

**„I am come with his Forces (...) to reduce it to his Obedience”
The 1663 Siege of Neuhäusel (Nové Zámky)
Through the Eyes of an Englishman**

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Abstract: The Habsburg-Ottoman War of 1663 was a turning point in the history of the Hungarian military theatre, as for the first time in decades, open warfare broke out again with the "Arch nemesis of Christianity." The main forces of the Sublime Porte marched again Westward under the leadership of the Grand Vizier and, on top of all this, they also managed to capture the fortress of Neuhäusel (Érsekújvár, Nové Zámky), which protected the approaches to Vienna. The significance of these events and the international interest they attracted is well illustrated by the 17th century work of the author presented in this study, Sir Paul Rycaut, an English diplomat, who devotes considerable attention to the military and political events taking place in the Kingdom of Hungary. In this paper, I would like to briefly present Rycaut's reports on the siege of Érsekújvár, focusing on their accuracy and his possible sources.

Keywords: Hungarian-Ottoman wars, War of 1663, Neuhäusel/Érsekújvár/Nové Zámky, Paul Rycaut, Kingdom of Hungary.

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Introduction

The Ottoman campaign of 1663 reignited open conflict between the Habsburg Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary and the Sublime Porte, which (despite smaller engagements and border clashes) was basically dormant since the 1606 treaty of Zsitvatorok (confirmed for another 20 years by the 1642 treaty of Szőny). The Christian defeat at Gbelce (also known as Köbölkút) and the fall of Nové Zámky (Érsekújvár in Hungarian, also referred to as Neuhäusel in German and Uyvar in Ottoman sources) demonstrated the effectiveness of the Ottoman army under the leadership of Grand Vizier Köprülüzade Fazıl Ahmed pasha (1661 – 1676), but it also resulted in the resurgence of the „Türkenfurcht” (the great „fear of the Turk”), which was dominant in German territories during the 16th century and significantly decreased by the end of the Long Turkish War (1591 – 1606).

The events of the war of 1663 – 1664 received significant attention from the contemporary press. Several newspapers and accounts from

Germany to England covered the progress and the military engagements of the conflict as it became a highly popular topic during its time.

This paper focuses to present the definitive event of the 1663 Ottoman campaign: the siege of Nové Zámky in light of the historical accounts of the popular English diplomat Sir Paul Rycaut (1629 – 1700). Despite its popularity and value as a historical source it has yet to be analyzed in detail by modern-day historiography. In his work Rycaut dominantly refers to the fortress by a conemporary variant of the German name (Newhausel), thus for the sake of consistency this paper will mostly use the name Neuhäusel as well.

The Fortress of Neuhäusel (Nové Zámky)

Érsekújvár started developoing as a fortress city since 1573. After the fall of his archbishopric centre in 1543 Pál Várdai, archbishop of Esztergom (1526 – 1549) relocated his seat to Trnava (in Hungarian: Nagyszombat) and issued the construction of a new palisade near the Nitra river for better protection of the bishopric's remaining estates, which became more and more endangered by Ottoman raids. By the 1580's a larger, more modern fortress of stone and brick was built on the other bank of the river, which received the Hungarian name Újvár, or *Castrum Novum* (meaning „New Castle” both in Hungarian and Latin)¹. This provided much better protection against Ottoman attacks and it also became part of the defensive networks guarding Pressburg (in Hungarian: Pozsony, today: Bratislava, Slovakia) and Vienna. Due to its increasing strategic significance, modernizations continued until 1663, but were not fully completed by the time of Köprülü's attack.²

By the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries the fortress received its state of the art defences under the supervision of Italian military architects Giulio and Ottavio Baldigara. Six bastions of the so-called „New Italian” style were built, evolving it to a bastion fort. The bastions received the names of Zserotin; Frigyes (Frederick); Cseh; Forgách; Császár and Ernő (Ernst). Due to its strategic importance, Neuhäusel also received a royal garrison, thus becoming both a military and a civilian city. The fortress received several modernisations during the decades, but these were not completed by 1663.³

¹ The new fortress was constructed between 1580 and 1588. MATUNÁK, Mihály: Érsekújvár második alapítása. In: *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*. 1897. pp. 103–104.

² MATUNÁK, Érsekújvár, pp. 102–105; BLASKOVICS, József: *Az Újvári Ejálet török összeírásai*. Pozsony : Erdem, 1993. pp. 9–10.

³ G. ETÉNYI, Nóra: *Hadszintér és nyilvánosság – A magyarországi török háború hírei a 17. századi német újságokban*. Budapest : Balassi, 2003. pp. 88–89; DOMOKOS, György: *Ottavio Baldigara. Egy itáliai várfundáló mester Magyarországon*. Budapest : Balassi, 2000. pp. 3–41, 49–52; HAICZL, Kálmán: *Érsekújvár múltjából*. Érsekújvár : Winter Zsigmond Fia könyvnyomdája, 1931. pp. 121–127, 183.

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As part of the Hungarian fortress network, Neuhäusel cooperated with other strongholds in the area, such as Komárno (in Hungarian: Komárom, Slovakia), and its garrison took part in raids and other joint operations around Esztergom and Buda during the Long Turkish War. These incursions resulted in successes, for example in 1597, when the Christian troops raided and destroyed the Ottoman-held fortress of Baja.

In 1605 Neuhäusel suffered its first siege, when prince Stephen (István) Bocskai's (Prince of Transylvania from 1605 to 1606) army even managed to capture and hold it until 1607 (not long after Bocskai's death on the 29th december 1606). This was not the last time a Transylvanian prince captured it: during the early stages of the Thirty Years' War, in the year 1621 prince Gabriel (Gábor) Bethlen (Prince of Transylvania from 1613 to 1629) also took the city. Afterwards it once again came under royal control and had to deal with frequent Ottoman incursions during the 1650's.

