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The Siege of the Town and Castle of Trenčín by Army of John Katzianer in 1528

Miroslav Kotrha*

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After the Battle of Mohács in August 1526, where the Ottoman army decisively defeated the Hungarian army, Hungarian Kingdom entered a long period of continuous fighting that persisted across the following centuries. Amid these events, the struggle for the royal crown between Ferdinand I of Habsburg and John Zápoľský (Zápolya) also took place. The conflict resulted in many casualties, but it also brought power to new nobles, such as John Katzianer, the commander of the Habsburg forces. Katzianer's name became deeply etched in the history of the town of Trenčín, which was significantly impacted by the battle between Ferdinand and John Zápoľský. Katzianer's army looted the town, and it took a long time for its inhabitants to recover. The town came under the control of King Ferdinand; the residents continued to remember this commander with much disdain and his name came to symbolize a bad person among the people of Trenčín.

Keywords: John Katzianer; town and castle of Trenčín; John Zápoľský; siege; terms of capitulation; war for the Hungarian throne.

Introduction

The struggle for the Hungarian throne between John Zápoľský (Zápolya) and Ferdinand of Habsburg undoubtedly had a significant impact on the lives of many towns in today's Slovakia.¹ One such town was Trenčín, which at the end of the Middle Ages was under the control of John Zápoľský. Older literature often mentions the devastation caused during the war by the troops of John Katzianer, but the actual events and the extent of the violence are difficult to imagine today without credible source

* Mgr. Miroslav Kotrha; Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, Trnava University in Trnava, Slovak Republic; miroslav.kotrha@tvu.sk; ORCID: 0009-0006-6353-9195.

1 The political situation after 1526, which emerged in the Kingdom of Hungary as a result of the defeat at Mohács, represents one of the most pivotal moments in Hungarian history. On the battlefield, where the fate of the kingdom was decided, King Louis II Jagiellon met his death while attempting to escape, leaving the country vulnerable to the ravages of the Ottoman army. With the king's death, the struggle for the royal crown ignited. King Louis II died without leaving a male heir, but there was no shortage of claimants to the throne. Based on the contracts from 1515 – when Ferdinand I became engaged to Anna Jagiellon and Louis II to Mary of Habsburg, the brother-in-law of the late King Louis II – the future King Ferdinand I began to claim the Hungarian crown. Negotiations regarding the marriage took place in Bratislava (FRIMMOVÁ, *Preláti v Bratislave v roku 1515*, 295–296). The wedding took place in July of the same year in Vienna. The agreement stipulated that if one of the families died with no male heir, the other would inherit its claim to the throne. However, the agreement directly conflicted with the rights of the Hungarian nobility, which, in such a case, claimed the right to elect a new king. It is also important to note that at that time, the most powerful Hungarian magnate, John Zápoľský, had already submitted a proposal to King Vladislaus II in 1505, according to which, if the last male heir dies a new Hungarian king would be elected exclusively from the ranks of the Hungarian nobility. The king ultimately agreed to and accepted this proposal, which worked into favour of John Zápoľský. It was John Zápoľský who became the most serious candidate for the Hungarian throne among the Hungarian aristocracy (BOTLIK, 1526. OKTÓBER 19, 669).

material.² To this day, this topic has received only limited attention. The occupation of Trenčín, a strategically important stronghold of John Zápoľský and also the seat of the Zápoľský's family, was of great importance to Ferdinand of Habsburg. During the siege, the capture of Trenčín Castle as a fortified base was paramount, as it would open the way for Habsburg forces into the Upper Váh Region. Thus, the castle represented the most crucial point for seizing control of the area, unlike the town itself, which likely remained on the periphery of interest. The town had stone fortifications dating back to the fifteenth century which were connected to the castle walls.³ A possible attack on these town walls can also be inferred from later documents mentioning repairs to the town's fortifications.

To understand the situation that prevailed in the town of Trenčín during the siege, we must largely rely on documents related to the castle, among which a significant document detailing the terms of capitulation has been preserved. Based on the analysis of this document, we can attempt to reflect on the course and consequences of the siege of Trenčín, particularly after the castle's surrender, as the town was closely connected to the castle at the time, even though they were two distinct entities. The task of capturing Trenčín was entrusted to John Katzianer, who ultimately succeeded. In addition to the capitulation document, the siege of Trenčín is also mentioned in contemporary works, which to some extent reflect the impact of Katzianer's campaign not only on the burghers of Trenčín but also on residents of other towns through which Habsburg troops marched.⁴

However, these sources must be approached with a degree of caution, especially when they come from supporters of either side. It is clear that both factions, in waging war – which inherently brings suffering and loss of life – resorted to certain acts of violence. The sources remain silent on more detailed accounts of the plundering of the town itself, which might have significantly affected its economic prosperity and demographic development. Nevertheless, the town remained an important economic centre in the region. Although Trenčín became a free royal city only later, the monarch undoubtedly had an interest in its prosperity, particularly due to its strategic location. This is also evident from later royal privileges granted to the town just a few months after the siege ended.⁵ The king's privileges for Trenčín date back to the 1530s and 1540s. The town may have required a longer period to recover from the plundering, as even in the 1540s there were still reports concerning difficulties in maintaining the town walls.⁶

The Journey of John Katzianer to the Town of Trenčín

Ferdinand of Habsburg's campaign into Hungarian Kingdom began in July 1527. Initially, Ferdinand's troops encountered little serious resistance, and John Zápoľský was forced to retreat to the eastern part of the Kingdom.⁷ Ferdinand thus gained a significantly stronger position in the struggle for the throne, while John Zápoľský

2 KAROLYI, *Trencsén vár*, 56–57.

3 HORVÁTH, *Trenčín v období novoveku*, 73.

4 This also testifies to the importance attributed to the conquest of Trenčín.

5 Štátny archív v Trenčíne (hereinafter ŠA TN), fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 3.

6 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 14.

7 MRVA, *Slovenské dejiny*, 140.

was increasingly forced to seek support, first from his brother-in-law, Polish King Sigismund I,⁸ and eventually from the Ottoman Empire, for which he earned a wave of criticism.⁹ The situation in the country began to grow complicated. In 1527, Ferdinand confirmed John Katzianer to the position of deputy commander of the army and Katzianer subsequently served Ferdinand bravely in the fight against John Zápoľský, who had fled to the eastern part of the Hungarian Kingdom after Ferdinand's capture of Buda. Katzianer was ordered to advance further and pursue Zápoľský's forces. Zápoľský hastily gathered all available military forces, but they were defeated in the Battle of Tokaj. The army led by Nicholas of Salm achieved such a crushing victory that Zápoľský was forced to retreat beyond the Tisa River. Despite these defeats, Zápoľský was determined not to give up. He managed to assemble another army and headed north towards the city of Košice.¹⁰ Another significant battle took place near the village of Seňa, but even here, Zápoľský was unable to succeed and was forced to flee to safety, seeking refuge with Sigismund I Jagiellon, in Tarnów.¹¹ Meanwhile, Katzianer's advance did not stop. On Ferdinand's orders, he began capturing Zápoľský's properties in the territory of present-day Slovakia.¹² Katzianer's units seized Spiš Castle and Zniev Castle, continuing their march towards the Central Váh Region.¹³

John Katzianer's expedition continued its advance towards Trenčín, which was one of the most significant possessions of John Zápoľský. The loss of this strategic point would have been a significant blow to his side.¹⁴ Katzianer's journey to Trenčín was not easy; his advance was likely slowed by rainy weather. It is important to note, however, that Katzianer was equipped with heavy artillery and cannons. While these proved very useful in battle, they also delayed his progress, and he likely reached Trenčín only in the first half of May 1528.¹⁵ The problem, however, was not just the weather. Katzianer complained to Ferdinand during his departure from Košice to Trenčín that his army was lacking higher-quality artillery, the roads were often barely passable, desertion was becoming an issue among the soldiers – particularly due to unpaid wages, and spreading diseases also posed a significant challenge. All of these factors made it impossible for Katzianer move his forces any more swiftly. It is also worth noting that during the siege of Trenčín Katzianer was not in the best health. As early as the beginning of April 1528, he wrote to Ferdinand requesting to be relieved of his

8 Zápoľský's mother was the notable Polish noblewoman Hedwig of Teschen, and his sister Barbara (who died in 1515, before the events described here took place) married Sigismund I the Old. KUCHARSKÁ, *Ducissa*, 98.

9 The Pope declared an excommunication against John Zápoľský. MRVA, *Slovenské dejiny*, 142.

10 During this period, John Katzianer became the supreme commander of Ferdinand's army in Hungary. BERGMANN, *Medaillen auf berühmte und ausgezeichnete Männer*, 245.

11 MRVA, *Slovenské dejiny*, 140.

12 After the success at the battle of Seňa, Katzianer wrote a letter to Ferdinand informing him of Zápoľský's escape to Poland. However, in his reply, Ferdinand informed Katzianer that he had received information that 5,000 soldiers had joined Zápoľský in Poland, and that he had already paid them. BERGMANN, *Medaillen auf berühmte und ausgezeichnete Männer*, 245–246.

