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**The life of Anton Eszterházy and his role in the Rákóczi's War of
Independence according to his letters to Francis II Rákóczi**

Doctoral (PhD) hypotheses

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I. Short historiographical summary

The biography of Anton Eszterházy has never been researched until now, however, most of the books and articles about the Rákóczi's War of Independence mentioned his name. The most significant results in the research of his life has been accomplished by Kálmán Thaly, Oszkár Firbás and István Szabó. In 1901 Thaly published the camp book of Anton Eszterházy,¹ in which he wrote a quite detailed biography, and the published sources of this book gave us many data about the military activity of Eszterházy. István Szabó published Eszterházy's letters to his second wife, countess Mária Anna Nigrelli, between 1701 and 1706,² these letters provides us very interesting information about the military career of Anton Eszterházy in the Habsburg army and about his private life. Oszkár Firbás wrote a short article about the joining of Eszterházy to the Rákóczi's War of independence.³

Beside the above mentioned historians we have to mention Géza Perjés and Imre Bánkúti. Géza Perjés, in his article⁴ about the sieges of Esztergom in 1706, analysed the role of Eszterházy in these operations. Imre Bánkúti previously wrote shortly about the role of Eszterházy in the defence of Érsekújvár⁵ and later in his book about county of Veszprém in the Rákóczi's War of Independence he wrote about the campaigns of Eszterházy in the defence of the transdanubian territory.⁶

In general we can say that most of the books and articles about the Rákóczi's War of Independence mentioned the name of Eszterházy so it is unfortunate that his biography was not completed until now.

¹ KÁLMÁN THALY: *The camp book of count and kurucz general Anton Eszterházy 1706–1709. Annex. Record of count and general Dániel Eszterházy 1708.* (Gróf Eszterházy Antal kurucz generális tábori könyve 1706–1709. Függelék. Gróf Eszterházy Dániel tábornok jegyzőkönyve 1708.) Magyar Tudományos Akadémia 1901.

² SZABÓ ISTVÁN: *The letters of Anton Eszterházy, count of Galántha and Fraknó to his wife, countess Mária Anna Nigrelli. 1701–1706.* (Galánthai és fraknói gróf Esterházy Antal levelei feleségéhez gróf Nigrelli Mária Annához 1701–1706.) 1940

³ OSZKÁR FIRBÁS: Additives to the join to Rákóczi of count and imperial colonial Anton Eszterházy. (Adalékok gróf Eszterházy Antal császári ezredesnek Rákóczi hűségére téréséhez.) In.: *A szegedi Baross Gábor Főreáliskola 1925/26. tanévi értesítője.*

⁴ GÉZA PERJÉS: The sieges of Esztergom at 1706 and the military operations associated with the sieges. (Esztergom 1706. évi ostromai és az ostromokkal kapcsolatos hadműveletek.) In.: *Hadtörténelmi közlemények*, 1954 (1.évf.) 2. sz. 136–184.

⁵ IMRE BÁNKÚTI: *The letters of Sándor Károlyi from Érsekújvár and his three regulation about castle defence.* (Károlyi Sándor levelei Érsekújvárból és három várvédő szabályzata.) Vay Ádám Múzeum Baráti Köre, 2000.

⁶ IMRE BÁNKÚTI: *Veszprém county in the Rákóczi's War of Independence.* (Veszprém megye a Rákóczi-szabadságharcban.) Balatonfüred Városért Közalapítvány kiadványai, 18. 2005.

II. Topic choice and significance

The Rákóczi's War of Independence, this very important chapter of the Hungarian history in the 18th century, has been researched by many historians, still it can provide us new results because of its significance and complexity. As a topic of my thesis I chose the life and role of Anton Eszterházy in the Rákóczi's War of Independence. I started my thesis with the purpose that through the biography of a person, who belonged to the leadership of the war of independence, unlike the old point of view which focused on prince Rákóczi, I would like to research the events from a new aspect. The introduction of the life and role of an aristocrat looked very useful because the role of the aristocrats was evaluated very negatively or from the aspect of the development of Hungary very injurious. For this reason it looked important to come to know the aspect of a member of this group of the society.