Prelude to the Siege – The Ottoman Campaign of 1663

The decision to launch a campaign against the Kingdom of Hungary by the Sublime Porte was made in 1662 in order to punish the Habsburg court at Vienna for their support of the Transylvanian prince János Kemény (1661 – 1662) and for allowing the construction of the fortress Zrínyiújvár on Ottoman-controlled territory. A large scale war was not yet in the interest of the Porte since it was still engaged against Venice since 1645 in the war for Candia (1645 – 1669). A swift and concentrated Ottoman victory however would have been an effective show of force towards the Christian powers to prevent, or delay a possible international „anti-Turkish” coalition.⁴ The army lead by Grand Vizier *Köprülü* arrived at Buda by June 1663, where the details and primary targets of the campaign would then be decided.

The ultimate target of the Porte was the „*Kizil Elma*” (Golden Apple), i.e. Vienna. In order to reach it however, the Ottomans needed to breach the defensive ring of fortresses surrounding the *Kaiserstadt*. According to sources the fortress cities of Győr, Komárom and Újvár came up as possible targets. Eventually Ahmed pasha chose the latter, mainly because both Győr and Komárom were highly formidable both in terms of defences and their respective garrisons. Újvár was considered the weaker out of the three options and by capturing it the Ottomans could open the way towards Pressburg and Vienna, but also in the direction of the rich mining cities of Kremnica (in Hungarian: *Körmöcbánya*) and Banská Bystrica (in Hungarian: *Besztercebánya*). Therefore a victory here would bring the Ottomans closer to a direct attack against Vienna,

⁴ For further detail see: G. ETÉNYI, *Hadszínkép...*, pp. 86–91.

but it also could sway the demoralized Upper-Hungarian nobility to capitulate to the Porte with a status similar to Transylvania's.⁵ It is worth noting here, that Ottoman sources as well as Sir Paul Rycout do confirm this decision being made at Buda, however historians such as Nóra G. Etényi, or Géza Perjés suggest that Neuhäusel may have been marked as a target well before Köprülü arrived at Buda.⁶

The Life and Works of Sir Paul Rycout

The author of the aforementioned historical account, Paul Rycout was born in Aylesford, Kent into a wealthy merchant family in 1629.⁷ His father, Peter was knighted by king Charles I of England (1625 – 1649) in 1641, but eventually lost his fortune as a result for supporting the monarch during the time of the English Civil War (1642 – 1651).⁸ These events made Rycout a staunch Royalist, which sentiment is also reflected in his later writings. He finished his education in Trinity College, Cambridge, and became a diplomat. Sir Paul spent a considerable amount of time in France in the service of Charles II (1660 – 1685) during his exile between 1651 and 1660 and after the monarchy's restoration he became the private secretary to Heneage Finch, second Earl of Winchilsea, ambassador to the Porte, as well as secretary of the Levant Company residing in Constantinople. During his stay he wrote his first major work, titled *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, which was published in 1668 and became one of his most successful writings. He spent his years between 1667 and 1677 in Smyrna as consul for the English chartered *Levant Company*. After returning to England in 1679 he published *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches, Anno Christi 1678* and later *The History of the Turkish Empire from 1623 to 1677* (1687).

His service as a diplomat and writer was not without recognition. In 1666 he became a Fellow of the prestigious *Royal Society* and he was knighted in 1685. In 1689 he moved to Hamburg and served as resident until his death in 1700, the same year when his final work, *The History of the Turks. Beginning with the Year 1679* was published.

In his works regarding the history of the Ottoman Empire Paul Rycout

⁵ PERJÉS, Géza: Zrínyi és az 1663–64-es nagy török háború. In: IVÁNYI, Emma (trans.), HAUSNER, Gábor (ed.): *Esterházy Pál Mars Hungaricus*. Budapest: Zrínyi, 1989, pp. 48–50; CZIGÁNY, István: Az oszmánellenes háború (1660–1664). In: MÉSZÁROS, Kálmán (ed.): *Magyarország hadtörténete II. – Az oszmán hódítás kora 1526–1718*. Budapest: Zrínyi, 2020. pp. 352–353.

⁶ This can also indicate that Rycout used the Ottoman sources when writing this segment of his work. G. ETÉNYI, *Hadszintér...*, pp. 90–91.

⁷ Other sources mention 1628.

⁸ DARLING, Linda T.: Ottoman Politics Through British Eyes: Paul Rycout's „The Present State of the Ottoman Empire”. In: *Journal of World History*. Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring, 1994), p. 72.

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put great emphasis on the events in Central Europe, especially regarding the Kingdom of Hungary. What also makes his works so fascinating are the finer details regarding certain military campaigns, political events (such as the Wesselényi-conspiracy in 1664) and more important participants, which shows how well-informed he was not just regarding the Christian side, but due to his decade long diplomatic service in Istanbul and Smyrna, the Ottoman side as well. There are several instances where he explained the meaning, the background or the significance of certain Ottoman diplomatic gestures, or customs, making his historical works not just highly popular in his time, but making them valuable and fascinating historical sources as well.

The siege of 1663 and *The History of the Turks*

The siege of Neuhausen is fairly well documented and researched by modern day historiography. As such we have sufficient amount of knowledge to compare Rycaut's accounts with other contemporary sources and academic studies.