13 BEL, *Trenčianska stolica*, 230. John Katzianer's army did not continue its advance through the Váh region, as there were still many supporters of Zápoľský in this area. Therefore, Katzianer had to approach Trenčín from a different direction, coming from the Kláštor pod Znievom, which could have been more challenging for the heavy artillery.

14 KENYERES, *A Trencséni vár a XVI. században*, 6–7.

15 ISTVANFFY, *Magyarország Története 1490 – 1606*, 175.

command due to illness and asked for the appointment of a new commander to take his place, as he needed to leave for treatment.¹⁶

The Town of Trenčín in the Power Struggle for the Hungarian Throne

An important factor in the struggle for the Hungarian crown is undoubtedly the towns and cities which both contenders for the throne tried to win over to their side. Despite numerous privileges granted by Hungarian kings, Trenčín was unable to obtain the status of a free royal city and, as a result, it remained under the control of various owners throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹⁷ Some sources mention the granting of privileges as a free royal city through a charter dating from 1412. According to this charter, Trenčín was to enjoy the same rights as Székesfehérvár and Buda.¹⁸ However, as noted by Richard Marsina, this charter was a forgery.¹⁹ Thus, during the early modern period,²⁰ the town of Trenčín belonged to the owners of Trenčín Castle.²¹ The castle, along with the town, came into the hands of the Huňady (Hunydi) family. In 1473, King Matthias Corvinus pledged it to the Count of Trenčín county, Franz from Háj, who held it at least until 1476. Around 1476–1477, Franz from Háj died, and the pledge remained in the hands of his wife, Margaret. Subsequently, around 1477, Trenčín Castle and the town became the property of the Zápoľský family²² after Stephen Zápoľský purchased the pledge on the castle from Franz's widow Margita for 6,200 florins.²³ This situation lasted until 1494, when King Vladislaus II Jagiellon issued a donation deed to Stephen Zápoľský and his son John for the castle and town of Trenčín.²⁴ Thus, Trenčín Castle and town became the hereditary property of the

16 BERGMANN, *Medaillen auf berühmte und ausgezeichnete Männer*, 246.

17 ŠPIESZ, *Slobodné kráľovské mestá na Slovensku v rokoch 1680–1780*, 14. By the seventeenth century, Trenčín was legally recognized as a free royal city. The issue of when and how Trenčín was granted the status of a free royal city requires deeper analysis and study in the future.

18 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (hereinafter MNL OL), fund Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény (hereinafter DF), 280 059.

19 Throughout the Middle Ages the town and castle of Trenčín had several owners. During the period of the Arpad Royal Dynasty, Trenčín was an unconditional possession of the Arpad kings, but by the end of the thirteenth century, the town came under the control of Matthias Čák of Trenčín. It is clear that Matthias was interested in the town's prosperity and, as a result, it must have acquired several privileges during this period that contributed to its development. FRANKO, *Vybrané aspekty z hospodárstva Trenčianskej župy začiatkom 14. storočia*, 76.

20 After the issuance of King Vladislaus II's decree, Trenčín was still not listed among the free royal cities. However, as Richard Marsina notes, the conditions for this had already existed at the end of the reign of King Louis I the Great. MARSINA, *Najstaršie dejiny Trenčína*, 69. After the suppression of the Dózsa uprising, the assembly emphasized that there were a total of eight free royal cities. The cities were named, but Trenčín was not mentioned among them. RÁBIK, *Spoločensko-politická situácia v slobodných kráľovských mestách*, 154.

21 After the death of Matthias Čák, Trenčín returned to royal possession. During the second half of the fourteenth century and the entire fifteenth century, it was owned by several prominent nobles, including Palatine Emerich Bebek (FEKETE NAGY, *Trencsén vármegye*, 220), as well as Queen Barbara of Celje and Queen Elisabeth of Luxembourg. Another owner was Ulrich of Celje, to whom Albert of Habsburg had pledged the castle and town. In 1454, King Ladislaus the Posthumous allowed John Huňady to redeem the pledge on Trenčín Castle for 13,000 florins. MNL, fund Diplomatikai Levéltár (hereinafter DL), 14 839; TELEKI, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon. Oklevéltár*. X. 420, no. 205.

22 The exact date is not provided.

23 KUCHARSKÁ, *Ducissa*, 51.

24 "...castrum nostrum Trinchiniensis in comitatu Trinchiniensis habitum, quod aliis per serenissimum principem condam dominum Mathiam regem predecessorem nostrum, bone memorie, eidem titulo inscriptionis in certa et notabili summa pecuniarum fuerat obligatum ac tandem per nos ratificatum et confirmatum

Zápolský family.²⁵ The fortifications of the town and castle of Trenčín underwent reconstructions in the first quarter of sixteenth century, as evidenced by a document from King Vladislaus II from 1510.²⁶ In 1528, Trenčín Castle was one of the most important fortifications in the northwestern region of Hungarian Kingdom.²⁷

John Zápolský also valued the town of Trenčín and sought to support its economic growth. Therefore, in February 1527, at the request of the mayor Blaze Hrubý, George Magolt, scholar Laurence Hulman, and George Kropáč, he confirmed a charter, based on earlier privileges, which exempted the burghers of Trenčín from paying tolls, market fees and various other fees.²⁸ As the King of Hungary, Zápolský also granted the town of Trenčín and its citizens the privilege of using red wax, again upon the request of Hrubý, Magolt, Hulman and Kropáč.²⁹

The significance of Trenčín as a border defence point can be seen shortly after the outbreak of the dispute between John Zápolský and Ferdinand Habsburg. In February 1527, it became the site of negotiations between Stephen Werbőczy and Leonardus III of Harrach. The discussions in Trenčín were intended to establish conditions for securing peace between the two contenders for the Hungarian crown, and the negotiations were also meant to serve as a foundation for future formal talks between Ferdinand and John Zápolský. The first condition was that John Zápolský should marry Ferdinand's sister and widow of Louis II, Mary Habsburg. The second condition involved ceding Lusatia, Moravia, and Silesia to Ferdinand, with John also returning 400,000 florins. The third condition stipulated that if John Zápolský had no descendants or legitimate heirs with Mary, the throne would pass to the Habsburgs. Based on these negotiations, which Werbőczy then presented to his king, John Zápolský, it was agreed that the talks would continue, this time with the presence of both Ferdinand and Zápolský, and the Polish king would act as an arbiter.³⁰ Initially, the events following the negotiations in Trenčín seemed to suggest the possibility of resolving the succession dispute.³¹ It should be emphasized that Trenčín was the most important seat of the Zápolský family. The place for conducting the first negotiations regarding the resolution of succession rights was certainly not chosen by chance, since the entire administration of John Zápolský must have been located there at that time.

After arriving in Olomouc, John Zápolský still believed that Ferdinand might truly renounce the crown. However, when the negotiations began, the terms of the Trenčín

simulcum civitate similiter Trinchiniensis omnibusque villis possessionibus prediis porcionibus et iuribus possessionariis ac pariter cum cunctis suis utilitatibus et pertinentiis quibuslibet, eidem Stephano palatino ac Iohanni filio suo vigore aliarum litterarum nostrarum donacionalium superinde confectarum in perpetuum contulerimus velimusque eosdem in dominium eorundem castri et civitatis..." MNL DL 19 969.

25 After the death of Stephen Zápolský, the estates of Trenčín Castle were managed by his wife, Hedviga of Cieszyn. After her death in 1519, John Zápolský's brother, George, took over the administration, but he died in the Battle of Mohács in 1526. MRVA – SEGEŠ, *Dejiny Uhorska a Slováci*, 143.

26 MNL DF 280 057; KUCHÁRSKA, *Ducissa*, 55.

27 HORVÁTH, *Trenčín v období novoveku (1526 – 1848)*, 73.

28 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C3, fasc. 1.

29 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C3, fasc. 1, no. 3b.

30 From a letter from John Zápolský to the Polish king, we learn that there were supposed to be more negotiations in Trenčín, but Stephen Werbőczy had to hurry to the Hungarian Diet. At the same time, Zápolský was trying to seek advice from the Polish king and convince him to act as an arbiter between him and Ferdinand. GÓRSKI, *Acta tomiciana IX*, 54.

31 The place chosen for the negotiations was Olomouc. ACSÁDY, *Magyarország három részre oszlásának története*, 27.

agreement were not mentioned. On the contrary, Ferdinand demanded the Hungarian crown and the payment of incurred expenses amounting to 300,000 florins, which Zápol'ský could not agree to.³² As is well known, these events did not lead to a peaceful resolution and soon Trenčín once again became a focal point in history.³³ In the first half of May of 1528,³⁴ John Katzianer's military units were approaching Trenčín with the aim of capturing the centre and one of the most important strongholds of John Zápol'ský. Moreover, Trenčín represented a strategic point for controlling the northwestern part of the Hungarian Kingdom.³⁵ The fall of Trenčín would have represented not only a strategic advantage but also the capture of John Zápol'ský's seat, which would undoubtedly have been a significant moral blow.

