

Zrínyi Miklós

Zrínyi Miklós (1620-1664)

“Sors bona, nihil aliud”^[1]

Statesman, poet, general and founder of the Hungarian military science

Harald Pöcher

Zrínyi Miklós or Zrinski Nikola^[2] respectively, is honoured in Hungary and Croatia as a great son of the nation. In Hungary many monuments were erected to his honour and many places and the Zrínyi Miklós Nemzetvédelmi Egyetem (ZMNE-Military University of Hungary/ZMMU) are named after him. In Austria, Zrínyi Miklós is not well-known. Only the Zrínyi-lane, a small lane in the 20th district in Vienna (Brigittenau), is named after him. The insignificance of Zrínyi Miklós in Austria is only understandable, when we study his life and his relationship with the Imperial Court in Vienna. Zrínyi Miklós was an ardent Hungarian patriot, and during his life he always had the dream of an independent Hungary. So, for most of his life he dreamed of liberating his country from the yoke of the Habsburg Empire and therefore he wasn't welcome at the Court in Vienna. In order to understand more about the life of Zrínyi Miklós it is necessary to study the political relationship between the Habsburg monarchy and the newly occupied territories, especially Hungary and Croatia in the 16th and 17th century.

Let us begin our journey through time with the battle of Mohács in 1526. After the disastrous defeat of a Hungarian army under the command of King Lajos II by the Ottomans, Hungary was divided into three parts. The western part of Hungary and Croatia was occupied by the Habsburg Empire, while the main part of Hungary was occupied by the Ottomans and the eastern part remained an independent principality of Transylvania. In 1529, three years after the great victory of Mohács, the Ottomans attacked Vienna for the first time, but the short siege was not successful and they had to withdraw. Afterwards the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire signed an armistice.

The Hungarian part of the Habsburg Empire was a border land which was permanently threatened by Ottoman forces. In this territory, Emperor Ferdinand III was elected King of Hungary, while in the Ottoman-occupied territory of Hungary János Szapolyai was elected King and became an ally of the Sultan in Istanbul. In the western part of Hungary, Zrínyi Miklós (1508-1566) bravely fought against the Ottomans and died during the defeat of the castle of Sziget in 1566. His great-grandson Zrínyi Miklós was born at a time which was determined by the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and the permanent threat from the Ottoman Empire. During the Thirty Years' War, the Court in Vienna had to use all its military power in the northern theatre of war and therefore the Court didn't risk a second theatre of war in the eastern part of the Empire against the Ottomans. All the cries for help coming from the people who lived near the frontier to the Ottoman Empire fell on deaf ears at the Court in Vienna and petitioners weren't welcome there. So the people living near the border got the feeling of being left in the lurch shabbily. All these facts caused a more intensive fight for freedom of the aristocracy of Hungary against the Court in Vienna between the 16th and 17th century. The leaders of these fights were Prince István Bocskay, Gábor Bethlen and György Rákóczi I.

The Habsburg Emperors had no real success with getting their will. They were only successful with setting in motion the counter-reformation in the western part of Hungary. In the mid-17th century, the Ottoman Empire felt strong enough to start a large attack against the Habsburg Empire. The Ottoman forces and the army of the Habsburg Empire fought a decisive battle near Szentgotthárd/Mogersdorf in 1664. The Habsburg Army under the command of Count Raimondo Montecuccoli won the battle on August 1, 1664 and after the battle the Habsburg Emperor and the Sultan signed an armistice which was limited to 20 years. In the eyes of the Hungarian and Croatian people this armistice was a shame and dishonour because both belligerents thus arranged the freezing of the status quo. In the eyes of the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Sultanate, the armistice was an advantage, because both were able to recover their strength. The Hungarian and Croatian people, however, wanted a decisive battle to regain their independence. The disillusion led to a conspiracy of the Hungarian and Croatian nobility against the Court in Vienna. The conspiracy was put down and the leaders of the rebellion, prominent members of the Zrínyi and Rákóczi family, were beheaded in Wiener Neustadt in 1671. Shortly before the armistice ended the Ottomans started a large-scale attack against Vienna leading to the siege of the city by Ottoman troops in 1683 and the following rescue of the Habsburg Empire by a Polish Army under the command of their King Sobieski. After the decisive victory the Habsburg Empire step by step reconquered the occupied territories in Hungary.