Rycaut wrote about the Grand Vizier's procession towards Buda and the further planning of the Ottoman campaign. He also reported about the developments on the Habsburg side. According to his accounts, the Imperial Diet at Regensburg approved the plans of defense as per the following: „(...) it was resolved to raise four Armies, the first for the Guard and defence of Moravia and Silesia, under the Command of Count Susa, a Native of Rochel.⁹ The second under the Command of Count Raimond Monteculi¹⁰, for safety of Raab, Neuhausen, and Komorra, and the Frontiers of Hungary. The third under Command of Count Nicholas Serini¹¹ for defence of Croatia. The fourth composed solely of Hungarians, commanded by the Palatine of that Country¹², which they reported to consist of Thirty thousand fighting men.“¹³ He also mentioned that they also started to prepare Vienna and its surroundings for a potential Ottoman attack.¹⁴

⁹ General Jean-Louis Raduit de Souches (1608 – 1682).

¹⁰ Count Raimondo Montecuccoli (1609 – 1680), Imperial general, military theorist, captain-general of Győr from 1660.

¹¹ Count Miklós VII. Zrínyi (1620 – 1664), Imperial general, military theorist, ban of Croatia from 1647.

¹² Count Ferenc Wesselényi (1655 – 1667), palatine of Hungary from 1655.

¹³ RYCAUT, Paul: *The History of the Turkish empire from the year 1623 to the year 1677 containing the reigns of the three last emperours, viz., Sultan Morat or Amurat IV, Sultan Ibrahim, and Sultan Mahomet IV, his son, the XIII emperour now reigning*. London, 1680, pp. 135–136. In the digital collection Early English Books Online 2. <https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A57997.0001.001>. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. [Last accessed September 5, 2025.]

¹⁴ „Fifthly, It was ordered that all Garisons should be well provided of Victuals and Ammunition; and that the Inhabitants of Vienna should take into every House a provision for a years maintenance, and such as were not able at their own Cost, were to abandon their Dwellings.

According to Rycaut, the Ottomans viewed the Habsburg Empire as a weak opponent in light that Emperor Leopold I seemed willing to negotiate a peace treaty. Thus the Grand Vizier „started a farther demand of fifty thousand Florins of Yearly Tribute, and two Millions of Crowns for expence of the War, to be paid by the Emperour to the Sultan.”¹⁵ These harsh terms eventually shook up the imperial princes as well which then resulted in the decisions made at the diet of Regensburg.

Rycaut described Köprülü as a highly ambitious man, but also a careful strategic planner. Upon choosing the campaign’s target he consulted with pashas residing in Ottoman Hungary and chose rather not attack the well protected and supplied fortresses of Győr and Komárno. His inexperienced troops needed a confident victory with relative low casualties in order to lift their morale, thus choosing the smaller, but still vital Neuhausel.¹⁶ The author also brought up interesting ideas regarding the Grand Vizier’s motivation, which reaches back to the unsuccessful Ottoman siege of Vienna back in 1529: „he proposed to himself, without any interruption, a clear and undisturbed March to the Gates of Vienna, which he swallowing also in his thoughts, hoped by his own success to repair the shame of Solyman’s flight from the Walls of that City, and besides the Glory of forcing the Emperour from his Imperial Seat, he should atone for the sin of the Ottoman Cowardice, and be the first who undertook to mend the actions, and outvie the prowess of the most magnificent, and most successful of their Sultans.”¹⁷ Motivations this scale can be interpreted as great ambition, but also hubris as well, to surpass the deeds of even Suleiman the Magnificent.

And in the mean time the Villages round about were demolished, to the great amazement and confusion of the People.” RYCAUT, The History..., p. 136.

¹⁵ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 135.

¹⁶ „The Vizier, though he farther considered that his Souldiers were as yet young and unexperienced, and that a foyl encountred at the first Enterprize, might be a discouragement from following the continued Tract and Course of this War, which must be sustained with labour and patience, and that to withdraw his Forces in the Winter would be a dishonour to the Ottoman Armes, a blemish in the beginning to his own Reputation, and an encouragement of the Enemy: Howsoever, having a violent Ambition and Desire to become Master of Rab, he could not rest satisfied in this Counsel before he had consulted with Ali Pasha, and other Pashaws of the Frontier Countries, who duly considering the matter as it stood, concurred in the same judgment that was formerly made of the difficulty of this design; and herein they were the more strongly confirmed, by the report of certain Hungarians, whom some parties of Horse, under the Command of Ali Pasha, roving and sallying out near the Walls of Rab, had surprized and taken, who being brought bound before the Vizier, related, That the Town was well provided with all sorts of Ammunition and Provisions, and the Garison reinforced by Count Montecuculi with supply of four thousand men, and in this man/ner reported the Work as difficult as the Turks of the Countrey had formerly signified.” RYCAUT, *The History...*, pp. 136–137.

¹⁷ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 137.

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At this time Neuhäusel was commanded by count Ádám Forgách (1601–1681), who filled this position since 1652. Forgách was an experienced commander (although not with the most pristine reputation) and was in military service since the 1620's. He fought against prince George (György) I Rákóczi's (Prince of Transylvania from 1630 to 1648) Transylvanian troops in 1643 – 1644 and achieved a costly victory over the Ottomans at the battle of Vezekény (today: Velké Vozokany, Slovakia) in 1652. His political influence is demonstrated by the fact that he was a nominee for the position of palatine of Hungary three times¹⁸, he was present at the imperial coronation of Ferdinand IV (King of the Romans: 1653 – 1654; King of Hungary: 1646 – 1654) at Regensburg and was also granted the *Order of the Golden Fleece* by Ferdinand. He was also made Master of Treasury (Hungarian: tárnokmester; Latin: magister tavernicorum) by king Leopold (Holy Roman emperor: 1658 – 1705; King of Hungary: 1655 – 1705) in 1670 and later Judge Royal (in Hungarian: országbíró; in Latin: iudex curiae regiae) by 1680.