In my thesis, I divided the life of Anton Eszterházy to nine chapters from his childhood until his death. I gave a detailed description about the military carrier of Eszterházy in the Habsburg army, the marriages of Eszterházy, his relation with his family, the motives and circumstances of the joining of Eszterházy to the war of independence, the military and of the war of independence which were in relation with Eszterházy and the very significant activity of Eszterházy as a military organiser. Beside the above mentioned topics I introduced his role in political events, like the diet of Szécsény, the convention of the transdanubian counties at Sümeg in 1708 or the arrest of Imre Bezerédj. During my research I collected the letters and other documents related to Eszterházy, in my thesis I would like to publish Eszterházy's letters to Francis II Rákóczi too. I felt it very important because through these letters we can know the personality of Eszterházy and his relation to Rákóczi, this was not researched in the past.

III. The methodology and the sources of the thesis

During my research I thought important to investigate not only Eszterházy's documents but also the documents of his superiors and inferiors because only in this way could I receive a full picture about his motivations and the circumstances which surrounded him. I did not have to always research in the archives because a large part of the documents of the Rákóczi's War of Independence has been already published. I researched not only the correspondence of Eszterházy with other officers but also their other documents.

The greater part of my thesis attend with Eszterházy's activity in the war of independence, however, I considered important to present his childhood, his carrier in the Habsburg army and his marriages too. The most important sources of these ages are the letters of Eszterházy to his brother-in-law, Ferenc Batthyány (*NAH CA X7435 (P1314) 4806. d. 11880. Anton Eszterházy to Ferenc Batthyány 06. 01. 1688; NAH CA X7435 (P1314) 4806. d. 11881. Anton Eszterházy to Ferenc Batthyány 17. 03. 1688; NAH CA X7435 (P1314) 4806. d. 11882. Anton Eszterházy to Ferenc Batthyány 02. 09. 1688; NAH CA X7435 (P1314) 4806. d. 11883. Anton Eszterházy to Ferenc Batthyány 02. 01. 1689; NAH CA X7435 (P1314) 4806. d. 11884. Anton Eszterházy to Ferenc Batthyány 01. 02. 1689; NAH CA X7435 (P1314) 4806. d. 11885. Anton Eszterházy to Ferenc Batthyány 12. 08. 1690*), the historical song of Pál Kőszeghy about the marriage of Miklós Bercsényi, the letters of Eszterházy to his uncle, Paul Esterházy during his captivity (*NAH CA X89 4699.d. 11. 826. Anton Eszterházy to Paul Esterházy 10. 02. 1699; NAH CA X89 4699.d. 11. 827. Anton Eszterházy to Paul Esterházy 03. 04. 1699; NAH CA X89 4699.d. 11. 828. Anton Eszterházy to Paul Esterházy 06. 09. 1699*). The most valuable sources to the military career of Eszterházy, before he joined the rebellion, were the entries of register-books of War Council of Vienna. Besides these entries, his letters to his second wife, Mária Anna Nigrelli were also very important and well detailed sources.

Beside the letters of Eszterházy to Rákóczi, his other letters to Bercsényi, Simon Forgách, Sándor Károlyi and to other Hungarian officers and Eszterházy's other documents, his orders to the counties, since many times these orders were responses to the orders of the Habsburg officers and commanders, were good sources of the propaganda war between the supporters of Rákóczi and the royalists. The investigation of these sources was easier, especially in the period between 1706 and 1709, the camp

book of Eszterházy (we know only his camp book, the other kuruc generals's do not) contained the large parts of these documents, and was published by Kálmán Thaly in the first decade of the 20th century. The volumes of the Archivum Rákócziánium series were also published by Kálmán Thaly and they were basic sources for the years of the war of independence because Eszterházy was usually mentioned on the pages of these books and it contained many letters of Francis II Rákóczi, Miklós Bercsényi and János Bottyán. The diaries, memoirs and newspapers also helped me to reconstruct the role of Eszterházy. The most important ones from these were the memoirs of Rákóczi and Louis Lemaire and the articles of the Mercurius Veridicus and the Theatrum Europaeum.

