklevéltár, MNL OL) P1314 Batthyány. In: Missiles. Numerus (Nr.) 11716.

17 As to the origins of the word haramia, see: *Kakuk* 1973. 174.

18 ÖStA KA AFA 1557-7-4.

19 Őze 1996. 322.

Slavonian district. From the Croatian and Krajnian borders, 300 additional light cavalry and the same number of uskoks[20] were supposed to join them.[21]

Lenković's catalog suggests that they also expected the rebelled horsemen and infantry of the Slavonian provinces, but exact numbers were unknown to the *Obrist* at the time of writing his letter. The ban informed that the numbers of these would total around 1500, so Lenković assumed that altogether 5780 mounted and infantry troops would march to besiege *Čazma*.[22]

Beside this force, the ban hoped to receive additional armies from the Austrian lands. The ban asked for a thousand German shots from the Styrian nobles but they refused, their reason being that the great military and financial expenditures of the recent years had pushed the subjects to the verge of revolt. Therefore their armies had not been mustered recently. As to the nobility in Krajna and Carinthia, the high cost of one thousand arquebusiers would have necessitated demanding them in advance, thus they were too late and had to give up on this infantry force.[23]

The ban, the master of the treasury, and the *Obrist* also began to organize the provisioning of the army. Southern Dunántúl territories played a great role in this, especially the Nádasdy-Kanizsay province, as it is inferred from Magyar's letter to Csányi, sent from Kanizsa on July 17.[24]

Despite the long preparations, the campaign did not start smoothly. According to the July 13 report, the two wall-breaker cannons had not arrived yet, and the Christian army lacked transportation vehicles and other equipment, which made Lenković consider cancelling the campaign. However, on July 13 the *Obrist* set off from Varasd with his men and artillery. They crossed the mountain and made camp between Rakovec and Vrbovec, some two miles from *Čazma*. *Here they were joined by Zrínyi's and Erdődy's infantry, cavalry*, and artillery troops.[25] Ákos Csányi, high prefect of the Nádasdy-Kanizsay estates wrote to the ban on July 14 that Zrínyi had marched with all his men to the castle, already under siege by the ban.[26] Though the army was less than what they had expected, they managed to organize its provisions for a while, as Magyar informed Csányi on July 17: »In addition, we can inform you lordship what is also public news that fifty wagons of provisions were sent toward Čazma.«[27]

In his July 17 letter he also claimed that »our men are said to win the castle as it is common word that last evening they had taken the castle, however, I cannot write with any certainty as I'm certain that mylord Zrínyi would have sent word if it were true.«[28] Though the high prefect could not know whether the siege was completed successfully, the next day (July 18) he informed the palatine accordingly.[29] However, Csányi wrote to Nádasdy from Kanizsa on July 19 that Čazma's fate was still uncertain.[30] The following day he could only relate that he possessed no credible information as to the state of the siege.[31] Csányi decided to send two counts (*ispán*s) from Kanizsa county; he informs about this in another letter dated July 20.[32] From Jakab Zele's letter to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári on July 22,

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20 About the uskoks, see: *Grünfelder* 1973.; *Bracewell* 1992.; *Pálffy* 2000. 179-180.; Šmitran 2008.

21 ÖStA KA AFA 1557-7-4.

22 ÖStA KA AFA 1557-7-4.; ÖStA KA Hofkriegsrat (HKR) Protokollum (Pr.) 139. Expedit Folio (Fol.) 60r. Nr. 106.

23 ÖStA KA AFA 1557-7-4.

24 Bálint Magyar's letter to Ákos Csányi, Kanizsa July 17 1557. Hungarian National Archives, Document Archive (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Oklevéltár, MNL OL), Archives of the Hungarian Treasury (Magyar Kamara Archivuma, MKA) E 185 archive of the Nádasdy family, box 18, No. 10.

25 ÖStA KA AFA 1557-7-4.