The Siege of the Castle Trenčín According to Nicholas Istvanffy

The siege of the castle was previously described by Nicholas Istvanffy.³⁶ Based on this description, we know that in May 1528, a sizeable army under Katzianer – consisting of around 3,700 mercenaries (*landsknechts*) recruited from German-speaking countries, along with several hundred cavalry from Hungarian Kingdom – arrived at Trenčín.³⁷ The town and castle were thus surrounded by Ferdinand's army. On the other hand, Trenčín was well-prepared and equipped for the siege. John Zápol'ský deployed around 2,000 soldiers for the defence of the castle, ensuring that the town was well-supplied and capable of withstanding a potential prolonged siege.³⁸ Among the commanders of Katzianer's army were Luis Pekry, Gaspar Šerédi (Serédy), Valentine Turek and Gaspar Cobor (Czobor), significant Hungarian nobles on the side of King Ferdinand. In addition, there was Hungarian Vice-Palatine Emerich Nagy, Leonard the Younger of Vels, Field Marshal John Afalter, Udaltit Laysser, Julius of Hardek, Rupert of Mandersthud and, Lukas Zarkel.³⁹ Against them stood Paul Baračka⁴⁰ and Benedict Kozár, who were tasked by Zápol'ský with securing the castle's defence;⁴¹ both are described as very tough but determined men.⁴²

Since the castle was built on a high rock, with the Váh River flowing below it, the most advantageous position for Katzianer to begin the siege was from the southern side of the castle.⁴³ Katzianer used the modern siege techniques of the time, subjecting the castle to heavy cannon fire. The southern fortifications of the castle were, however, thoroughly reinforced by Stephen Zápol'ský after he took full possession of the castle and town in 1494.⁴⁴ This prevented the castle from being easily captured from the

32 ACSÁDY, *Magyarország három részre*, 29.

33 BÉKÉS – SZÖRÉNYI, *Nicolaus Olahus. Epistulae pars I.*, 244.

34 We can assume that this happened in the first half of May. However, this is not an exact determination.

35 KENYERES, *A trencséni vár a XVI. században*, 8.

36 ISTVANFFY, *Magyarország Története 1490 – 1606*, 174.

37 KENYERES, *A trencséni vár a XVI. században*, 8.

38 KENYERES, *A Szapolyai-család és Trencsén*, 188.

39 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C3, fasc. 10, no. 15.

40 A noble family from Bardoňovo.

41 In 1527, Gregor Mutňanský is listed as the castellan of Trenčín Castle.

42 ISTVANFFY, *Magyarország Története 1490 – 1606*, 174.

43 Today, Brezina Forest Park.

44 This is confirmed by a charter from King Vladislaus II from 1510.

southern side, which had previously been the weakest point of the fortification.⁴⁵ Therefore, Katzianer had no choice but to prepare for a long and exhausting siege. Meanwhile, the castle was constantly subjected to cannon fire.⁴⁶ After a month of exhausting siege, Katzianer's troops still struggled to break through the defences. The situation began to worsen significantly, especially due to the prolonged presence in the Central Váh Region of a mercenary army, which was not adequately paid for its services. As a result, terrorization of the surrounding areas of Trenčín worsened, with the peasant population bearing the brunt of the violence.

One important source of information about the situation around Trenčín is a letter from the Hungarian Palatine Stephen Bátori (Báthory) to Ferdinand Habsburg from 10 June 1528, which was written before the siege ended. Thanks to this letter, we have more information about the course of the siege of the town and castle of Trenčín, as well as the widespread looting that accompanied it. Although Stephen acknowledged that conducting a war without injustices and violence was hardly possible, he tried to give the monarch a sense of the actions of his army in Hungarian Kingdom.⁴⁷ Stephen Bátori's letter captures the atmosphere that prevailed during the war, not only in the Central Váh Region but throughout other parts of Hungarian Kingdom as well. The southern borders were continuously threatened by Ottoman raids. In his letter, Stephen pleaded with the monarch to address the situation caused by the war, noting that he was aware that the actions occurring in the war-torn region did not originate from Ferdinand's own will. However, the situation in kingdom was difficult to resolve.

By June 1528, Trenčín was still resisting Katzianer and his mercenary army. The situation had become serious for Ferdinand's side. After a month of siege the castle continued to hold out, causing Katzianer's troops to become significantly exhausted, especially due to the delayed wages.⁴⁸ Katzianer allegedly called a meeting of the leading commanders and asked each one individually whether they should continue the siege or call it off. Some nobles still saw the capture of Trenčín as a significant strategic victory that would open the way to castles located to the north of the town. Here, Gaspar Cobor spoke up, informing Katzianer that he knew Trenčín Castle well and was aware of its weak points. He confirmed that the castle could not be captured through sheer force or artillery fire, as its defences were impenetrable.⁴⁹ He knew that the castle contained large amounts of unthreshed grain, ensuring that the garrison would not run out of supplies. Cobor allegedly pointed out that Ferdinand's army would

45 The number of units deployed for the conquest of the town and castle of Trenčín was relatively low, which meant that Katzianer faced a difficult task.

46 ISTVANFFY, *Magyarország Története 1490 – 1606*, 174.

47 "...quod bellum sine violencia et iniuria aliena geri vix possit..." KISS, *A magyar helytartótanács*, 339–341. "However, what is happening in Trenčín is completely intolerable, a total of thirteen villages have been burned to the ground and all of this is happening with immense cruelty, while the entire region is being ravaged." The local inhabitants were allegedly also robbed of horses and cattle, which were sold in Moravia, "and these were things essential for the people's survival." The whole kingdom is thus described as completely exhausted from the oppression and pillaging by Katzianer's army. This letter serves as an account of an witness to the devastation wrought by Katzianer's troops in the Hungarian Kingdom. In the letter, he states that the reality in Hungarian Kingdom is completely difficult, as it is not the enemies but the peasants who are being forced to flee the country, while His Majesty Ferdinand's army is engaged in burning and plundering villages and towns in the entire Kingdom of Hungary. KISS, *A magyar helytartótanács*, 339–341.

48 A mercenary's pay was usually determined according to a pre-established agreement between the mercenary and the contractor who hired him. SEGEŠ, *Od rytierstva po žoldnierstvo*, 139.

49 ISTVANFFY, *Magyarország Története 1490 – 1606*, 175.

run out of supplies before the defenders of Trenčín, which meant that prolonging the siege was not the way to success. Two large piles of unthreshed grain were supposed to be covered with wet cattle hides. Gaspar Cobor is said to have come up with the idea of setting fire to the grain inside, with the fire being started by burning the roof, which seemed an almost impossible task.⁵⁰

Katzianer is said to have liked the plan and convinced the artillery commander, John Globič, to carry it out. The roof included some kind of glass filling⁵¹ making it very difficult to fire to. However, the invaders eventually noticed small attic windows which were left open to ventilate the room, ensuring a supply of sunlight also to prevent the grain from spoiling. The artillerymen began firing at these spots, and the fire spread so intensely that it reached the interior of the roof, causing the beams to catch fire. The castle was powerless against the flames. The guards noticed the fire too late: by the time they started trying to extinguish it, it had already spread to the tower and to places where gunpowder was stored. One of the buildings exploded and a strong wind further spread the fire throughout the entire castle. Most of the garrison died while trying to put out the fire and many took refuge in the cellars, only to be buried by the crumbling walls of the castle. Katzianer continued to fire on the castle, further intensifying the panic that had spread within its walls. The fire spread rapidly, eventually reaching houses in the town below; it is said to have damaged the parish church as well. Kozár and Baračka⁵² began to discuss their next steps and whether to surrender. Ultimately, the defenders of the castle raised a white flag on the ramparts, signalling the start of negotiations for the surrender of Trenčín Castle.⁵³ Other sources, such as the memoir of the mercenary Melchior Hauſſe, confirm the account of the castle being set on fire.⁵⁴ The burning of the castle led to the garrison's surrender due to a lack of supplies.

The Terms of Capitulation for the Defenders of Trenčín

After the successful attack on the castle, John Katzianer wrote a letter to King Ferdinand assuring him that he would capture the fortress of Trenčín for him. However, at that very moment, following Katzianer's offer, the defenders of the castle agreed to begin negotiations regarding its surrender. While the negotiations were underway, it was especially necessary to secure agreements regarding the surrender of artillery and ammunition. Katzianer also mentioned that he was not worried about Zápol'ský sending reinforcements, but noted that there was growing discontent within his army, as they had not been properly paid for their services.⁵⁵ The letter to Ferdinand was sent on 25 June 1528 and the capitulation document was issued on 24 June 1528, so we can assume that the castle was handed over later, after the full terms of the capitulation

50 The castle could only be besieged from the south due to its location; the other side led through the town but was very well fortified and disadvantageous.

51 "ob vitreatos tectorum imbrices" – probably some kind of glaze-based filling that resembled glass.

52 Another interesting aspect is the fate of the Trenčín captain Paul Baračka, who, after the surrender of Trenčín, switched to the side of Ferdinand I, which allowed him to save his property holdings in Trenčín and Nitra counties. He entered the service of Alexius Turzo and, for a time, served again in Trenčín. From 1530 to 1550, he reached the rank of Viscount of Trenčín and is mentioned as the Count of Trenčín from 1554 to 1555. KENYERES, *A Szapolyai-család és Trencsén*, 184.