Rycaut described Forgách as a „valiant and experienced soldier”¹⁹, which (considering his active, yet controversially successful career so far) is still a believable, yet not necessarily an impartial description. His positive tone towards the count did not prevent him to write about neither his mistakes, nor the negative attitude of other officers towards him. This is demonstrated by the way Rycaut describes Forgách's unsuccessful attempt to break the Ottoman troops before reaching Neuhäusel itself.

Rycaut also included a description of the events concerning the battle of Gbelce (in Hungarian: Köbölkút)²⁰ on the 6th August 1663 (also known as the battle of Párkány²¹), where a large portion of the garrison led by Forgách attacked the Ottoman troops, which already crossed the Danube. The engagement was a catastrophic defeat for the Christians and Rycaut did not leave out Forgách's involvement in this ill-fated attempt. He wrote, that Köprülü's crossing of the Danube had been stalled and the Ottomans managed to get only a fraction of their force on the other bank before the bridge got damaged and needed immediate repairs.²² Seeing the opportunity to inflict severe casualties on both the attackers' numbers and morale before even reaching Neuhäusel, Forgách argued to mount an assault on the Ottoman camp. Despite resistance from other

¹⁸ In 1646, 1649 and 1668.

¹⁹ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 137.

²⁰ Today: Gbelce, Slovakia.

²¹ Today: Štúrovo, Slovakia.

²² Ottoman historiographer *Evliya Çelebi* claimed that this was the result of the vizier's disinformation, however Forgách did receive inaccurate information for example from Komárom (Komárno). CZIGÁNY, *Az oszmánellenes háború...*, p. 353.

officers he eventually managed to get enough volunteers (around 8000 men according to Rycaut²³) and attempted to ambush the Ottomans during nighttime. The initial phase of the attack caused panic among the Ottomans but as the fighting went on the Christian force realised that by that time the Vizier transported a much larger portion of his army across the Danube, thus Forgách was facing a 12.000 strong contingent instead of the 2000 he was originally informed of. Eventually the Ottomans surrounded Forgách's force with a crescent (referred to as „half Moon” by Rycaut) and almost completely annihilated them with Forgách himself barely escaping from the battlefield. Rycaut also mentioned the German mercenaries, who kept fighting „until their Spirits fainted with labour, and their Swords were blunted by the Bodies of their Enemies”. Forgách did return to Neuhäusel, however Rycaut mentions, that his reputation suffered greatly among the defenders, some even wishing his death rather than the ones who fell during the engagement.²⁴

The account continues with one of the most gruesome descriptions regarding the 1663 campaign. In the following paragraphs Rycaut elaborates about the public execution of the Christian captives, who were taken during the battle and brought to Esztergom. There „ (...) the Vizier mounting a Throne of State and Majesty, treated these valiant Souldiers, not like men of War, or Captives taken in open Field, but as a Judge condemned them to dye by the hand of the Hang-man or Executioner, passing a formal Sentence of Death upon them, as if they had been Thieves or Assasins arrested by the hand of Justice.” The captives were publicly executed in front of the Ottoman troops, who – according to Rycaut – celebrated with cheers, gunfire and „barbarous music”.²⁵ This depiction fits perfectly into the mainstream European Ottoman image of the 17th century. Generally the Ottoman military prowess was acknowledged by contemporary authors, however several reports, newspapers or propaganda works showcased the „Turkish” cruelty and barbarism especially against Christian slaves or captives. Rycaut however included a bit more nuance in characterising the Ottomans, highlighting a kind of opposition against overly brutal methods by the military personnel, who had already been stationed in Hungary. These soldiers claimed that this overly cruel act went against the „Law of Arms” and also this might bring a

²³ István Czigány's research says 6000, 1/3 of which were men from the garrison, the rest were recruited from field troops and from the local counties. CZIGÁNY, *Az oszmánellenes háború...*, p. 353.

²⁴ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 138. More recent researches show that ca. 3000 Christian soldiers died and 1000 fell into captivity. CZIGÁNY, *Az oszmánellenes háború...*, p. 353.

²⁵ Approximately 1300 or 1400 captives had been executed according to the account. RYCAUT, *The History...*, pp. 138–139.

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Christian retaliation of a similar sort upon the next opportunity.²⁶ Based on Rycaut’s work we can clearly differentiate two major components of the Ottoman force: the units of the borderland, who were living in the Ottoman-occupied parts of Hungary and were familiar with their enemy and the country, but also got accustomed to the manner of warfare in the region, thus showing a bit more caution in certain circumstances, and the units from other parts of the Ottoman Empire (mostly from the Balkans and the Porte units), who were probably less familiar with the local dynamics, but much more radical in their behaviour.

The historical account briefly received a much more personal aspect as well, because Rycaut included, that he himself saw the decayed remains of the executed captives while passing through the area near Esztergom during his travels. He compared the sight to the aftermath of the battle of Teutoburg (in the year 9), where the three Roman legions under Quintilius Varus had been annihilated by Germanian forces.²⁷

Neuhäusel’s garrison became severely weakened due to the Forgách’s defeat (both physically and morally) and the Captain requested immediate reinforcements from Montecuccoli, who was at that time Supreme Captain (*supremus capitaneus*) of Győr²⁸ and also from Palatine Francis (Ferenc) Wesselényi.²⁹ According to Rycaut „a thousand Germans” were sent to bolster the city’s defences. Other numbers can be found in various contemporary sources. The *Diarium Europaeum* for example mentions 200 dragoons, 300 infantry and a further 140 haiduks, with a total of 640 soldiers, plus supplies.³⁰ Early 20th century historian József Bánlaky’s sources show a much closer number: 240 dragoons from General Strozzi and 800 men from Győr and Komárom (companies from the Lacroni and Sporck-regiments).³¹ The exact number of the reinforcements who arrived at Neuhäusel remains difficult to pinpoint.