Unfortunately, I found much fewer sources about the exile of Eszterházy than about his activity in the war of independence or in his years in the service of the emperor. Besides few of his letters to Rákóczi and Simon Forgách, the most important sources of these years was published by Imre Karácson in his book, *The Turkish documentation of the Rákóczi-emigration*, which summarized the researches of Imre Karácsony in the archives of Istanbul. The other very important sources were the fictitious letters of Kelemen Mikes (he wrote these letters to his not existing aunt). A very interesting source of these years was a memorandum of Eszterházy which he wrote to Francis II Rákóczi presumably a few weeks after the treaty of Szatmár and he analysed the situation and the foreign political opportunities of the exiled participants of the Rákóczi's War of Independence.

I found the largest parts of the investigated sources in the Country Archive of the National Archives of Hungary, in the National Széchényi Library and in the Österreichische Staatsarchiv. (**Country Archive of the National Archives of Hungary:** *E174 - Archive of the Hungarian Chamber. Archivum familiae Eszterházy.; G8 - Archive of Thököly's War of Independence. Documents of the family of Thököly.; G15 - Archive of the Rákóczi's War of Independence. Archive of Prince Francis II Rákóczi. Part taken to the emigration.; G16 - Archive of the Rákóczi's War of Independence. Archive of Prince Francis II Rákóczi. Part remained at Munkács.; G19 - Archive of the Rákóczi's War of Independence. Princeley Chancellery.; G24 - Archive of the Rákóczi's War of Independence. Chancellery.; G26 - Archive of the Rákóczi's War of Independence. Requests, letters, records. 1700–1710.; G28 - Archive of the Rákóczi's War of Independence. Assembled parts. Military documents.; P287 - Family archives. Gácsi branch of the Forgách family. Registered documents.; P396 - Family archives.*

*Family Károlyi. Acta publica.; X89 - Archive of the ducal branch of the Esterházy family. Palatines Paul(P125) 1615–1713.;X7435 - Archive of the family Batthyány. Missiles(P1314). National Széchényi Library: 1389/2 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. 1703.; 1389/4 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. 1705. .; 1389/5 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. 1706.; 1389/6 - Folio Hungarica. Thaly Kálmán kuruckori okmánygyűjteménye. Eredeti okmányok. 1707. év.; 1389/7 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. 1707.; 1389/9 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. 1708.; 1389\11 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. 1709.; 1389/15 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. 1710.; 1389/16 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. 1710.; 1389/17 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Original documents. Copies. Chamber archives. Antecedents. 1703–1705.; 1389/18 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Copies. Chamber archives. 1706–7.; 1389/20 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages. Copies. Chamber archives. 1709.; 1389/26 - Folio Hungarica. The collection of documents of Kálmán Thaly from the kurucz ages.. Copies from archives of several family. (Andrássy, Bercsényi, Berényi, Bikk, Bodó, Bossányi, Csáky, Eszterházy (Kismarton), Erdődy, Eszterházy (Csesznek), Forgách.). **Österreichische Staatsarchiv Kriegsarchiv: Zentralstellen. Wiener Hofkriegsrat. Hauptreihe. Bücher 1557–1848.**)*

IV. Main topics and results

In my thesis I introduced the life of Anton Eszterházy and his role in the Rákóczi's War of Independence through new sources. I think it is an important result that I was able to provide a detailed description about the juvenescent life of Eszterházy which was not researched yet, for example about his student years in Sopron or his marriage with Julianna Erdődy. With the help of the published funeral speech of Julianna Erdődy I was able to demonstrate her personality and her death too. It was a well known fact in the Hungarian historiography that Eszterházy was captured by the Turks but we did not know anything about the circumstances of his captivity. With the help of the few of his letters to palatine Paul Esterházy we got some information about the every days of his captivity. With his inscription on the wall of his prison I successfully ascertained that Eszterházy was only a captain, not a major when he was captured, as other historians concluded from some of his letters.