53 KAROLYI, *Trencsén vár*, 56–57.

54 RATKOŠ, *Memoár*, 141–142.

55 KENYERES, *A trencséni vár a XVI. században*, 9.

regarding the surrender of the castle and town of Trenčín to Ferdinand were drafted.⁵⁶ Trenčín could no longer defend itself, although Katzianer's army must have also been considerably weakened. Ferdinand could not send fresh reinforcements to Katzianer, as a large part of the army was engaged in the fight against the Ottoman forces in the south. Nevertheless Trenčín found itself helpless in the face of Katzianer's army.

The capitulation document issued by John Katzianer, dated 24 June 1528, states that the defenders of the castle would be allowed to leave safely and join Ferdinand's army after several consultations. We must again refer to the record by Melchior Hauffe, who mentions that the castle was set on fire on 15 June.⁵⁷ This approximate date could align with the subsequent beginning of peace talks and the drafting of the capitulation terms for Trenčín a week later. Also, Istvanffy's version suggests that after the castle was set on fire, Valentine Turek initiated efforts to negotiate with the defenders.⁵⁸ It is clear that despite the relatively dire situation, the defenders of the castle only surrendered with great difficulty, as can be seen from the terms of the capitulation. The capitulation document of June 1528, contained a total of 15 conditions, mainly related to the surrender of the castle or the property matters:⁵⁹

1. The captains and owner of Trenčín Castle would be allowed to manage all movable property, such as silver, gold, jewels and other property of John Zápoľský which is located in Trenčín Castle, so that their mercenary army can be better paid.
2. All military and siege machines and equipment – including containers of gunpowder, cannon balls and materials for making gunpowder – were to be handed over to the honourable Captain John Katzianer together with Trenčín Castle.
3. Regarding the documents and privileges issued for the county, castle and town of Trenčín, which were stored in the castle, any documents and privileges of the captains and owners of the castle could be kept in their possession, but documents concerning the county, castle and property of the burghers of Trenčín were to be handed over to John Katzianer. Documents related to the property matters of the burghers of Trenčín would be returned to the captains and owners of the castle by Katzianer after the castle was surrendered.
4. After the surrender of Trenčín Castle, the burghers of the town, along with the other captains, would be free to remove their own property and ecclesiastical property from the castle.
5. Any other ecclesiastical relics deposited in Trenčín Castle which did not belong to the burghers of Trenčín was to remain in the hands of the Captain Katzianer, in place of the Royal Majesty, except for ecclesiastical relics belonging to their respective lords and not yet dedicated to any churches.
6. The movable and immovable property of the nobles who defended the castle against the army of King Ferdinand would remain intact in their possession, including all assets acquired either as gifts from John Zápoľský or lost as a result of the outbreak of war. This also applied to pledged properties. However, it did not apply to properties acquired during this war at the expense of King Ferdinand's subjects, as all such properties had to be returned to these individuals.

⁵⁶ The defenders had until 30 June to surrender the castle under the terms of the capitulation.

⁵⁷ RATKOŠ, *Memoár*, 145.

⁵⁸ ISTVANFFY, *Magyarország Története 1490 – 1606*, 175.

⁵⁹ ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C3, fasc. 10, no. 15.

7. Any ecclesiastical persons staying in the castle during the siege would be allowed to continue enjoying their benefits until a different decision was made.
8. Regarding the final surrender, John Katzianer allowed the captains of the castle, Paul Baračka and Benedict Kozár, to send out a messenger from the castle informing John Zápoľský about the miserable condition of the garrison defending Trenčín Castle – a defence they still considered their duty to carry out. The message stated that Zápoľský needed to respond to the dire condition of the garrison by sending military support no later than 30 June 1528, the third day of the following week. If Zápoľský failed to defeat the besieging army or did not provide assistance to the defenders by the set deadline, the captains of the castle would be obliged to surrender it before sunset, even if the besieging army had withdrawn two or four miles from the walls.
9. The captains and owners of Trenčín Castle would be allowed to leave the castle for certain matters and personal needs. The condition for their departure from the castle was that they inform John Katzianer, who would also designate individuals responsible for accompanying them. However, only 11 riders and 12 carts could leave the castle per day. All captains had to return to the castle before nightfall and could not remain outside the castle during the night.
10. Wherever the owners of the castle decide to go, they must have all the necessary provisions secured at a fair price.
11. If any of the captains or owners of Trenčín Castle requested safe passage upon departure, John Katzianer must grant and approve it.
12. If anyone, whether one or more individuals, violated the safe passage terms and Katzianer's guarantee, the specific perpetrator would be punished, but this crime would not be attributed to others.
13. If any dispute or conflict were to arise among the owners of Trenčín, they would have the right to resolve their disputes among themselves without the intervention of John Katzianer.
14. All the captains and owners of Trenčín Castle would be allowed to leave Trenčín and settle in any town within the Kingdom of Bohemia or the Kingdom of Hungary three weeks after accepting the terms of capitulation, but they must not settle in a fortress within Hungarian Kingdom. Furthermore, they must be granted safe passage.
15. All those captured during the siege would be released without any exceptions. Here, Katzianer also committed to adhering to all the points outlined in the capitulation document.⁶⁰

The capitulation charter provides a glimpse into the condition of the castle's defenders at the end of June 1528.⁶¹ Despite the fact that the castle represented Zápoľský's most important seat and stronghold, the terms laid out for its surrender

60 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C3, fasc. 10, no. 15. The capitulation conditions have already been addressed by John Károlyi in his monograph dedicated to Trenčín Castle.

61 The defenders of Trenčín, even after the burning of the castle and the town, were still willing to hold their positions, as is evident from the content of the aforementioned 15 points, which seem very lenient. To a large extent, John Katzianer himself was committed to these concessions, since prospects for a prolonged siege were not favourable and he needed to end it as quickly as possible. Despite this, the town and the surrounding area were devastated.

were not conceived with any element of retribution. On the contrary, the defenders later entered into the service of King Ferdinand, and considerable concessions can be observed, particularly in the fifteenth clause, which stipulated the release of all prisoners. Undoubtedly, the document is a significant diplomatic source that, from a content-based perspective, illuminates the events following the burning of the castle. The town of Trenčín itself is not mentioned directly in the charter, and no other documents have survived that would shed light on the situation within the town at that time. Of the 15 clauses of the capitulation, the burghers of Trenčín are referenced in three, specifically in the third, fourth, and fifth clauses. These state that documents concerning the property of Trenčín's burghers were to remain in the hands of John Katzianer. This suggests that the town was likely in a state of disorder, with Katzianer attempting to maintain strict control over all property matters.⁶²

Nevertheless, all such documents were to be returned to their rightful owners once the siege had concluded. This is undoubtedly reflected in the fourth clause of the capitulation, which addresses the possibility for burghers to remove their property from the castle following its surrender. Prior to the siege, the burghers had evidently stored their valuables within the castle, including various religious objects. Katzianer, however, planned to use Zápoľský's property stored in the castle to finance the wages of his troops. If the town had been subjected to looting, it was necessary to restore order and reduce tensions as swiftly as possible. By the time the capitulation was drafted, the town of Trenčín was undoubtedly already under the control of John Katzianer. It is likely that Katzianer communicated these matters to the town's representatives, possibly including the mayor, Blaze Hrubý, as the conditions also pertained to the property affairs of the burghers. This could be further supported by Caspar Ursini Veli, who in his work *De bello Panonico* mentions a slightly different course of action taken by Katzianer's troops, noting that the town itself fell into his hands much earlier than the castle.⁶³ The fact that the town was occupied at that time may also be supported by a reference to a certain burgher named George Kupec.

George Kupec is said to have contributed to the defeat of the town by leaving during the siege and heading to Uherský Brod, and later to Kroměříž. Upon leaving the town, he came into contact with Katzianer's soldiers and allegedly informed them of the greatest weaknesses in the town's fortifications.⁶⁴ He was reportedly seen communicating with Katzianer's troops and, as a result, was accused of treason.⁶⁵ The dispute between the town of Trenčín and George Kupec (*Georgium Kupecz*) and the burghers of Trenčín⁶⁶ reached King Ferdinand, who ordered an investigation into the

62 For this reason, a significant portion of the conditions are directed primarily at the Castle nobility.

63 VELII URSINI, *De bello Pannonico libri decem*, 49–50.

64 HORVÁTH, *Trenčín v období novoveku*, 73. George Kupec is also mentioned in 1535, when he was summoned by order of John Katzianer to appear before the Trenčín officials Viscount Paul Baračka, Bartos Borčický and Kilián Hreždovský due to some conflict with the burghers of Trenčín. The document also mentions that he had left the town of Trenčín without permission. From this, we learn that although he allegedly fled Trenčín due to some imminent danger, this event occurred under unclear circumstances, "pro zachování hrdla svého s povolením v ty časy nejvyšších hejtmanov trenčínských" [for the preservation of his life, with the consent of the then highest captains of Trenčín]. It is said that he left the town by the will of the town's leadership so that no problems would arise there because of him. MACŮREK – REJNUŠ, *České země a Slovensko*, 174, no. 5.