²⁶ He also added, that Zrínyi eventually did retaliate by ordering the execution of his Ottoman captives and sent the mutilated survivors to Köprülü as a message (probably referring to one of his engagements near Zrínyi-Újvár in August 1663.). RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 139.

²⁷ A typical parallel for the shocking carnage, but also fits in the 16 – 17th century narrative of the Ottomans being cruel and barbarous.

²⁸ He fulfilled this office between 1660 and 1680. PÁLFFY, Géza: Kerületi és végvidéki főkapitányok és főkapitány-helyettesek Magyarországon a 16–17. században. In: *Történelmi Szemle* 39. 1997/2. p. 277.

²⁹ Only the request towards Montecuccoli was mentioned by Rycaut. Rycaut, *The History...*, p. 139.

³⁰ MEYER, Martin: *Philemeri Irenici Elisii Diarium Europaeum. Insertis Actis Electoris. Oder Kurtze Beschreibung denckwürdigster Sachen.* Vol. 10. Frankfurt am Main, 1664. p. 580. [VD17 23:234316G]

³¹ BÁNLAKY, József: *A magyar nemzet hadtörténelme.* vol. XVI. Budapest, 1940. For this paper i used the digital copy found on Arcanum database: <https://www.ar->

However, based on the composition of the troops we can safely suggest, that these did not consist of only „Germans”, although the bulk of them did come from the gathering Imperial main army, thus weakening their force on the field.³²

After this Rycaut gets immediately into the siege itself. According to this segment Forgách tried to buy some time by raising the white flag of negotiation, so that the remaining supplies and reinforcements could still enter the city. Soon after „the white Flag was changed to colours of defiance” and the Ottoman army started digging the trenchworks around the walls.³³ Köprülü sent a letter calling for surrender, which Rycaut quoted in detail:

„Through the Grace of God and the Miracles of our Prophet, who is a Son of both Worlds, and by whom there is Happiness and Glory, I that am the first of the Council, and General of the most Mighty Emperor of the Turks, that is the King of all Kings on the Earth, To you Adam Forcatz that are the Chief among all the Nobility of Hungary, do make known, That through the Command of my most Gracious Lord, the most terrible, the most puissant, and most mysterious Emperor, I am come with his Forces before Newhausel to reduce it to his Obedience. Wherefore if you shall deliver up the place to Us, you shall have liberty to march out with what belongs unto you from the highest to the lowest, and he that would rather stay shall keep his Goods and Estate: But if you will not yield, we will take it by force, and every man of you, from the highest to the lowest, shall be put to the Sword. If the Hungarians did but know the good intentions of the mighty Emperor, they and their childrian would bless God for him. Peace be to the Obedient”³⁴ Köprülü’s letter was published in other contemporary works and news reports such as the *Diarium Europaeum*. Volume X. of the *Diarum* was published in 1664 and also contains detailed reports about the siege as well as the Vizier’s letter in German which is quite similar in content, although have some differences regarding some details.³⁵

Despite the long build-up, Rycaut did not go into much details regarding the six week-long siege itself. Instead he aimed to point out the more crucial segments of the event. He did include the scale of the artillery

canum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Banlaky-banlaky-jozsef-a-magyar-nemzet-hadtorteneleme-2/16-a-rakoczvak-zrinyiek-es-thokoly-imre-also-kuzdelmeinek-korszakala-16301682-377F/v-az-1663-evi-torok-hadiarat-3985/b-ersekuivar-ostroma-es-meghodo-lasa-399C/ [Last accessed September 5, 2025.]

³² CZIGÁNY, *Az oszmánok elleni háború...*, p. 354.

³³ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 140.

³⁴ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 140.

³⁵ MEYER, *Diarium Europaeum*, 1664. pp. 580–581.

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bombardment and the destruction which affected both the military personnel (on both sides) and the civilian population within the city.³⁶ Rycaut also mentioned the raid on the other side of the river Váh (referred to as Waag in the source). According to his accounts the size of the Ottoman force was more than enough to successfully handle Neuhäusel³⁷, therefore Köprülü sent 600 Tatars with a „strong force of Turks” to cross the river and move towards Moravia and Austria.³⁸ An interesting detail is the mention of the locals, who apparently guided the raiding force when crossing the river.³⁹ The description of the raid itself was brief, but fits well in the cruel and destructive (in certain cases even outright apocalyptic) image of the Tatars, which was dominant during the 16–17th century.⁴⁰ Although the plan was to reach the Austrian and Moravian territories, the raiding force was halted, then pushed back by „a considerable Body of Germans, both Horse and Foot”⁴¹. Fightings with the Christian forces commenced near Pressburg, but with additional support the Tatars managed to get „within five miles” of Vienna, which prompted emperor Leopold I to leave the city and relocate to the town of Linz. These events demonstrated the increasing threat the Imperial seat was facing and also became a highly discussed topic in Europe. Rycaut however mentions, that despite the growing concern regarding the Turks (which we can also interpret as the return of the *Türkenfurcht* to German territories), the Imperial princes were not the most determined to agree to take a joint action without conditions and even the election of a General for the Imperial Army stalled due to debates in the Imperial Diet.⁴²

Returning to the events of the siege, Rycaut points out the fierce fightings that happened for the capture and recapture of „Fort Frederick” i.e.