The early years

Zrínyi Miklós^[3] was born on May 1, 1620 in Ozalj as a descendant of a noble family who owned large property in Southwest Hungary and Croatia. The Zrínyi family were rulers of the Muraköz (Medimurje), which is situated between the rivers Mura and Drava and the former Austrian border. Miklós was born as a Presbyterian but was baptized as a Catholic. At the age of six Miklós and his brother Péter became orphans and soon afterwards their guardian also died. Both young men received their further education under the supervision of the Cardinal of Esztergom, Péter Pázmány. Since his early years Zrínyi Miklós had great interest in national literature. Besides learning the most popular science disciplines, Miklós received military training. With the knowledge and the obtained skills of a soldier Zrínyi acquired the qualification for his later career as a statesman, strategist, general and founder of the Hungarian military science.

In 1634, in order to widen his horizon, Zrínyi was sent to the Jesuit College in Graz, afterwards to Vienna and then to Nagyszombat, the largest university in Hungary at the time. Between 1635 and 1637 he continued his studies in several places in Italy. In Rome he met Pope Urban VIII and was inspired by the works of Machiavelli, which influenced his political thoughts for the rest of his life. On the basis of all his studies, Zrínyi became a well-educated nobleman who spoke Hungarian, Croatian, Italian, German and Latin fluently and was a good writer too. After his return from Italy he took over the administration of his property in the Muraköz. The land of the Zrínyi was a frontier country to the Ottoman Empire and his castle of Csáktornya was only 25 miles away from the strongly fortified Ottoman castle of Kanizsa. In 1600 the Ottomans easily captured Kanizsa without much resistance by the Habsburg Empire. After that, Kanizsa became an important basis for raids and plunderings of the Habsburg borderland by Ottoman troops. The land of the Zrínyi was not fertile but it was of enormous strategic importance, because it was a buffer-country between the Ottoman-occupied part of Hungary and Styria, and therefore it was the only corridor between the Adriatic Sea and the Western part of Hungary, which was occupied by the Habsburg Empire. Because of its strategic importance the Court in Vienna carefully watched over all activities of the Zrínyi on their property. For example, the Emperor in Vienna was not amused when Zrínyi exported cattle from the port of Bakar near Rijeka to Venice, thereby neglecting all customs requirements. Zrínyi Miklós justified the export with the necessity to earn money for the improvement of the border-defence.

Though he had to fight against the Ottomans and to administer his property, Zrínyi was able to write his first poems^[4] "Fantasia Poetica", "The Hunter and the Echo", "Idillium and the Lament of Adriadne". Besides writing poems, he began collecting Hungarian literature, literature about Eastern Europe and the Ottomans. This collection was the basis of the so-called "Bibliotheca Zriniana", which will be described below. Because Zrínyi read and studied all his books carefully he was able to understand the behaviour of the Ottomans and he developed a strategic concept for the fight against the Ottoman Empire. In his opinion the Ottoman Empire of the 17th century was weaker than the Ottoman Empire of the 16th century. He therefore considered that it should be possible to defeat the Ottoman Empire by an alliance of all Christian countries of Europe and drive all Ottomans out of Hungary.