65 KAROLYI, *Trencséni vár*, 61.

66 BRINDZA – BERNÁTOVÁ, *Magistrát mesta Trenčína, listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II*. Inventár, no. 116.

matter.⁶⁷ Later, John Katzianer became involved in the matter when he ordered Paul Baračka to investigate the witnesses of the dispute.⁶⁸ The dispute ultimately ended favourably for George Kupec,⁶⁹ as he was even allowed to sell his house in Trenčín⁷⁰ despite having left the town without permission.⁷¹

George Kupec undoubtedly played a role in the fall of the town. On the other hand, the town was very well fortified with stone walls. If George Kupec had pointed out neglected sections of the walls where heavy artillery could easily breach the defences, the town would have had no choice but to surrender.⁷² Despite the fall of the town, the attackers did not consider the approach from the town to the castle strategically advantageous. For this reason, John Katzianer bombarded the castle from an elevated hilltop. The mayor of Trenčín at the time was Blaze Hrubý, however, there is no record of a capitulation document for the town that he might have accepted. It is clear that it was around this time that the town was looted.⁷³ During this period, the town also held the patronage rights over the parish church, which, similar to the castle during the attack, was burned down. Therefore, its reconstruction had to be financed from the town treasury. Since medieval times, the town had two entrances, the Lower Gate and Upper Gate. The Upper Gate was additionally protected by the nearby Váh River, which made the siege of the town considerably more difficult. The simpler, but certainly better-fortified entrance was through the southern gate. Several years later, a bastion was built at this location, likely stemming from the need to improve the town's defences after a breach in the town walls.⁷⁴

Town of Trenčín after the Siege

By accepting the capitulation terms of John Katzianer, the town and castle of Trenčín came into the property of the Habsburgs. At the same time, with capitulation, Trenčín lost its previous importance; its significance as a border-guard fortress ceased to be

67 On 24 May 1532, at the request of the mayor and officials, King Ferdinand ordered the inhabitants of Trenčín to provide their testimony regarding George Kupec before the appointed official. BRINDZA – BERNÁTOVÁ, *Magistrát mesta Trenčína*, no. 115.

68 "...a mezi inými rosudkem nes smluvu konec učinili..." [...and among other judgments they at last brought the agreement to a close...] Based on the order of John Katzianer, Viscount Paul of Baračka, Kilian of Hrežd'ovce, and Bartos of Borčice were to question the witnesses in the dispute between George Kupec and the burghers of Trenčín.

69 The figure of George Kupec deserves a more comprehensive study in the future, which could lead to new insights into life in Trenčín during that period.

70 "Poruczeno mne Paulowi Baraczskiemu vicespanovi a Barthossowi Borczickemu z Borczic Kylianowi Hressczowskmu sluznym dworskym slolicze Tenczanske od welkomozneho a statecneho rytize pana pana Jana Kotziana naywyssyho heytmana polneho w kralowstwi uherskem etc..." [It was entrusted to me, Paul Baraczski, Viscount, and to Barthos Borcziczky of Borczice, and to Kylian Hressczowsky, court servants of the Trenčín seat, by the noble and valiant knight, Lord John Kotzian, the highest field captain in the Kingdom of Hungary, etc....] ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C3, fasc. 11, no. 12.

71 MACÚREK – REJNUŠ, *České země a Slovensko*, 174, no. 5. The town of Trenčín enjoyed freedom of movement, but this was limited by the authority of the Castle's castellans. If a burgher wished to leave town, they were first required to inform the mayor.

72 Another possibility is that he provided information about the defensive units which could also have helped Katzianer.

73 This is also mentioned in one of the charters granted by King Ferdinand to the town a few months after the end of the siege.

74 KAROLYI, *Trencsén vár*, 56–57.

relevant after its incorporation into the Habsburg domain.⁷⁵ The town was ravaged by Katzianer's army and it took a long time to recover from the looting.⁷⁶ The financing of the mercenary army by Ferdinand Habsburg encountered difficulties, so looting the local population seemed to serve as a form of reward and motivation for the *landsknechts* for their military service.⁷⁷ The burghers of Trenčín, however, did not have an easy life even after the departure of John Katzianer. As early as 1530, there are records of raids by Ottoman forces that reached the area around Beckov, information which was preserved by the later Archbishop of Esztergom, Nicholas Oláh.⁷⁸ This marked the beginning of a long period of continuous attacks and devastation of towns in Hungarian Kingdom, whether due to later anti-Habsburg uprisings or Ottoman raids aimed at plundering and intimidating the peasant population, a situation that lasted until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The economic and social situation in Trenčín after the departure of Katzianer's army must have been miserable. The town and castle were burned, the surrounding villages devastated and the fortifications of the town damaged. Ferdinand knew the destruction his army left behind in the places it intended to rule, so he had to act. One of the ways to revive the town's prosperity was through granting various privileges, which were meant to relieve the town from paying various taxes to the monarch. In November 1528, King Ferdinand issued a charter confirming all privileges granted to the town of Trenčín up to that point.⁷⁹ On 2 December 1528, Ferdinand issued the first of several charters concerning the privileges previously granted to the town. He forbade all prelates, barons, nobles, toll collectors and cities from collecting taxes from the burghers of Trenčín.⁸⁰

It is clear that the people of Trenčín must have appealed to the king in Vienna to help them out of the misery they had fallen into. This claim is supported by another charter issued by King Ferdinand for the town of Trenčín the very next day, 3 December 1528. This time, Ferdinand took into account the events surrounding the burning of the town and castle, which had been carried out by his army to drive out the supporters of John Zápoľský. The town of Trenčín was completely destroyed, so the king decided to exempt it from paying any fees for a period of ten years. The charter was not only intended for the burghers of Trenčín but also for the Master of the Treasury Nicholas of Grind and all his successors and toll collectors, instructing them to comply with the king's orders and refrain from collecting any taxes from the burghers of Trenčín during

75 The town and castle of Trenčín was a frequent stop of the Hungarian kings on diplomatic or military campaigns to Moravia, Silesia and Poland. As an important fortress, it also played a strategic role during the Hussite raids into the Hungarian Kingdom during the reign of King Sigismund of Luxembourg. KENYERES, *A Szapolyai család és Trencsén*, 177.

76 HORVÁTH, *Trenčín v období novoveku*, 73.

77 More about this matter can be learned from the memoir of Melchior Hauffe, which we will cover in the following pages. BERGMANN, *Medaillen auf berühmte und ausgezeichnete*, 247. Shortly after Katzianer left the town, however, his health worsened again, and in August, he again asked the king to appoint a new supreme commander in his place. Leonard of Vels was appointed as his deputy, but Katzianer was to remain in the position of supreme commander despite his illness.

78 BÉKÉS – SZÖRÉNYI, *Nicolaus Olahus*, 151.

79 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 2.

80 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 1.

the specified period.⁸¹ It was indeed a significant matter, but not all nobles adhered to it. In September 1535, King Ferdinand had to issue a charter addressed to Gabriel of Levice, instructing him not to demand tolls and market fees from the burghers of Trenčín, as this violated the privilege he himself had granted to them.⁸²

The series of charters issued by Ferdinand to Trenčín dating from December 1528 continues with the confirmation of the privilege charter of King Matthias Corvinus from 21 May 1464. According to it, the burghers of Trenčín had the right to retain 200 florins annually from the royal tithes, with the condition that this amount be used for the repair of the town fortifications. After the siege, these must have been in a catastrophic state, especially after being bombarded by artillery.⁸³ The 200 florins from the royal tolls⁸⁴ for repairing the town's defences⁸⁵ were again confirmed by the monarch more than eight decades later, in December 1546.⁸⁶ Another charter from King Ferdinand, dated to 1546, allowed Trenčín to hold markets on St Valentine's Day (14 February) and the Feast of St Peter in Chains (1 August).⁸⁷

The third charter from King Ferdinand in 1546 again focused on the reconstruction of the town fortification. In it, the king prohibited burghers and foreigners from privately brewing and selling beer: only the town of Trenčín itself was allowed to do so. The proceeds from beer sales were to be used for the reconstruction of the town's defences.⁸⁸ In February 1546, Trenčín was still facing issues with the fortification, as the mayor and the representatives of the town appeared before Ferdinand I with a request to allow the royal revenues from Trenčín to be used for the reconstruction.⁸⁹ We can add another charter from 1547 to the issue of the damage it sustained. This charter tells us that Trenčín's viscount, Paul Baračka, owned a house outside the town walls and was exempt from taxation. Nevertheless, he committed to helping with the repair of the town fortification.⁹⁰

On the other hand, the castle came under the administration of the Hungarian Chamber, which pledged it to Alexius Turzo (Thurzo) in 1534. After his death in 1543,

81 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 3. "...tum vero compacientes inopie et paupertati fidelium nostrum prudentium et circumspectorum iudicis et iuratorum cetorumque civium et totius communitatis civitatis nostre Trinchiniensis, in quam iidem per expugnationem et conflagrationem eiusdem civitatis a nostro exercitu, quem pro expellendis et domandis emulis nostris superioribus diebus illic miseramus factam, devenisse dicuntur, quo iidem cives rursus civitatem ipsam in pristinum statum redigere possint, eosdem ab omni solutione taxarum et contributionum nostrarum tam ordinare quam extraordinare ac aliorum quorumcunque censuum quocumque nomine censeantur intra spacium decem integrorum annorum a datis presencium computando duximus eximendos et supportandos..."