26 Őze 1996. 322.

27 Bálint Magyar's letter to Ákos Csányi, Kanizsa July 17 1557. MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives. box 18. Nr. 10.

28 Bálint Magyar's letter to Ákos Csányi, Kanizsa July 17 1557. MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives. box 18. Nr. 10.

29 Őze 1996. 324.

30 Őze 1996. 326.

31 Őze 1996. 329.

32 Őze 1996. 329.

we know that »I sent ispán Tamás and ispán Máté this last Monday [July 19] from here, Monári, to march to *Čazma*.«[33]

In reality, however, the siege of the strategically important castle was not going well at all. Probably due to the lack of siege cannons, they were unable to break an opening in the walls where a charge attempt could be made. As a result, the July 17 assault failed. Being informed by one of Zrínyi's servants, ispán *Máté related as follows: »this past Saturday they besieged Čazma and more than two hundred men were lost at the walls*.«[34] Zele's July 23 letter adds the accounts of ispán Tamás as well. The latter mentions significant losses, too, though »unable to say exact names from Miklós Bradacs and Haramia Gyurko's men, but he says he saw countless wounded.«[35]

The two ispáns sent to Čazma by Zele met only retreating troops. Zele's July 22 letter informs that »At this hour, as ispán Máté says, they had crossed the mountain and passed Remetics [Rakovec], they found a major servart of mylord Zrínyi who carried letters to Csáktornya, this spoke with certainty to the ispáns Máté and Tamás that the army had retreated from under *Čazma* by two miles on last Tuesday and was about to be disbanded.«[36] This indicates that the siege was abandoned on July 20. It must be added that while ispán Máté got his information from Zrínyi's servant called Markó, ispán Tamás also talked with Zrínyi, the future hero of Szigetvár himself. A July 23 letter from Zele reads the following: »this hour ispán Tamás arrived here at Monári saying that he crossed the Dráva at Varasd yesterday, together with mylord Zrínyi, also surely claiming that the army was disbanded.[37] Moreover, he was also aware of where the rest of the army was marching. According to his report, »mylord [Mihály] Kerecsényi rode with mylord Erdődy toward Rakonak [Rakovec].«[38]

Zele's two letters even suggest why the Christian army had to abandon the siege. According to his report, ispán Máté wrote to C*sányi on July 22 that »some news arrived as to the Turks would move to aid Čazma and lift the siege, and this was the reason why the*y quitted storming Čazma.[39] Ispán Máté related that »the Turkish army was six miles away from Čazma, coming to defend Čazma.«[40] As early as July 14, Csányi sent word to the palatine informing that »if the Lord God might not blind pasa Kázon in Buda, otherwise attempt on Čazma's capture would cost us dearly, even if you are able to hold Čazma for a while, the Turks will come to the rescue. The Good Lord may give you such luck in taking Čazma.«[41] The high prefect's worries were quite justified. Beglerbey Kasim[42], appointed on January 5, 1557 to lead the Mohács and Görösgál *liva*s gathered his troops near Szentlőrinc[43], as reported by Zele to CSányi on July 11.[44] Nobles in southern Dunántúl were informed on July 18 about the pasha entering Slavonia. Farkas Perneszy wrote from Szenyér to Bálint Magyar on July 19: »his men came this past

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33 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 22, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 5.

34 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 22, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 5.

35 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 23, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 6.

36 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 22, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 5.

37 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 23, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 6.

38 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 23, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 6.

39 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 22, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 5.

40 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 23, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 6.

41 Őze 1996. 322.

42 *Dávid* 2012. 103-104.