The years of the moment of truth

Around 1645, when he was 25, Zrínyi Miklós was an experienced general^[5], so the Court in Vienna ordered him to fight against the advancing Swedish troops in Moravia. Zrínyi armed an army corps at his own expenses and fought against the Swedish. During this campaign he took 2,000 prisoners. Towards the end of the Thirty Years' War, in 1647, he saved the life of the Habsburg Emperor in Eger during an attack by the Swedish General Wrangel. Afterwards he received the order to attack the army of György Rákóczy I near the river Theiss. Due to his merits he was promoted to "Ban and General of Croatia" on December 27, 1647. In his new function he had to chair the Croatian parliament. When he assumed his new function in 1649, he found a discouraged Croatian nation, so he had to do hard work to persuade the people to believe in an independent Hungary and Croatia. For Zrínyi the time of the Thirty Years' War was not only successful in military terms, but also his private life changed after he had married the Croatian noble dame Maria Eusebia Draskovic in 1649. She died one year later in 1650 and after a short time of mourning he married the Viennese Maria Sofia Löbl in 1652. They had four children. His son Adam was killed in the battle of Slankamen in 1691. At the end of the Thirty Years' War Zrínyi Miklós was on the zenith of his popularity and was welcomed at the Court in Vienna. For example, during the coronation ceremony of Emperor Ferdinand IV Zrínyi Miklós had to carry the Sword of the Empire. In his function as a Ban and General of Croatia he came more and more in conflict with the Imperial Court because he thought that Hungary and Croatia were a "regnum" with full rights and not a "partes annexae" of the Habsburg Empire with no rights. The Court in Vienna was terribly angry after Zrínyi Miklós once again exported cattle to Venice and tried to prevent the export by force of arms. For Zrínyi the export of cattle was necessary in order to earn money for the fortification of his border against the Ottoman Empire. After this incident Zrínyi went to Vienna to explain the reason for his behaviour, but the Court had no sympathy for his activities. The Court was also displeased with Zrínyi's constant fighting against the Ottoman troops which were based at the fortress of Kanizsa. All this fighting did not only displease the Court in Vienna but also the Ottoman General Suleiman. As a deterrent, the Ottoman Empire deployed more troops to the border. So the Imperial Court was afraid of a larger attack of the Ottoman Empire against Vienna.

For Zrínyi, the time of constant fighting was stimulating for his military studies^[6], because over the short distance of only 25 miles from his home castle Zrínyi could hear the rumble of gunfire every day. His first work was "Tábori kis tracta" (The organisation of a field camp), a field manual and instruction of how to manage a field camp for 24,000 - 36,000 soldiers. It was written between 1646 and 1651. Other works were "Adriai tengernek Syrenaja" (The Sirenian of the Adriatic Sea) consisting of several parts, for example "Szigeti veszedelem" (The danger for the castle Sziget). In "Szigeti veszedelem" he described the heroic defence of the castle of Sziget by his great-grandfather during the siege in 1566.

During his campaign against the Ottomans in Bosnia in 1651, he intercepted a message by the Grand Vizier addressed to the commander of the castle of Kanizsa. In the letter the Grand Vizier urged the commander of Kanizsa to take part in the fighting against Zrínyi more actively. He also wrote that in the case of further inactivity the commander of the castle would be punished with death. So the letter was convincing proof that the Ottoman troops were not in the best condition and in Zrínyi's opinion it was now a good time for a large-scale attack of all Christian nations against the Ottomans. After the campaign in Bosnia the Court forbade all activities against the Ottomans. Since that time the atmosphere between Zrínyi and the Court was even more clouded. The behaviour of the Court inspired Zrínyi to write "Vitéz hadnagy" (The brave Lieutenant) between 1650 and 1653. During this time Zrínyi did not only have problems with the Court but also a conflict with Count Erdő about how to handle a rebellion of peasants occurring on the property of Erdő in 1653. Zrínyi had the opinion that peasants were important for recruitment in times of emergency and should therefore be treated well. Erdő had the contrary opinion and wanted to solve the problem by force of arms. At nearly the same time the position of a Nádor (=the most powerful man after the king) became vacant and Zrínyi hoped to get the position. Especially in times without a king holding the same nationality as his subjects the Nádor, who is of the same nationality like his subjects, was an important person for a country. At the Court in Vienna Zrínyi's opponents upset his plans, and in 1655 Wesselényi Miklós was appointed Nádor. So the Court was able to control Hungary and Croatia in a better way. Feeling snubbed, Zrínyi made efforts to install a king in Hungary, who was a Hungarian and he made the proposal to elect a new king. To lay emphasis on his request, Zrínyi wrote "Mátyás király életerl való elmélkedések" (Thoughts about the life of King Matthias). With "Mátyás király életerl való elmélkedések", Zrínyi wanted to show the Hungarian nation an ideal king. For Zrínyi King Mátyás was such a king, ruling over all Hungary and large parts of Eastern Austria. After this secret appeal to the Hungarian nation to shake off the yoke of the Habsburgs over Hungary, Zrínyi lost all confidence of the Court in Vienna.