82 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 8.

83 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 4.

84 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1.

85 However, another reason could have been the growing pressure from the Ottoman Empire, due to which it was necessary for towns to be properly prepared for possible attacks

86 A dispute over the 200 florins also appears in 1527 (ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C3, fasc. 10, no. 17). The king became involved in a dispute again in 1548, when he once more forbade the tax collectors from collecting the 200 florins intended for the construction of the town's fortification. ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 14.

87 BERNÁTOVÁ-MORIŠOVÁ, *Poklady z trenčianskeho archívu*, 13.

88 BERNÁTOVÁ-MORIŠOVÁ, *Poklady z trenčianskeho archívu*, 21, no. 8.

89 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C2, fasc. 1, no. 13.

90 ŠA TN, fund Magistrát mesta Trenčín. Listiny a iné príbuzné záznamy II. Novoveké listiny, C3, fasc. 2, no. 3.

it was held by Nicholas of Salm but eventually, in 1549, it came back under the control of the Hungarian Chamber.⁹¹ In 1549, negotiations took place with Isabella Jagiellon, the widow of John Zápol'ský, about the possible return of the castle to the Zápol'ský family, specifically to her son John Sigismund. However, this never happened.⁹² After the siege, repairs to the damaged sections of Trenčín castle and the town fortification were initiated. One of these was what is now known as "Jeremias Bastion" (Jeremiášova bašta), which took a direct hit from Katzianer's forces coming from the south. A new fortified entrance to the town with more advanced towers and a moat was built and, notably, a new bastion was also constructed.⁹³ As a result, the town had to undergo extensive reconstruction after the departure of Katzianer's army.

Other Sources Mentioning the Siege of Trenčín by John Katzianer

The war between Ferdinand Habsburg and John Zápol'ský is associated with several preserved sources, one of which is the work of George Sirmiensi (Georgius Sirmiensi),⁹⁴ a loyal supporter of John Zápol'ský in the struggle for the Hungarian crown. Sirmiensi supported Zápol'ský's candidacy from the very beginning, as he participated in the Diet in Tokaj, where he voted for John Zápol'ský as the new king. During the war with Ferdinand, he held the position of John's court chaplain. In the 1540s, he wrote the work *Epistola de perdicione regni Hungarorum*.⁹⁵ It is an extensive work written in Latin which presents the most important events in the country from 1484 to 1543, with the author also capturing his own dialogues with prominent authorities of the time. Of course, we must approach the presented sources with a certain degree of criticism, as it one might naturally expect some bias from the author, who wrote his work retrospectively.

From the memories of Sirmiensi, we learn that during Zápol'ský's retreat to Polish Tarnów, in 1528, Sirmiensi was in Veľké Kapušany. At that time, John Katzianer arrived in Košice following the victorious battle at Seňa. He spent one week there, during which he sent tax collectors from Košice to Veľké Kapušany, where they also found Sirmiensi. Fearing imminent danger, Sirmiensi fled to Užhorod, where he stayed for a few days. He continued on, and in April he arrived in Tarnów to join John Zápol'ský. In the meantime, John Katzianer left Košice heading west to seize Trenčín. Information about his advance reached Zápol'ský in Tarnów. Trenčín Castle was supposed to be defended against Katzianer by Franz Kapolnaj, but he left the castle, allegedly pretending to be ill as an excuse to escape. Trenčín was then left to be defended by a scholar called Michael Puich. However, when Katzianer saw him, he immediately realized that he was not a warrior, but rather just a rather effeminate man. Katzianer sent an envoy to Trenčín to negotiate the castle's surrender with Puich. The envoy was to convince Puich to hand over the castle in exchange for a noble title, property and two hundred serfs. Puich seems to have been quite pleased with the offer, but nevertheless remarked that he would only surrender the castle to Katzianer if Zápol'ský failed to provide assistance

91 HORVÁTH, *Trenčín v období novoveku*, 73.

92 KENYERES, *A Szapolyai-család és Trencsén*, 188.

93 ŠIŠMIŠ, *Trenčiansky hrad*, 54–55.

94 The work *Emlékirata Magyarország romlásáról, 1484–1543*, was edited by the historian Gustáv Wenzel. In 2023, it was also edited by Slovak researchers, and it was translated into Slovak. SRIEMSKY, Juraj. *Zničenie kráľovstva Uhorského*. Transl. KARABOVÁ, Katarína – KATRENIČOVÁ, Anabela. Bratislava: Perfekt, 2023.

95 *Magyar életrajzi lexikon: Szerémi György*, <<https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-eletrajzi-lexikon-7428D/sz-77C95/szeremi-gyorgy-77F86/>> (accessed: 18-01-2025).

within 15 days. Puich pointed out that the castle must still be bombarded with cannons during that time.⁹⁶

In Tarnów, John Zápol'ský received the envoy from Trenčín who informed him of the dire condition of the town and castle. He requested help from Zápol'ský, claiming that the castle could not be held for more than two months. However, Zápol'ský sent a response to Puich instructing him to hold the castle until the very last moment and under no circumstances surrender Trenčín to Katzianer. He was to defend it until he himself died in the process. The messenger then returned to Trenčín, where he delivered John Zápol'ský's message to Puich, informing him that no supplies would be sent and no help would come to defend the castle. Puich was advised to collect supplies from the population under his rule. After the messenger's arrival from Tarnów, not even a week passed before Puich surrendered the castle to Katzianer. George Sirmiensiis was not a direct witness to the siege of Trenčín, as he was in Tarnów at the time, serving as Zápol'ský's confessor. Therefore, he described the capture of the castle as a prearranged matter between Michael Deák and John Katzianer. Sirmiensiis's description of events is highly simplified and shows no signs of credibility, resembling more the author's imagination or the recording of unverified facts.⁹⁷

Another significant document that provides insights into the siege of Trenčín is the memoir of Melchior Hauffe, a German mercenary who personally participated in Ferdinand's campaign to Hungarian Kingdom as part of the Habsburg army. Hauffe joined the Habsburg service in 1526 and was a *landsknecht* serving under Lamparter.⁹⁸ The source has previously been extensively studied by Peter Ratkoš. Melchior Hauffe wrote his memoirs after being persuaded by friends, with whom he used to meet, to record his memories from the time he served in the military. By then, Hauffe was already of considerable age and more than 30 years had passed since his participation in the campaign in Hungarian Kingdom. Despite this, many of his recollections align with historical facts, therefore we can also refer to his memories of Trenčín. His memoir offers a perspective on the campaign from the viewpoint of a mercenary in Habsburg service. However, since he wrote it sometime in the late 1560s or early 1570s, it is important to note that Hauffe must have viewed the events he experienced with a certain degree of retrospection.

During his military service as a mercenary, Hauffe travelled through Hungarian Kingdom. From the very beginning, he was part of the campaign led by Nicholas of Salm and John Katzianer. Under these commanders he made it to Buda and from there moved towards Tokaj, where John Zápol'ský was defeated. Subsequently, he took part in the Battle of Seňa with the army under John Katzianer. He spent three days at Seňa and eventually made his way to Košice, where he and the soldiers spent Easter. After the feast, they set out to march towards Trenčín. On the way, he also took part in the siege of Spiš Castle. Eventually, they reached Trenčín where, as he states, the siege lasted a total of nine weeks. He records that the castle and town were overcome by constantly bombardment with cannons, and that ultimately everything was set on fire and destroyed. However, as he notes, this ruined their plan to plunder the town,

96 George Sirmiensiis, while recounting the siege of Trenčín, mentions a certain pilgrim named Paul who was at the castle at the time and had committed several shameless transgressions that were deemed to oppose God. George thus links the fall of Trenčín with the will of God. WENZEL, *Emlékirata Magyarország romlásáról*, 223.

97 WENZEL, *Emlékirata Magyarország romlásáról*, 222; SRIEMSKY, *Zničenie kráľovstva Uhorského*, 551–552.

98 Lamparter was a mercenary commander in the service of the Habsburgs. RATKOŠ, *Memoár*, 141–142.

as the fire burned everything down. He mentions the burning of the castle and town occurring on the feast of Saint Vitus, 15 June 1528. After the capitulation of the castle, John Katzianer found a noblewoman on the castle grounds whom he sent, along with the spoils, to Vienna to King Ferdinand.