³⁶ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 141.

³⁷ Further Tatar, Moldovan and Wallachian reinforcements arrived by the 26th August, thus fielding significantly more cavalry than needed for the siege. CZIGÁNY, *Az oszmánellenes háború...*, pp. 354–355.

³⁸ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 141.

³⁹ „[...] by the guidance of the Natives passing the River Waegh, spoiled and destroyed all the Country round about, carrying men, women, and children into slavery, leaving what was not conveniently portable, in ashes.” RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 141.

⁴⁰ See also: SZUROMI, Kristóf: *Vérebek, barbárok, szamaritánusok – Az oszmánkép változatai a 16–17. századi Európában*. Budapest, 2020. pp. 134–135; KOŁODZIEJCZIK, Dariusz: *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania: International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th–18th Century). A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by Annotated Documents*. Leiden – Boston, 2011. pp. 183–192.

⁴¹ He most likely refers to the forces of Montecuccoli and Sporck.

⁴² Rycaut also mentions that this increasing crisis and Ottoman progress was briefly halted by the coming winter and Zrínyi’s successful military actions against the Ottoman troops, which were on their way from the conquered Neuhäusel to their winter quarters. RYCAUT, *The History...*, pp. 141–142.

the „Frigyes”, or „Frederick” bastion. This was one of the least modern parts of Neuhausel’s fortifications, therefore the Ottomans concentrated their attacks on this segment. Eventually, the author reports about the destruction of a gunpowder magazine on the 15th September which killed „fifty Souldiers and several Officers” and also deprived the defenders from their ammunition reserves. This was also the breaking point for the morale of the civilians within the city and they began to beg and later demand the defenders to start negotiating with the Vizier. Tensions escalated to a point where the locals harassed the soldiers and threw rocks at them.⁴³ Finally, the defenders presented their terms of surrender to Köprülü, which Rycaut also included in his work:

„First, That the Commanders and Garrison should march out on the 17th of September with Bag and Baggage, and have safe conduct as far as Komorra: and that for a convenience of the sick and wounded, the Vizier should be obliged to provide four hundred Carts and more, if there should be occasion.

Secondly, That as such as desire to abandon their dwellings, may have liberty to depart, so such as desire to abide may continue their habitations: and that the Religious and Ecclesiastical persons may perform their Functions as in former times.

Thirdly, That upon the Surrender of the principal Works, no Turk shall enter within the Town, until all such as intend to depart have quitted their stations.

Fourthly, That for performance of Articles, two Aga’s should be given for Hostages; and that until the foregoing Articles were fully accomplished, all acts of Hostility should cease.

Fifthly, That the Garrison might not be necessitated to march through the Turkish Camp, the Turks themselves were obliged to make them a new Bridge, or repair the old to pass the Niter.”⁴⁴

The Grand Vizier accepted the terms and although the Ottomans aimed to honor these, the Tatars, who according to Rycaut „are of a faithless and barbarous nature” moved to attack the garrison when they marched out of the fortress. Further atrocities were prevented by the Ottoman officers and Köprülü allowed safe passage for the Christians. Rycaut also mentioned, that the Grand Vizier not only provided safety to the survivors, but also gave money to the soldiers. Rycaut added, that this gesture („especially to the Hungarians”) was most likely to present the Ottoman occupation as a benevolent rule, in order to gain more local support and maybe make pacification of the area easier.⁴⁵

⁴³ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 142.

⁴⁴ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 142.

⁴⁵ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 143. This is also in line with Ottoman policies on conquered

„I am come with his Forces (...) to reduce it to his Obedience“...

Finally, Rycaut summarises the overall losses and international reactions surrounding the fall of Neuhäusel. After the 43 day long siege 3500 „sound men“ and 500 wounded left the fortress city and they left „60 pieces of Brass Cannon“ behind. Those civilians, who chose to stay „had protection and liberty“. The Ottoman losses were also high: from the 50 000 about 15 000 perished including several high ranking officers, such as: „the Spaheelar Agasee, or General of the Horse, Beco Pasha, Beglerbeg of Romalia, Vsaf, Pasha of Anatolia, and Ibrahim Pasha of Seydi, with sixteen Captains belonging to Buda, and nine to Constantinople“. ⁴⁶

The fall of Neuhäusel put Vienna and Pressburg into direct Ottoman threat. Rycaut mentioned that after the defeat Vienna's fortifications were quickly finished and the surrounding woods were cut down, preparing the area for a siege and denying the Ottomans cover and material, while Pressburg was also fortified and received a stronger garrison. The returning „*Türkenfurcht*“ also resulted in the fortification of „the innermost parts of Austria, which extend along the River, as far as within three Miles of Lintz.“ ⁴⁷ The blow on morale was also quite severe. Rycaut mentions that even the inhabitants of Pressburg „(...) lost so much of their Spirit and Courage, by the melancholy relation of the fate of Newhausel, and the apprehension of the dreadful advance of the whole Turkish Force; that their constancy to the Emperour began to waver, and to entertain some thoughts of submit[ti]ng to the mercy and clemency of the Turks, who had newly declared, that such as voluntarily submitted to the Ottoman Obedience, should for three years be exempted from all Tribute or Taxes“ ⁴⁸

News of the victory at Neuhäusel reached Constantinople and it was celebrated with a seven days long festivity. Rycaut gives us some details how these celebrations „in the fashion of the Turks“ looked like: „ (...) by adorning the Gates, and outward Walls of their Houses, so soon as it begins to be dark, with great store of Lamps and Candles, during which time the Nights are spent with Musick and Bankets, as the Dayes are with Visits and Presents, and Corban, (which is an Almes which rich men make in flesh to the poor sort, and is given either at the little Biram, which is called the Feast of Corban, or upon some publick Thanksgiving, which is performed in this manner.) He that makes the Corban, first layes his hand upon the head of the Sheep, or Lamb, makes a short Prayer, and then in

territories, most likely to ease their pacification but also to show Islamic rule to the population as desirable and on the long term open them up for future conversion. This phenomenon is also present in the letter of Miklós Thorda to Philip Melanchton from 1545. In: *Magyar Történelmi Tár*. vol. 8. 1885. pp. 524–528.