Zrínyi spent his last years with the fortification of his property and writing poems about the Ottomans: "Ne bántsá a magyart! Az török áfium ellen való orvosság" (Hands off of the Hungarians! An antidote against the Ottoman opium); and about the behaviour of Count Raimondo Montecuccoli as a general: "Névtelen levél" (An anonymous letter). The poem written in 1660 about the Ottomans was widely read and became very popular, causing great effect. In this poem Zrínyi made the proposal to activate and organize a Hungarian army and to arm the whole population in wartime. With the construction of the fortress Új-Zrínyivár in 1663 Zrínyi wrote the last chapter in his life, fighting against the Ottomans[7]. To arm his newly built fortress, Zrínyi ordered 10 cannons in Vienna. Today, the exact appearance and position are not known, but scientists of Zrínyi Miklós Nemzetvédelmi Egyetem and the Military Museum in Budapest researched the appearance and the exact position of the fortress. The fortress was built on no-man's-land or on Ottoman soil and the construction work bothered both the Court in Vienna and the Court in Istanbul. Istanbul removed the commander of Kanizsa, who was beheaded because he was not able to stop the construction work. In Istanbul the Austrian ambassador was cited to the Sultan and was warned that the construction of the fortress near the border sharply jeopardized the relationship between the Sultanate and the Court in Vienna. Therefore the Imperial Court labelled Zrínyi a disloyal subject, who had built a fortress in order to pursue his private interests. During the time when Zrínyi built his fortress the Emperor sent troops under the command of Montecuccoli to Transylvania to help the ruler of the principality against Ottoman attacks. On the march to Transylvania the soldiers committed many atrocities on the civilian people but they couldn't save the life of the prince of Transylvania. After the atrocities had become known to the public, Montecuccoli wrote his version, in which he justified his behaviour. The result was a storm of indignation. Zrínyi Miklós answered in his own way, publishing "Névtelen levél", in which he got even with Montecuccoli.

In 1663, when it was clear for Zrínyi that the Ottomans were planning a large attack, he tried to suggest the best possible defensive measures to the Court, but the Court refused to listen to his advice. Zrínyi Miklós was well informed about the plan of the Sultanate and he asked for more troops to defend his property. In the concrete situation the Court in Vienna only deployed 6,000 soldiers to the Styrian border. Faced with the War of Spanish Succession the Viennese Court played for time and the Sultanate did the same because it needed more time to deploy and organize their forces for the planned large attack. In the negotiations with the Sultanate the Court in Vienna therefore also talked about a handover of the newly built fortress of Zrínyi Miklós. Being on his own, Zrínyi was in a similar situation like his great-grandfather during the siege of the castle of Szigetin 1566. Zrínyi concentrated nearly 20,000 soldiers near the border but the circumstances were desperate after the Pasha of Kanizsa had sent him a message that the whole Ottoman army would soon attack the fortress. This worst case didn't happen, because the Ottoman army attacked a Hungarian army near Érsekújvár and defeated it. After the Court had received knowledge about the advance of a large Ottoman army marching from Belgrade to the border, Zrínyi was allowed to fight against the Ottomans. After Zrínyi had defeated Ottoman troops that had attacked his fortress, he was promoted to "totius patronus Hungariae dux" (leader of the Hungarian nation) and was entrusted with the command over Hungarian troops that should fight independently of Montecuccoli's troops. Zrínyi Miklós took over the difficult command shortly after the Hungarian troops had been defeated near Érsekújvár. He could dispose of only 15,000 discouraged soldiers and he undertook all necessary efforts to motivate them. He reorganized the troops between October and November 1663 and at the end of November Zrínyi fought a successful battle against the Ottomans, but he was removed from his position as a result of an intrigue of the Imperial Court. So, for Zrínyi, it was once again not possible to start a surprise-attack along the river Drava up to the Danube in order to prevent the Ottomans from crossing the river as he had planned before. It would have been undoubtedly interesting if the plan had been realized to see what would have happened because due to his observations Zrínyi knew that the Ottoman commanders didn't like warfare in wintertime. Even without the help of the Court, Zrínyi won some skirmishes against the Ottomans.

