

Ph. D. Thesis

Balázs Lázár

**The Military Carrier of Feldzeugmester
Baron Paul von Kray de Krajova and Topolya**

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Humanities
PhD School of History

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1. The purpose and sources of the dissertation

For a long time in the Hungarian historiography and education the so called independence struggles against the Habsburg Rulers have meant the whole national history in the modern and early modern era. It was the Bocskai-movement, the Rakóczi-uprising and the war of independence in 1848/49 that dominated the research, the school books and the public opinion. However, under the flags of the Habsburgs hundred thousands of Hungarian soldiers fought during the “Cabinet Wars” of the dynasty then against the revolutionary France and Napoleon. Out of the “common soldiers” there were also good Hungarian born military leaders in the Emperor’s Army. We can mention here the legendary hussar general, Franz Nádasdy or Andreas Hadik, who raided Berlin in 1757 and held the presidency of the Aulic War Council, moreover Joseph Alvinczy who fought a bitter two-day battle at Rivoli with Bonaparte Napoleon in 1797. Among them, there is a dedicated place to Paul von Kray, who was one of the most successful Austrian generals in the French wars. He is ranked by some historian the second place after Archduke Charles among the Austrian Generals of the Napoleonic- and French Wars. Kray was born in 6th of February 1735 in Késmárk (today Kežmarok, Slovakia) and died January 19th 1804 in Pest.

On this formerly well-known and acknowledged generals there are only obsolete and sketchy biographies today, which usually based on secondary sources. The purpose of my dissertation was to accomplish a biography of Paul von Kray that mainly depends on primary sources and strives to make a comprehensive portrait of this long forgotten soldier.

One of the main bases of the study is the correspondence of Paul von Kray and his brother Alexander between 1784 and 1803. It was published by the Wiener Kriegsarchiv in 1904. There is also a contemporary biography from the Lutheran

priest of Késmárk, but the backbone of the military career was accomplished from archival sources of the Haus, Hof und Staatsarchiv and the Kriegsarchiv. In the former I researched in the groups of personal affairs and in the operational acts with special regards to the campaign of 1799 and 1800. There can be found also a fragment of Kray's papers in the National Archives of Hungary which was treated too.

2. The methods and the set-up of the dissertation

The study comprises ten chapters, from which seven chapters covers the military career of the Feldzeugmeister in chronological order. After the historical and methodical introduction (Chapter I.) the second chapter describes the beginning of the career during the seven years war (1756–1763) and the rising under the rule of Joseph II and finally Kray's role in the oppression of the Horea and Closka uprising in Transylvania. The Chapter III describes the Turkish war (1788–1791) when Kray achieved the rank of major-general, but in 1791 he was sent to retirement and his career seemed to be over. This unexpected downfall might be the result of an inquiry in the spring of 1791 against Kray and his fellow generals of the Army in Wallachia after accusations of Greek and Armenian merchants.

The next chapter (Chapter IV.) treats the reactivation of general Kray and his activity as commander of the avant-garde of the k. k. Army against the revolutionary France during the first war of coalition (1792–1797) in Nederland and the Rheine Valley. Because of his achievements, he was promoted to Feldmarschall-lieutenant in 1796.

The Chapter V. describes one of the most critical point of Kray's career. In April of 1797, at the Rheine bridgehead of Neuwied, he suffered a considerable defeat from the French under General Hoche. He was court-martialled but at the end was sentenced

only a 14-Days arrest in Mainz then transferred to the Army of Italy.

Unexpectedly in 1799 (Chapter VI.) the career reached its top. His superior, the Prince of Orange died suddenly so Kray as senior of rank had to take over his place of the Commander-in-Chief in Italy. Between March 25th and 31th he beat back the French attacks around Verona and started a counter offensive. At Magnano 5th April 1799 he won a decisive victory over the enemy. After his successes, which established the further allied (Austrian and Russian) victories in Italy, he had to hand over the command to Melas and Suvorov but was promoted to Feldzeugmeister. As a detached Army Corps commander he forced the capitulation of Peschiera on May 6th. After an only three weeks long siege on July 31th Kray took the surrender of the very important fortress of Mantua. It is worth mentioning, that in 1796-97 it took seven month to Bonaparte to capture Mantua. Kray was also instrumental in the Austrian victories at Novi (August 15th), where he led the allied right wing and at Fossano (September 17th 1799).