Hauffe then mentions that his unit departed through Trnava and Bratislava to Csepreg, where the mercenaries finally received their unpaid wages from the monarch. In addition, they were promised that reinforcements would soon join their unit. Afterward, they returned to Trenčín, where he describes the outbreak of a rebellion against Wasserman, the Castellan of Trenčín. Although this rebellion is not documented in the town's archival letters, it is highly likely to have taken place, as it was also mentioned by Caspar Ursini Velli. According to Hauffe, the rebels were successfully driven out of Trenčín when the Habsburg soldiers managed to enter the castle unnoticed through the back gate, surprising the rebels. By the next morning, they had gained control over the entire town and castle. Afterward, Hauffe's unit set off again to Košice, where they spent the winter. There, they rejoined Katzianer and Vels and prepared for another campaign. Hauffe fought several times against the forces of John Zápoľský, often encountering poaching and bandit groups. On one occasion, after a victorious battle against bandits, many prisoners were taken. Some were executed, but a few were selected and sent to Trenčín to dig a well.⁹⁹

Melchior Hauffe endured many hardships and dangerous situations, but in this case, luck was on his side on the battlefield, which allowed him to write his memoirs. Hauffe's story is thus very interesting and adds to the narrative of major political events in Central Europe. He continued to fight against the Ottomans, both in Hungarian Kingdom and in defence of besieged Vienna, when Sultan Suleiman laid siege to the city in 1529.¹⁰⁰ The preserved accounts and events described by Hauffe provide a captivating glimpse into the life of Habsburg mercenaries in the sixteenth century. While George Sirmiensis supported John Zápoľský, Melchior Hauffe directly fought in the Habsburg army. The preserved stories thus provide us with a view of both sides, although we cannot say that Hauffe, as a mercenary from Germany, was an ardent supporter of Ferdinand. Therefore, it is necessary to approach both sources with a certain level of criticism and through the lens of contemporary thinking.

A closer look at the siege of the town is provided by the work of Caspar Ursini Velli titled *De bello Pannonico*. According to this account, after Katzianer arrived at the town, the surrounding villages voluntarily sided with Ferdinand and joined his military forces. Katzianer's army positioned itself outside the town walls but it was very poorly disciplined. The defenders of the town noticed this during the siege and decided to launch an attack with approximately 100 cavalymen and infantry. The defenders managed to capture around 200 of Katzianer's soldiers, with 20 men being killed. The rest fled into the surrounding hills. The town thus refused to surrender, but the morale of Katzianer's army was declining, which led him to withdraw from the town and march toward the city of Trnava. The surrounding villages were once again forced to switch their allegiance to John Zápoľský. In Trnava, Katzianer was victorious, so he decided to march north again. On the way, two of Zápoľský's men were captured and

99 Whether it was the well in the lower courtyard of the castle is not specified, but historians such as Milan Šišmiš consider this reference to be evidence of the beginning of the excavation of the so-called Well of Love. ŠIŠMIŠ, *Trenčiansky hrad*, 54.

100 RATKOŠ, *Memoár*, 145–147.

revealed to Katzianer that most of the Trenčín infantry was stationed in the suburbs of the town. Katzianer did not hesitate and launched an early morning attack on the town. He succeeded in entering the town. About 30 of Katzianer's men reached the town's cannons, which they then turned against the defenders. Katzianer had the town within his grasp, but his troops began to loot and plunder the town in an undisciplined manner. He then ordered that the suburbs of Trenčín be burned down.¹⁰¹

This description presents a possible scenario of how the town of Trenčín fell into the hands of John Katzianer before the castle was captured. The castle was guarded by around 800 men, hence Katzianer decided to attack the town first. However, the town initially resisted Katzianer's assaults. One of the reasons was that the cannons were brought to the town only later, which then accelerated the siege. Katzianer subsequently launched an attack on the castle as well, which was eventually set on fire and its garrison surrendered. Ursini also confirms the account of Hauffe, who claimed that after Katzianer's departure and the signing of the capitulation, a rebellion broke out. Ursini, however, states that the town was retaken by around 600 of Zápoľský's soldiers and that it surrendered voluntarily, thus falling once again into the hands of supporters of Zápoľský. The rebels did not capture the castle and so it remained in the hands of Ferdinand's faction. However, John Katzianer knew that the castle had not yet been conquered. Therefore, he set out for the town with 300 men. The infantry advanced slowly, together with the cannons, aiming to cross the bridge into the town before the defenders could destroy it. He unexpectedly stormed the town, killing around 50 men. The garrison from the castle also decided to support Katzianer, and the remaining rebels fled through the second town gate into the nearby hills. After Katzianer's second capture of the town, he ordered that the bridge over the Váh River be repaired. He did not stay long in Trenčín, leaving with his army to pursue the enemy.¹⁰²

Caspar Ursini's account suggests that John Katzianer led the attack on the town from the southern side, as only the second attack by Katzianer is described as coming from the direction of the Váh River. However, even this work diverges from certain known facts, such as the description of Katzianer's campaign against Trnava and his abandonment of the siege of Trenčín. Nevertheless, this work most likely provides the closest depiction of the actual situation in the town – especially where it is supported by Melchior Hauffe's memoir, which offers independent confirmation of certain recorded facts. One thing that is clear is that the situation in the town was not as straightforward as it might initially seem and the actual takeover of the area by the Habsburgs was preceded by several other smaller conflicts.

Conclusion

The town of Trenčín was undoubtedly plundered during the siege by the forces of John Katzianer, as was its surrounding area. This was most likely due to the insufficient funding of the mercenary army, for whom looting served as a form of substitute payment in place of wages. The plundering of the town, mentioned in one of King Ferdinand's charters, may have been caused not only by the mercenaries' pillaging but also by the spread of fire from the castle to the lower part of the town, as indicated by the destruction of the parish church. The fire could have affected a significant portion of the town, though the issue of repairing the town's fortification must have been directly

101 VELII URSINI, *De bello Pannonico libri decem*, 49–50.

102 VELII URSINI, *De bello Pannonico libri decem*, 139.

related to the siege itself. Narrative sources also speak of the town being plundered. A closer look at the capitulation document of Trenčín Castle sheds light on a situation that applied to the town of Trenčín as well. John Katzianer primarily focused on seizing all available munitions, which he undoubtedly needed for the continued advance of his army northwards.

A significant part of the capitulation document deals with matters of property, which involved not only the possessions of the castle lords but also those of the burghers of Trenčín. It is quite logical that the burghers were also subject to a ban on leaving the town or staying outside its boundaries at night. Such measures were primarily aimed at preventing desertion or avoiding a strategic disadvantage in relation to the army stationed near the town. After the capitulation was accepted, the town's representative, Mayor Blaze Hrubý, continued in office until 1532. At the same time, according to the final point of the capitulation, all prisoners on both sides were to be released. The capitulation was therefore highly acceptable for both the castle garrison and the burghers. The town retained all the privileges granted by John Zápoľský, but it was primarily King Ferdinand I of Habsburg who contributed to its economic recovery after the difficult days of June 1528. During the mid-sixteenth century, the town of Trenčín underwent significant reconstruction. Although the reliability of narrative sources is somewhat inconsistent, it can be assumed that the accounts of Melchior Hauße and Caspar Ursini regarding the two occupations of the town are credible and were written independently of one another, just as their descriptions of the town's burning appear to align. Thus, the town of Trenčín endured several military assaults in a short span of time, from which it undoubtedly had to recover.

Appendix

24 June 1528, Trenčín – *The commander of the Habsburg army, John Katzianer, issues 15 capitulatory conditions for the castle of Trenčín, based on which the terms of surrender were negotiated with the defenders of the castle.*

The original on paper (A) is stored in the Štátny archív v Trenčíne under the signature C3. fasc. 10. No. 15. The text of the document is also included in the transumptum of Leonard Súľovský from 1529 under the same signature. (E). The document is damaged by frequent cuts and several stains. The text of the document is recorded on three pages of paper.

Nos infrascripti Iohannes Catzianer eques auratus regie maiestatis Hungarie et Bohemie etc. consiliarius et capitaneus generalis, Emericus Nagh vicepalatinus regni Hungarie,¹⁰³ Ludovicus Pekry de Razyna¹⁰⁴ capitaneus supremus levis armature, Leonardus iunior liber baro de Vels,¹⁰⁵ eius maiestatis consiliarius cubicularius et capitaneus supremus peditatus universi etc. Nicolaus de Thurm¹⁰⁶ eques armatus

¹⁰³ Emericus Nagy was Hungarian vice-palatine.

¹⁰⁴ Today Rasinja in Croatia. Ludovicus Pekry was ban of Croatia. Nagy, Iván. Magyarország családai. Pekry család. [online]. Accessed 9. 9. 2025 <<https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Nagyivan-nagy-ivan-magyarorszag-csaladai-1/kilencedik-kotet-796B/pekry-csalad-pekrovinai-vagy-petrovinai-7FC8/>>

¹⁰⁵ Today Vels in Österreich. Leonhard II. Freiherr Vels was supreme Field Commander in Hungary and in Slovenian and Lower Austrian lands. BERGMANN, Medaillen auf berühmte und ausgezeichnete Männer, 243.