In times of real trouble the Court in Vienna couldn't ignore Zrínyi as a skilled general. So the Emperor's army was divided into three parts. The first part was assigned to Count Jean-Louis Raduit de Souches, who was to fight in the northern part of Hungary. The second and largest part commanded by Montecuccoli was to advance against Buda and the third part was assigned to Zrínyi, who had to attack the Ottomans alongside the river Drava. The operation verified Zrínyi's evaluation about the Ottomans' aversion to warfare in wintertime. During the campaign Zrínyi destroyed the bridge of Eszék (=Osijek) in February 1664. It was a great operative success because the Ottomans couldn't cross the river within a period of more months to reinforce their troops in Hungary, which were standby for a large attack against the Habsburg Empire. The destruction was an important precondition for the defeat of the Ottomans in the Battle of Szentgotthárd /Mogersdorf on August 1, 1664. After the destruction of the bridge of Eszék, Zrínyi began to siege the castle of Kanizsa, but had to withdraw, because he received no support from Montecuccoli. Soon afterwards, the Ottomans attacked the fortress Új-Zrínyivár and razed it to the ground. Zrínyi had to withdraw all his troops up to the Styrian border. Afterwards the story was told that Zrínyi said: "I built the fortress in the wrong place, though I knew that it couldn't be defended." Possibly the story is right. From the present point of view the fortress was built on the best possible place, because it functioned as a bridgehead. Not long after the destruction of the fortress the decisive battle of Szentgotthárd/Mogersdorf was fought on August 1, 1664. The Ottoman campaign ended with the armistice of Vasvár signed between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Sultanate. The armistice provided a 20 year period of regeneration for both belligerents. In the eyes of the Hungarian and Croatian people the armistice was an infamy because they had hoped that after the victory at Szentgotthárd/Mogersdorf the Austrian army and their allies would begin a campaign for Hungary's liberation from the yoke of the Ottomans. While the Court in Vienna showed only a minimum of sympathy for Zrínyi Miklós, the French King Louis XIV admired him. He gave him 10,000 Thalers and called the armistice unfriendly against France because side by side with the Austrian troops French troops had fought very successfully at the battle of Szentgotthárd/Mogersdorf. In the late summer Zrínyi Miklós and his brother Péter held secret negotiations with the French ambassador in Vienna to organize an alliance between France and Hungary to liberate Hungary. At nearly the same time the Court in Vienna changed its opinion about how to manage the Ottoman threat. On November 25, 1664 the Court invited all Hungarian noblemen to a conference. For Zrínyi, the invitation came too late, because he was deadly wounded by a wild boar during hunting on November 18, 1664. After Zrínyi's death, all Europe mourned and it was reported that the Court in Vienna had its hand in it and the death of Zrínyi was an attempted murder. All these things helped Zrínyi and his literary works to become more and more popular.

Zrínyi Miklós as a pioneer of Hungarian military science

When preparing to write his works Zrínyi read many works by foreign writers. The greatest impression on him left the works of Machiavelli, which Zrínyi could read in Italian. Zrínyi wasn't only a translator of all these works, he also developed the thoughts and added his own interpretations. As a result Zrínyi wrote single masterpieces. In this article we want to discuss "Tábori kis tracta", "Vitéz hadnagy", "Mátyás király életéről való elmélkedések", "Ne bántsá a magyart! Az török áfium ellen való orvosság" and "Névtelen levél".