⁴⁶ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 143.

⁴⁷ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 143.

⁴⁸ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 143.

the name of God cuts the throat, the Butcher afterwards fleying off the skin, the Corbanist divides the flesh into small pieces, to as many poor as slock to receive it. In the heat of these Revels, and Bankets, every one spake high in praise of their fortunate Arms, and Congratulated each with other, the prosperous beginnings of this War, promising to them|selves the following year, rather a time of Peregrination or Travel through the pleasant Countries and Cities of the Christians, than blood and sweat in obtaining the possession of their Enemies".⁴⁹

Accuracy and possible sources of Rycaut

Rycaut's account regarding the 1663 campaign has its own unique elements which further enriches our knowledge, however it is of course neither the only, nor the most detailed contemporary narrative source about the events. The Ottoman wars in Hungary was a highly popular topic for 16–17th century; general public and we have knowledge of numerous reports on both Christian and Muslim troop movements and other military actions (with a various rate of accuracy) from this time period. A significant amount of highly detailed sources come from the territory of the Holy Roman Empire, such as the works of Martin Meyer⁵⁰; Erasmus Francisci⁵¹; Hieronymus Ortelius⁵², or Martin Zimmermann⁵³. Among these Meyer's account is considered the most detailed one, containing around 150 pages about the Neuhäusel campaign alone. Francisci also provides details for example about the Ottoman army (which he counts as „more than seventy-thousand”, which seems a bit too much) and the size of its various contingents and auxiliary forces and he also gives a brief description and evaluation about them.⁵⁴ He also provides a brief history of Neuhäusel and the sieges it had to endure.⁵⁵

These accounts were highly popular in their time and as a diplomat and traveller, who showed deep interest in the Ottoman Empire, Rycaut very likely had knowledge of these works as well as local newspapers. The similarities found in these printed works also suggest the likeliness that he used these as sources. It is also worth mentioning that two years

⁴⁹ RYCAUT, *The History...*, p. 144.

⁵⁰ MEYER, Martin: *Philemeri Irenici Elisii Diarium Europaeum. Insertis Actis Electoris. Oder Kurtze Beschreibung denckwürdigster Sachen*. Vol. 10. Frankfurt am Main, 1664. [VD17 23:234316G]

⁵¹ FRANCISCI, Erasmus: *Neue und kurtze Beschreibung des Königreichs Ungarn*. Nürnberg, 1664. [BSB-ID 991105428159707356]

⁵² Ortelius *Redivivus Et Continuatus Oder Ungarische Kriegs Empörungen*. Nürnberg, 1665. [BSB-ID 13232628]

⁵³ *Ganz Neue Beschreibung dess jüngst inn Hungarn Türcken Kriegs*. Augsburg, 1665.

⁵⁴ MEYER, *Kurtze Beschreibung...*, pp. 38–50.

⁵⁵ Some of the phrases here are exactly similar to Rycaut's description. MEYER, *Kurtze Beschreibung...*, pp. 53–55.

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after his book was published (1687), Rycaut became a resident in Hamburg, which suggests that he probably had even better access for German source materials for his later work.

Other possible source could have been other writings from France, Italy or even popular English newspapers, such as „*The Newes*“ or „*The Intelligencer*“, which regularly reported about the events in the Kingdom of Hungary. Apart from „outsider“ sources a Hungarian account also was published with the title: *Diarium Obsidionis Vyvarini vel Neüheüsl á Turcis Anno 1663*.⁵⁶ This work (also referred to as „*Újvár Diarium*“) became highly popular due to the fact that this was written by someone who was in Neuhäusel during the siege and gave a detailed and accurate view about the events from the inside. So far there is no hard evidence that Rycaut possessed a copy of this work or have used it as source for his own book, but due to its popularity and Rycaut’s connections, there is a chance that he might have it.

In his work Rycaut also mentions that his sources were also based on his own perceptions. This aspect is referred to on several occasions, for example when he wrote about seeing the aftermath of the execution of the Christian soldiers captured at Gbelce/Köbölkút, when passing through the area near Esztergom a while later. His years as a diplomat not only resulted in a series of travels, but also had him build up a network of information sources, connections and a level of inside knowledge regarding the politics, nature and mentality of the Ottoman Empire.

The question however still remains: How accurate are his reports about the events concerning the siege? In order to get closer to answering this we need to compare his writings with other contemporary sources which are regarded as reliable. The aforementioned *Diarium* can be a good basis of a comparative analysis and looking at key segments of the siege we can immediately see interesting overlaps and differences. Both sources mentioned for example the reinforcements sent to Neuhäusel after Forgách’s defeat. While the *Diarium* quite precisely listed the units and their numbers (200 dragoons, 300 infantry, 140 haiduks, plus supplies), Rycaut only broadly mentioned „a thousand germans“ sent to the fortress, which is a definite simplification in terms of both numbers and ethnicity.