However, István Szabó, the publisher of Eszterházy's letters to his second wife, Mária Anna Nigrelli, made a careful background research about Eszterházy's carrier in the Habsburg army, but he did not know the argument between Eszterházy and Siegbert von Heister about some estates. Eszterházy lodged a complaint against Heister because he occupied some of his estates with his troops, after the Hungarian Chancellery lodged a complaint against Heister too, he defended himself that he got these estates from the Court Chamber. I think this affair just like the unfortunate argument of Eszterházy with his commander, Adam Kollonich about Eszterházy receiving the Kollonich hussar regiment, convinced later Eszterházy to join the Rákóczi's War of Independence.

However, our historiography linked the Hungarian defeat in the battle of Koroncó at 13.06.1704 with the lost of the transdanubian territories but there were months between the two events and the kuruc forces were able to launch an attacking operation. István Szabó mentioned that Eszterházy launched a smaller operation against the Serbian forces in the southern Transdanubia. The register-book of the War Council from 1704 also mentioned this operation. With this source and with some letters from Eszterházy to his wife I was able to give a description about this operation.

I saw in the sources that Eszterházy had some kind of transdanubian provincialism as he usually raised his word in order to defend the interests of the Transdanubia and for the families and nobles who were refugees from the

Transdanubia, and were forced to leave their homes because of the unfortunate military situation.

I successfully demonstrated the role of Eszterházy in the military reforms of the Hungarian army in 1705 and 1706, during these reforms Eszterházy received important tasks in the recomposition of the army, he was responsible for the Upper-Hungarian military district, his headquarter was in Kassa. The main sources of this activity are his letters to Rákóczi. From these letters, even if some of their parts were known earlier too, we receive a very reliable view about the contrast of interests of Rákóczi and the counties about the military reforms.

The role of Eszterházy at the diet of Szécsény was not analysed yet but his activity based on the published sources and articles can be reconstructed. He took part in the diet only for a short time because of the military situation he had to leave the diet but his role on this short time proved us that he was able to become one of the most important people of the rebellion in bit more than a year.

From 1706 Eszterházy was the captain general of the Transdanubian district and as captain general he played an important role in Rákóczi's late summer campaign, the high spot of this was the occupation of Esztergom. This period has the best documentation with letters about the relation of Eszterházy and Rákóczi. During the siege of the castle and the town, Eszterházy had to launch raids against the enemy territory and he had to have in sight the main forces of the Habsburg army. However he was not trusted with the defence of the castle of Esztergom, he camped with his army not far from the town and helped to organise the defence but Esztergom was recaptured by the Habsburg forces.

I successfully introduced the activity of Eszterházy in the year of 1707 as the acting commander of the military district of Érsekújvár, his role in the successful defence of the Transdanubia in the first months of the year. From this year I found a long and interesting memoir written by Eszterházy, in this he summarized his operations and campaigns in the summer and autumn of the year and give us a good perspective about the opinion of Eszterházy.

I demonstrated the role of Eszterházy during the council of the transdanubian counties and nobles in 1708 where they accepted the military regulation of the diet of Ónod. It was the Regulamentum Universale and Eszterházy asked for contribution successfully from the counties in order to be able to continue the war of independence and for the food and raiment of the troops. Another important topic of this year was the

arrest of Imre Bezerédj who became disloyal to the war of independence. I think, as I explained in my thesis, that Eszterházy made a good decision with the arrest of Bezerédj, later even Bezerédj also admitted his sinfulness. In 1708 the Habsburg army tried to recapture the Transdanubia but Eszterházy was able to throw back this assault, thanks to the victory of Ádám Béri Balogh at Kölesd. Based on the camp book of Eszterházy it looks clear that it happened to the order of Eszterházy and it was not an independent action of Ádám Béri Balogh.

The campaigns of Eszterházy in 1709, which led to the lost of the transdanubian territories, are well known from the historiography. From this year I found an interesting data from the private life of Eszterházy. In the correspondence of Sándor Erdődy, who also had estates at the Transdanubia, I found cross-references that Eszterházy had a mistress, she was Mária Chernel, the wife of Ferenc Szegedy.