Tábori kis tracta[8]

(The organization of a field camp)

Zrínyi wrote "Tábori kis tracta" between 1646 and 1651 but it wasn't finished. It was a preliminary study to his even larger works. In "Tábori kis tracta" Zrínyi discussed technical details and administrative questions concerning the organization of a field camp for 24,000 (18,000 infantrymen, 6,000 cavalry) and 36,000 (24,000 infantrymen, 12,000 cavalry) soldiers. Besides the organization of the field camp he discussed the behaviour of a commander and how he should behave towards his subordinate soldiers.

Vitéz hadnagy[9]

(The brave Lieutenant)

"Vitéz hadnagy" is not only a work of prose written in Hungarian but it is also a military treatise. It stayed unfinished like "Tábori kis tracta". "Vitéz hadnagy" consists of three parts and two short introductions for a better understanding of the main part. The first part consists of six chapters. Model for this part was the Italian translation of "Le Ministre d'Etat, avec le veritable usage de la politique moderne", written by Jean de Silhon, a secretary of the French Cardinal Richelieu. The six chapters are titled: 1. The science of war depends on research work; 2. Soldiers must be careful, resolute and watchful; 3. In warfare there exist no standing rules; 4. For a lieutenant it is important to track the target and to put through his tracked target; 5. A lieutenant must have a clear opinion about the best time for a campaign and about the best time to destroy and annihilate an enemy; and 6. A soldier is nothing without the necessary luck. The second part consists of aphorisms, essentially 128 parts by Tacitus. The third part, which is titled "Centuriae", was never finished and consists of 52 reflections about military topics. In "Vitéz hadnagy" Zrínyi Miklós used aphorisms and parables to characterize the nature of a general. He compared a braced general with a skilled clockmaker. Like a clockmaker a general can only be successful, when he puts all parts together using a construction plan. A general is the soul of an army, he must be eloquent and should be alert and has to set a good example for his men.

Mátyás király életéről való elmékedések[10]

(Thoughts about the life of King Matthias)

Zrínyi Miklós wrote the work about King Matthias to his pleasure between 1656 and 1657. The title shows us that the work is not only a simple biography of King Matthias but a description and an evaluation of all the achievements of King Matthias. At the beginning of the work, Zrínyi asks why Hungary does not have a king like Mátyás and points out that such a wish raises wrong hopes, which cannot be fulfilled at present. Mátyás király was a soldier, statesman, expert, patron of arts and a prominent figure of the Renaissance who reigned over his nation on the zenith of his power and he was beloved by all his subjects. He carried on three wars and captured Vienna in 1485, which was his capital for a short time. Mátyás király was a logical enemy of the Habsburgs, because the Habsburgs saw themselves as the legitimate heirs of the kingdom of Hungary and called Hunyadi János, the father of Mátyás, a usurper. They justified this with the descent from the female line of the Arpad family. During the days when Mátyás ascended the throne his situation was more dangerous than the one of Hercules, who was assaulted by two snakes while lying in the crib. Mátyás was threatened by three kings, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the King of Bohemia and the Sultan. Zrínyi compared the character of Mátyás with the characteristic features of the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand III. Zrínyi characterized Ferdinand as a melancholy and dogged man who led a reclusive life. Mátyás was characterized as an extrovert and generous man. Zrínyi wrote that he couldn't understand all the actions of King Mátyás because they were not logically understandable. For example it was a riddle for him that Mátyás didn't fight against a weak Austrian Monarchy; instead he fought against a well-armed Ottoman Empire. Using all his military power to attack the Ottomans, the Western part of his property was defenceless. The consequence was a campaign of Austrian troops into Hungary and a devastation of large parts of West-Hungary. He compared the situation which happened during the reign of Mátyás with his own time and concluded that Austria and Hungary could only live in peace together, when the team of advisers at the Court honestly advised the Emperor and didn't play intrigues against the Hungarian nation. With the work "Mátyás király életéről való elmékedések" Zrínyi wanted to tell his nation that it was highly necessary that Hungary get a king who was a Hungarian and who was willing to fight for his land even with his life.