Apart from the numbers Rycaut also mentions the dates of the various events inaccurately. A good example is the Ottomans’ general assault, which Rycaut put on the 14th August, while the *Diarium* put this

⁵⁶ This work can be found in the Kriegsarchiv in Vienna under the identifier: ÖStA KA AFA Türkenkrieg 1663/160. IX–XIII 1663. Memoires 1660–1664. 1663. 13. 8. Analysed and presented in detail in: G. ETÉNYI: *Hadszintér...*, pp. 92–97.

one week later, on the 21st August. Another critical point of the siege was the explosion of the gunpowder magazine which according to Rycaut happened on the 15th September, while the *Diarium* mentions this happening on the 22nd September.⁵⁷ The date of the capitulation of the defenders is a bit unclear at Rycaut. Although he mentions that when the defenders offered their terms of surrender, they gave 17th September as their date of capitulation, however he later did not confirm, that they actually marched on that day. The *Diarium* on the other hand put the date of capitulation on the 25th/26th September which is accurate. Overall, we can see that there is almost a constant ca. one week difference between the dates given by Rycaut and the ones mentioned by the *Diarium*.

There are also several instances, where both sources confirm each other. Both of them report about the massive Ottoman artillery bombardment, which is also a reoccurring element in other written and pictorial sources. Both sources report about how the Ottomans filled up the trenches around Neuhäusel and they also correctly pointed out the Frigyes (or Frederick) Bastion as the place where the fightings were the fiercest. Another key segment was when the women of Neuhäusel pleaded to Forgách to surrender the fort to end their misery. This was also mentioned by both sources. Both Rycaut and the author of the *Diarium* correctly pointed out that the siege lasted for 43 days and around 3000–3500 people survived, who were then given passage to Komárno.

The accuracy of these narrative sources could be further determined by using existing archival sources apart from the *Diarium*, such as the testimony of Ádám Forgách about surrendering of the fortress, an other testimony regarding Forgách's innocence and the interrogation transcript of surviving German soldiers fighting under Vice Captain Pio, as well as Ottoman descriptions of the siege.⁵⁸

Conclusion

Further questions still remain for example regarding Rycaut's confirmable sources. For example which were the ones he used to write his book and how did these sources influenced him in this endeavour. The possible answer to these (along with other analyses) will hopefully be included in a future paper. By this point however we can say that Sir Paul Rycaut's accounts on the siege of Neuhäusel, although not the most detailed or accurate compared to other major contemporary works, such as the *Diarium Europaeum*, or the *Újvár Diarium*, still has high source value due to the author's own more nuanced knowledge and experience

⁵⁷ It is also worth mentioning, that the casualties of this explosion is in a somewhat similar scale: 50 dead according to Rycaut, and 40 according to the *Diarium*.

⁵⁸ G. ETÉNYI, *Hadszínér...*, pp. 91–92.

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regarding the Ottoman Empire. Not only his work provides additional information about the Ottoman losses, their gestures and their meanings, as well as their customs and celebrations after their victory, it also differentiates between the Ottoman garrison forces, who lived in the Hungarian border area, and the forces of the Porte, who he described as more radical and fanatic compared to their provincial brethren. This suggests that Rycaut intended to give a more nuanced, more complex image of the Ottomans to the reader, including his personal experiences as well, but also kept and strengthened certain elements that were part of the general negative image of Ottomans in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. Rycaut's works about the Ottomans Empire's history were highly popular, therefore it also gives us further insight how the contemporaries viewed the events which occurred in Central Europe, how well-informed they were, but also how much they could have influenced each others' works on similar topics.

Zhrnutie

„Prišiel som s jeho vojskom (...), aby som ju prinútil k poslušnosti“ – Obliehanie Nových Zámkov v roku 1663 očami Angličana

Habsbursko-osmanská vojna v roku 1663 bola zlomovým bodom v dejinách uhorského vojenského javiska, keďže po desaťročiach opäť vypukla otvorená vojna s „úhlavným nepriateľom kresťanstva“. Hlavné sily Vysokej porty opäť pochodovali na západ pod vedením veľkovezira a navyše sa im podarilo dobyť pevnosť Nové Zámky, ktorá chránila prístup k Viedni. Význam týchto udalostí a medzinárodný záujem, ktorý vzbudili, dobre ilustruje dielo autora 17. storočia. Sir Paul Rycaut bol anglický diplomat, ktorý venoval značnú pozornosť vojenským a politickým udalostiam v Uhorskom kráľovstve. Príspevok stručne predstavuje Rycautove správy o obliehaní Nových Zámkov, so zameraním na ich presnosť a možné zdroje.

Správy Rycauta o obliehaní Nových Zámkov, hoci nie sú najpodrobnejšie ani najpresnejšie v porovnaní s inými významnými súčasnými dielami, ako sú *Diarium Europaeum* alebo *Újvár Diarium*, majú stále vysokú hodnotu ako prameň vďaka autorovým vlastným podrobnejším znalostiam a skúsenostiam s Osmanskou ríšou. Jeho dielo poskytuje nielen doplňujúce informácie o osmanskej porážke a jej význame, ale aj o zvykoch a oslavách po víťazstve. Rozlišuje aj medzi osmanskými posádkami, ktoré žili v uhorskej pohraničnej oblasti, a silami Porty, ktoré opísal ako radikálnejšie a fanatickejšie v porovnaní s ich provinčnými bratmi. To

naznačuje, že Rycaut chcel čitateľom poskytnúť nuansovanejší a komplexnejší obraz Osmanov, vrátane svojich osobných skúseností, ale zároveň zachoval a posilnil určité prvky, ktoré boli súčasťou všeobecného negatívneho obrazu Osmanov v Európe v 16. a 17. storočí.