¹⁰⁶ Today Thurm in Germany; supreme captain of heavy cavalry.

capitaneus supremus gravis armature, Iohannes Aphalter eques auratus supremus campi marsalkus,¹⁰⁷ Udalricus Leysser¹⁰⁸ capitaneus municionum et ingeniorum bellicorum supremus, Iulius comes de Hardek¹⁰⁹ etc. Rupertus comes de Mandersthud,¹¹⁰ Caspar Czobor de Zenth Mihal,¹¹¹ Lucas Zarkel Baro in Frydaw¹¹² et Cristopherus de Thurm capitaneus veteris Zoly¹¹³ et comes comitatus Zolyensis recognoscimus et facemur tenore presencium significantes quibus expedit universis, quod cum nos simul cum regie(!) prefato exercitu per tempus aliquod castrum et civitatem Trinchiniensis obsederamus et capitaneos possessoresque castri eiusdem ad regie maiestatis domini nostri gratiosissimi obedienciam repetiveramus extunc ad petitionem eorundem salvum et securum conductum nostrum iisdem dedimus et concessimus, per quod quidem. Nos cum iisdem in colloquium amicum et milem devenimus et post longa et multa habita consilia bene preponderata premeditata et recta consciencia. Nos nomine et loco prenominate regie maiestatis ex auctoritate potestate et comissione ab eadem regia maiestate data et concessa negocio isto inimisimus. Nosque ex utraque parte tandem in contractum intromisimus de superque articulos conclusiones et contractum sequentem ereximus et conclusimus. Primo transactum et conclusum est. Capitaneis et possessoribus castri Thrinchiniensis omnia bona mobilia aurum videlicet argentum, clenodia et a[l]ia bona ad eorundem dominum Iohannem de Zapolya pertinentis et in castro Thrinchiniensis [ia]m dicto existentis, quo scilicet commodius et melius solutionem stipendiorum suorum nancisci et acquirere possint libere et impediti permitti debere. Secundo ingenia seu tormenta bellica pixides etiam alie globi pulveres et materia omnis ad conficiendum pulveres destinata cum pixidibus¹¹⁴ et pertinentiis aliis ingeniorum tormentorum et pixidum quibuscumque quantum in predicto castro existit venerali¹¹⁵ capitaneo domino Iohanni Catzianer loco regie maiestatis Hungarie et Bohemie etc. simulcum castro Thrinchiniensis dari, resignari et assignari debebunt. Tercio omnia privilegia maiestatis alieque littere prefatis capitaneis et possessoribus castri Thrinchiniensis dominoque eorum attinentis in castro eodem deposite existentis apud eosdem capitaneos et possessores dicti castri permaneant exceptis tamen litteris privilegiis et registris castrum et comitatum Thrinchiniensis simul etiam bona civium civitatis Thrinchiniensis concernentis, que in castro ad manus capitanei generalis permanere tandemque resignato castro, que civibus attinent rursus restitui debebunt. Quarto resignato castro Thrinchiniensis cives civitatis eiusdem simul cum bonis aliorum capitaneorum bona sua et ecclesiastica propria de castro eodem libere educere possunt. Quinto quecumque alia clenodia ecclesiastica in prefato castro Thrinchiniensis deposita nec ad cives Thrinchiniensis pertinentis in castro eodem ad manus capitanei generalis loco regie maiestatis immota permaneant exceptis clenodiis ecclesiasticis ad dominum eorundem spectantis necdum ad ecclesias ullas dicatis. Sexto nobilibus in castro Thrinchiniensis existentis bona sua immobilia et hereditaria, que nunc temporis

107 Field marshal of Habsburg army.

108 Chief commander of military and siege engines.

109 Today Castle Hardegg in Österreich. Count of Hardek.

110 Probably a location in the German lands. Count of Mandersthud.

111 Village Zombor in Slovakia. Caspar Cobor was a prominent Hungarian nobleman

112 Today Fridau in Österreich. Baron of Fridau.

113 Today Zvolen in Slovakia. Count of Zvolen county.

114 In the original, it is missing.

115 In the original, it is missing.

possident ea etiam de quibus in isto bello hungarico deieci et expulsi forent omnique, que a prefato eorum domino Iohanne de Zapolya de bonis eius propriis donacionis titulo acceperunt cum bonis, que iisdem impignorata seu hypothecata sunt. Nuncque iisdem nobilibus libere et impedite permitti et assignari debebunt. Contra quo capitanei nobiles et possessores castri Thrinchiniensis obligantur bona immobilia quecumque que regietis subditis in bello isto hungarico occupassent aut eosdem subditos de bonis suis modo deieciissent iisdem regie maiestatis subditis libere redere et rursus assignare. Septimo ecclesiastice persone quecumque in castro Thrinchiniensis existentis suis usque ad ulteriorem regie maiestatis Hungarie et Bohemie etc. ordinacionem revisionem et consensum quiete permaneant eademque beneficia, ut antea ad regie maiestatis tamen complacentis possideant utantur et fruuntur. Octavo cum capitaneis et possessoribus castri Thrinchiniensis honori eorum convenire visum sic eiusmodi eorum extremam necessitatem domino suo Iohannem de Zapolya significare itcirco dictis capitaneis et inhabitatoribus castri Thrinchiniensis a capitaneo generali concessum est. Nuncium ad dominum eorundem transmittere responsionemque ex parte auxilii eis mittendi usque ad feriam terciam proxime venturam, qui dies ultimus est mensis iunii expectare ea tamen lege quasi in prefixi termino iisdem ab eorum domino auxilium missus mitteretur neque capitaneus generalis simulcum toto exercitu per vim et potenciam sepedicti Iohannis de Zapolya ex [cam]po profligatur ex tunc capitanei e[t] possessores castri Thrinchiniensis idem castrum ad feriam terciam proxime venturam ante solis occasum diei eiusdem iamdicto capitaneo generali et dominis suprascriptis libere et impedite omni ulteriori procrastinacione postposita redere debeant et teneantur et etiam si capitaneus generalis ex necessitate vel aliis causis evidentibus cum exercitu et copiis a castro isto ad miliare duo aut quatuor obiret et prefixus terminis absque ullo auxilio aut profligacione elaboretur nichilominus tamen castrum Thrinchiniensis ad dictum terminum per possessores eiusdem capitaneo generali redi et resignari debebit. Nono concessum est prefatis capitaneis et possessoribus dicti castri ut scilicet in spacium ferie secunde proxime future secundum necessitatem et exigenciam eorum pabulatum aut alio e castro exire equitare vehique possint cum prescencia autem capitanei generalis qui iisdem certos quosdam homines semper adiungat ea tamen condicione et uno quovis die non magis quo duodecimo currus et decem equites e castro exeant semperque ad noctem rursus se se in castrum recipientis nullomodo alibi per noctem. Decimo quocumque prefati possessores castri Thrinchiniensis ierint ibidem omnes necessitates quasdam condigno precio administrari debebunt. Undecimo si quidem quispiam capitaneorum aut possessorum in castro tempore abitus sui saluum et securum conductum a capitaneo generali pecierii talis salvus conductus petenti dari et concedi debebit. Duodecimo si unus aut alter pluresne salvus conductum seu trengas violaverit aut fregerit ex tunc pena saltem a transgressore sumetur nec in alios cupla delicti transferatur. Tredecimo si quando in castro Thrinchiniensis predicto inter possessores discordiam aut sinistri quippiam oriri contingerit ex tunc iisdem possessoribus facultas data est ab[s]que capitaneo generali et regie maiestatis exerint eandem discordiam et sinistram machinacionem inter se se absque ullo penitus inpedimentis componere posse. Decimoquarto sepedictis capitaneis et possessoribus castri Th[ri]nchiniensis post resignacionem et assignacionem castri eiusdem pro obitu tres septimane immediate sequentes permissae sunt et concesse ea lege ut se se in eiusmodi temporis spacio ex regnis et prominentiis prefate regie maiestatis Hungarie et Bohemie etc. ad alia loca conferant nec in ullum presidium in hoc regie Hungarie se se recipiant extra tamen eiusmodi eorum obitui liber et securus

salvus conductus apertusque passus dari et permitti debebit. Ultimo captivi quicumque in ista obsidione et bello hungarico ab utraque parte capti absque ulla lesione aut impedimento libere utrimque rursus assignare debebunt. In super nos predictis capitaneis et possessoribus castri Thrinchiniensis sub honore et fide nostra christiana divisioneque honoris capitum rerum et bonorum nostrorum scienter per presentes promittimus et pollicemur suprascriptos omnis articulos et conclusiones in omnibus suis punctis et contentis quantumcumque nobis iidem articuli seu conclusiones iniungunt sive subterfugio contradiccione aut impedimento aliquas firmiter in violabiliterque servare et exequi nec contra eosdem vel consilio vel facto quitque agere aut idem nostris faciundem permittere debere et velle nullo [p]enitus modo sub predicta obligacione omnium nostrorum honore capitum rerum et bonorum si[ne] omni dolo et fraude. In cuius rei robur [et] testimonium efficacius maioremque securitatem secreta [et] signeta nostra solita litteris presentibus appo[su]imus et easdem manibus nostris propriis subscripsimus. Datum in castris ad Thrinchinium metarum in festo Nativitatis beati Iohannis Baptiste, anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo vigesimo octavo.

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