Ne bántsd a magyart! Az török áfium ellen való orvosság

(Hands off of the Hungarians! An antidote against the Ottoman opium)[11]

Zrínyi wrote this work in Hungarian, deeply impressed after the capture of Nagyvárad (=Oradea) by the Ottomans in 1660. It is a treatise of episodes in chronological order. That means that every episode is based on the preceding one. Zrínyi used all his knowledge and borrowed many ideas from other authors. In the introduction and the first chapter he borrowed some ideas from the work "Exclamatio, sive de acie contra Turcam institutenda consilium" (A plan for a campaign against the Ottomans) written by Ogier Ghislain de Busbecque. Zrínyi characterized the Ottomans as a dragon which insatiably ate up village after village. The dragon prowled around like a wild boar and destroyed all the good wine. Having captured a village he drove thousands of Hungarians into slavery. Afterwards Zrínyi took the animals as an example of how they were willing to risk their lives to defend their freedom. Zrínyi drew unmistakable lessons from his explanations: The whole Hungarian people had to fight like animals for an independent Hungary, even at the risk of their lives. But Zrínyi was a realist and he also wrote that at the time Hungary did not have the necessary means and possibilities to fight for its independence successfully. He compared the situation of Hungary of his time with the situation of Greece during the Persian Wars and concluded that Hungary should take Greece as a shining example. After a short evaluation of the current strategic and security situation around Hungary he concluded that every country which had the serious potential to help Hungary also had a self-interest in helping. No country will help only out of charity. Therefore Hungary had to organize an army by itself consisting of at least 12,000 soldiers and the army should be best-possibly armed and trained.

He explained the best way to stay independent using the words by Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus: "Let him who desires peace prepare for war. Therefore, he who wishes for peace should prepare for war; he who desires victory, should carefully train his soldiers; he who wants favourable results, should fight relying on skill, not on choice". Zrínyi Miklós held the opinion that the Hungarian nation had become soft because of the long period of peace. Hungary therefore had no well trained officers and should quarter a Hungarian Army in a closed camp. Furthermore, Hungary should install a reconnaissance and an intelligence service. Zrínyi proposed a 12,000-strong Hungarian army, but this army was only the regular army for peacetime. In wartime the whole nation was to be mobilized in order to have a good chance of success. In addition, he proposed that the nobility should finance the army and not every citizen with their paid taxes. Therefore, the proposals of Zrínyi were instructions on how to organize and finance an army in peace- and wartime. Zrínyi concluded his work with the words: "All who trust in God and love the country should sing the song of Deborah with me "My heart is with the King of Israel, who gives it to his country. God save him". And he added: "Where there's a will, there's a way".

Névtelen levél (mely Montecuccoli ellen intézett hatásos irat)[12]

(Anonymous letter, an efficient writing against Montecuccoli)

For Zrínyi the Austrian General Montecuccoli was the antitype of a general, which he describes in his other works. In his eyes Montecuccoli was a lazy, intellectually inferior and egoistic general. After his inglorious campaign in Hungary against the Ottomans Montecuccoli wrote a memorandum for the public - not personally signed - in which he justified his proceedings. Montecuccoli characterized the Hungarians as militarily illiterate persons who were not able to understand his faultless campaign. Zrínyi replied in his own way with a public note in which he criticized Montecuccoli sharply. Zrínyi explained: Although Montecuccoli had a wonderful army, he destroyed this army without fighting a battle against an enemy. Montecuccoli abused rather his own men than the enemy and watched without taking action while the Ottomans were leading 100,000 Hungarians into slavery. Such behaviour is worse than the behaviour of a vile executioner. After his critiques, Zrínyi made proposals to find the best possible strategy to fight against the Ottomans.