43 A settlement between Pécs and Szigetvár.

44 *Szalay* 1861. 250.

evening from Pécs, telling that the pasha moved to the Slavonian lands to bring aid.«[45] It seems that Kasim also made sure that the Christian armies in the south Dunántúl would be unable aid Čazma's siege. On July 19, Pétere Orosztonyi reported to Bálint Magyar in Szenyér that »Szöcsény was captured by the Turks, without taking many prisoners but seizing all the cattle. We encountered them and they withdrew. Therefore your lordship be careful, if they arrive with force, they will pillage much either at the Balaton or in the Zalaság.[46] Perneszy's letter to Magyar, sent on July 19 from Szenyér, also mentions the Turks of Kaposvár plundering Szőcsény.[47] In Szigliget, Bálint Magyar wrote the following to Csányi on Jul 23: »Such evil fortune I suffered while I was away to Kanizsa, my horsemen were on the road with all my mounts. Hiding at Somodor, some peasant spotted them and the bey of Koppány went at them with a four-hundred-strong cavalry. They had twenty-two horses. No more than nine was (…), but fled into the woods on foot. Seek them out in the woods. So I had scribe (deák) Kristóf sent to you, as your lordship ordered me with summons. To this effect I ask your lordship, if it can be otherwise, I would not go gladly but would cross instead to them; for both horses and footmen were so terrified that I can't see any good coming of this if I can't join them. But if it there is no other way, I can not do but carry out mylord's order even if all my people be lost for it. (…) if I am indeed summoned, send word to me about is.«[48]

Naturally, Zele, Csányi, and the palatine were interested in pasa Kasim's long-term intentions as well. Ispán Tamás possessed no reliable information in the matter, as related by Zele in his July 23 letter: »I kept asking around about the Turkish forces, where they got, what their destinations and intentions could be, or if they were to withdraw, but he could not tell anything with certainty. […] Additionally, there is the stronghold Belaztina [Bela], called Fejérkű in Hungarian, he says that the Turkish troops were two miles close to it, but he couldn't tell which beys and pashas were present in the army.«[49]

Beside the advancement of Ottoman rescue troops, ispán Tamás reported further complications: »He also said that the king's army were running out of provisions and cannonballs as well.«[50]

The Court Military Council was informed by Lenković about the failure and the withdrawal of the Christian army, to which the council replied on July 30. However, this document is not extant and the content of their answer is unknown.[51]

Hungarian historiography did indeed forget the events and circumstances of the unsuccessful siege of Čazma, though the campaign was planned and prepared for months. Only Sándor Őze mentions it in a footnote to his edition of Csányi's letters sent to the palatine. However, he believed Zrínyi to be successful and thus Čazma returning to Christian control.[52] What caused the failure of the siege? The Christian army lacked the sufficient numbers in infantry, suitable artillery, enough ammunition and food. Finally, it also must be noted that the 1557 campaign against Čazma is an unremembered episode in a war fought continuously from 1541 to 1568, where fighting was sometimes done by the main armies, but mostly by local troops.

45 *Komáromy* 1911. 559.

46 Letter from Péter Orosztony to Bálint Magyar, sent from Szenyér, July 19 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 26, Nr 1.

47 *Komáromy* 1911. 559.

48 Letter from Bálint Magyar to Ákos Csányi, sent from Szigliegt July 23, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 18, Nr 44.

49 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi, sent from Molnári, July 23, 1557; MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 6.

50 Letter from Jakab Zele to Ákos Csányi from Molnári, July 23 1557MNL OL MKA E 185 Nádasdy family archives, box 38.. Nr. 6.

51 ÖStA KA HKR Pr. 140. Registratur Fol. 54r. Nr. 766.

52 Őze 1996. 322.

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SAŽETAK

Mađarska je historiografija zaboravila događaje vezane uz neuspjelu opsadu Čazme, iako je pohod planiran i pripreman mjesecima. Neuspjeh kršćanske vojske uzrokovan je time što kršćanski vojnici nisu imali odgovarajuću artiljeriju, municiju, niti dovoljno hrane. Osim navedenog, Petar Erdődy, Nikola Zrinski i Hans Lenković nisu imali dovoljan broj vojnika u pješadiji.