After he lost the transdanubian territories, he did not get important offices or missions from Rákóczi. Even so he did not accept the treaty of Szatmár and followed Rákóczi to his exile in Poland. In autumn of 1711 he made an unsuccessful attempt to return to Hungary. On the last pages of the thesis I introduced the role of Eszterházy and the other exiled nobles in the Habsburg-Turkish war between 1716 and 1718 and his life in his exile until his death. In the insert of my thesis I published the mostly unpublished letters of Eszterházy to Francis II Rákóczi.

V. Publication of the author connected to the topic of the thesis

László Rittling: The first months of Anton Eszterházy at the service of Francis II Rákóczi. (Eszterházy Antal első hónapjai II. Rákóczi Ferenc szolgálatában) In: András Döbör, Ferenc Zeman (Ed.): Tanulmányok a magyar történelemből a kora újkortól a legújabb korig. Szeged, 2014. 15–24.

László Rittling: Anton Eszterházy's activities in the field of organising military troops in 1705. (Eszterházy Antal hadszervező tevékenysége 1705 tavaszán) In: Peter Kónya (Ed.): Doba kuruckých bojov. Kuruc küzdelmek kora. Presov, 2014. 191–207.

László Rittling: The role of Anton Eszterházy during the sieges of Esztergom. (Eszterházy Antal szerepe Esztergom ostromai alatt.) In: Zsófia Kádár, Zsolt Kökényesi, Anna Diána Mitropulos (Ed.): KoraujkorÁSZ: Koraujkor-történettel foglalkozó doktoranduszok tanulmányai. Budapest, 2014. 230–250.

László Rittling: The memorandum of Simon Forgách to Francis II. Rákóczi, 27. august 1705. (Forgách Simon Emlékirata II. Rákóczi Ferenchez, 1705 augusztus 27.) In: Hadtörténelmi Közlemények. 126:(1) 205–219. (2013)

László Rittling: The lost of the Transdanubia in 1709. (A Dunántúl elvesztése 1709-ben.) In: Társadalom és Honvédelem. 17(3–4). 39–52. (2013)

László Rittling: The letters of Anton Eszterházy from the end of the war of independence. (Eszterházy Antal levelei a szabadságharc végéről.) Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Review. 47:(3) 29–39. (2012)

László Rittling: Reform efforts in the kuruc army. In: Belvedere Meridionale. 24:(3) 51–67. (2012)

László Rittling: The memorial of Anton Eszterházy in 1711 about the opportunities of Rákóczi in foreign policy. (Eszterházy Antal 1711. évi feljegyzése Rákóczi külpolitikai lehetőségeiről.) István Czigány, Katalin Mária Kincses (Ed.): Az újrakezdés esélye:

tanulmányok a Rákóczi-szabadságharc befejezésének 300. évfordulója alkalmából Budapest, 2012. 116–118.

The complete list of my publications can be seen in the Hungarian Scientific works database.

VI. Lectures of the author related to the topic

The role of Anton Eszterházy during the sieges of Esztergom. I. KoraujkorÁSZ conference for PhD students. Eötvös Lóránd University. 07.02. 2013.

Anton Eszterházy, the soldier of the emperor and the general of Rákóczi. TÁMOP-4.2.2/B-10/1-2010-0012 conference. University of Szeged. 24. 05. 2013.

The lost of the Transdanubia in 1709. In the service of home. National University of Public Service. 25. 10. 2013.

Anton Eszterházy in the service of the king. II. KoraujkorÁsz conference for PhD students. Eötvös Lóránd University. 06. 02. 2014.

The first kuruc months of Anton Eszterházy. I. History of Hungary from the early modern age until the modern age conference. Conference for PhD students. University of Szeged. 25. 04. 2014.

Anton Eszterházy „transdanubian” captain general in the struggles of 1707. II. History of Hungary from the early modern age until the modern age conference. Conference for PhD students. University of Szeged. 08. 05. 2015.