Bibliotheca Zriniana

The Bibliotheca Zriniana[13] is a collection of 529 books and 29 manuscripts which belongs to the Biblioteka Nacionalna I Sveučilisna (National Library of the University of Zagreb). Most of the books and manuscripts were collected by Zrínyi Miklós himself. Today we don't know what the library in the Castle of Csáktornya looked like. Around 1662 Zrínyi began to catalogue his books. Compared with other libraries of the 17th century the library of Zrínyi was on the level of the best libraries in Europe and it was the best library in Hungary. After Zrínyi's death in 1664 Péter inherited the Castle and the library. Péter as a leader of the rebellion had to flee and most of the property of the Zrínyi was confiscated. Ádám also collected books during his studies at the University. After Ádám's death his wife married a Moravian nobleman and moved to his castle. She also moved the library to Bitov in Moravia. During that time the library consisted of 850 books. In Bitov the books were badly stored. Only in the late 19th century a member of the family found the books and began to sort them using the catalogue of 1662. The Hungarian Academy of Science gained knowledge of the discovery of the Bibliotheca Zriniana and sent scientists to Bitov to undertake research work and to catalogue the books and manuscripts. After the owner's death the library was auctioned. Because the director of the Hungarian National Museum heard about the auction too late, the Viennese bookseller S. Kende bought the books. Kende was an expert and knew their real value. He stored the books, waiting to get a good price. Kende put advertisements in many newspapers under the title "Bibliotheca Zriniana (Vienna, 1893)" and fixed the price with 12,000 Hungarian Forint. Because Hungarian booksellers, museums and libraries did not have enough money, the Library of the University of Zagreb in Croatia bought the books. Afterwards the collection was named "Bibliotheca Zriniana". On the occasion of the anniversary of Zrínyi Miklós's 300th birthday the Hungarian Academy of Science in Budapest borrowed the books in 1918 and staged an exhibition with the books of the Bibliotheca Zriniana at the entrance hall for a short time.

The research work about the Bibliotheca Zriniana has not been finished until today. More research work is necessary to get clarity about the whereabouts of all books of the former library of Zrínyi Miklós.

Concluding remarks

In turbulent times a nation needs strong leaders in order to be able to keep its identity in the case of foreign rule to regain its independence and freedom. Since the Hungarian Nation settled in Central Europe in the 10th century, Hungary has suffered a lot. One of the most difficult periods of the nation was the time between the 16th and 17th centuries. During this period the Hungarian nation was divided and occupied by different foreign nations and their troops. In the 16th and 17th century the Zrínyi family made tremendous efforts to regain Hungary's independence. The most important member of the Zrínyi family during that time was Zrínyi Miklós (1620-1664) who fought a war against the Ottomans for 25 years, a war for freedom and independence of the Hungarian and Croatian nations. During this relatively short period for a human life Zrínyi left a work as a statesman, general, poet and military scientist which is remarkable and unique in Hungary. It was not granted to him to see an independent Hungary and Croatia, but with his works Zrínyi laid the basis for his successors to fight for an independent Hungary and Croatia successfully. Zrínyi Miklós's work isn't well known outside Hungary, because until now it hasn't been translated into the world languages. It is about time to translate the military works of Zrínyi into German to use them for all courses at the Military Universities, Colleges and Academies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In a united Europe all the military scientific achievements of all states should be combined to form a common European military scientific basis which can be used as a manual by the European Army. The military works of Zrínyi Miklós should be taken into consideration in any case.

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Notes:

[1] A good fate and nothing else

[2] See Molnár Miklós: Geschichte Ungarns, Krämer, Hamburg 1999

[3] Kovács Sándor (ed.): Angol életrajz Miklósról, Zrínyi Katonai K.; Budapest 1987 and Zrínyi Miklós on <http://hu.wikipedia.org>

[4] See Jones Mervyn D.: Five Hungarian Writers, At the Clarendon Press Oxford 1966, page 4

[5] See footnote 3

[6] See Jones Mervyn D., page 29 and 33

[7] Zrínyi Ujivár is an object for research work of ZMNE and Military Museum in Budapest (Prof. Padányi, Németh, Négyesi). More information about the project is available on www.belezn.hu.

[8] See Jones Mervyn D., p. 33

[9] See Jones Mervyn D., pp. 36-39

[10] See Jones Mervyn D., pp. 44-55

[11] See Jones Mervyn D., pp. 49-53

[12] See Komjathy A.T.: A thousand years of the Hungarian art of war, Rakoczi Foundation Toronto 1982, page 41

[13] See www.eruditio.hu/zrinyi3d/bz/hist_engl.html