Next year (Chapter VII.) he was not able to repeat his Italian achievements. In the 1800 campaign Kray was commanding the Army in Germany and was defeated by Moreau at Engen-Stockach on May 3rd, at Meßkirch two days later and at Biberach on May 9th. He had to withdraw with his army to fortress of Ulm. He was again beaten by Moreau on the Iller River on June 5th and by Lecourbe at Neuburg on the Danube on June 27th. An armistice had to be concluded. As a result of all his defeats Kray was discharged on August 28th 1800 and withdrew into private life.

In addition to the chronological order, Kray's effort to achieve various orders (especially the Military Order of Maria Theresa), estates, and regiments (as proprietor) was presented in a thematic chapter. The Feldzeugmeister made considerable efforts to pave the way his relatives - especially his sons - in the

army, and developed a network of relations. This efforts were mirrored in the files of the Hofkriegsrat, which body was responsible the personal affairs of the officers. Kray's efforts and application to gain a regiment and his activity as the Regiment-Proprietor of the IR 34 was also discussed in the chapter.

The Chapter IX describes the final years of the Feldzeugmeister, who lived alternately in Topolya, Pest and Pressburg from 1800 to his death. During his last years he dealt most of time with the businesses of his estates. He had a small castle built in Topolya too.

In the next chapter (X) I summed up the cult and popularity of the Feldzeugmeister in Hungary and in Europe. During the times of the Horea and Closka uprising Kray was a celebrated person in the circles of the Transylvanian nobility but after his Italian victories he enjoyed a European-wide, but short-lived fame. He was also immortalized by the great Hungarian poet, Mihály Csokonai, but Kray was almost completely forgotten by the time of the 20th Century.

3. Achievements

The goal of this paper was introducing and describing this important but is now largely forgotten Hungarian military career and personal life from some different aspect, and maybe the age in which he lived, and the army he served in. This paper may serve such additives which help to comprehend the inner life of the Kaiser's army, to understand the contemporary military life and career. It also describes the military system of the enlightened absolutism, the achievements and the limits of the meritocracy of Maria Theresa and Joseph II. Through Kray's activity as commander in Italy and Germany we can see the connections of politics and high command, the intrigues and frictions between generals and politics. These strained relati-

ons were one of the main factors of the Austrian failures of the French wars. Among the archdukes, aristocrats, and protégés Paul Kray was a self made man who thanked his achievements only for himself, therefore in the case of misfortune, nobody was willing to give him a helping hand. It was mostly the lack of the authority which hampered him taking through his orders during the campaign 1800. It is peculiar, that Kray' predecessor and successor as Commander-in-Chief at head of Army of Germany was either an archduke.

Kray career highlights that for the Hungarian nobility there were a significant career opportunities in the army, and he was not the only one. All in all, by his military achievements, he rose from the lower nobility with a modest property to the wealthy aristocrats.

The age of the first and second war of coalitions (1792-1801) against France was a kind of golden age of Hungarian generals in the Kaiser's Army. After the retirement or death of Alvinczy, Kray, Melas, Hadik etc. there was a slight decline of the Hungarian-born commanders in age of the Napoleonic wars (1805-1815). The analysis of this trend can be the next objective of a future research.

4. My previous papers on Paul von Kray

Lázár Balázs: Mantova visszafoglalása a második koalíciós háború idején. 1799. július 5–július 30. (The Recapture of Mantua during the 2nd War of the Coalition, 5–30 July 1799) *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 119. (2006) 2. 415–457.)

Lázár Balázs: Báró krajovai és topolyai Kray Pál táborszernagy végrendelete. (The Last Will of Baron Paul von Kray de Krajova and Topolya) *Lymbus Magyarorságtudományi Forrásközlések*. (2006) 4. 141–147.

Lázár Balázs: Kray Pál (1735–1804) és a Mária Terézia Rend. A Habsburg Birodalom legmagasabb katonai kitüntetésének adományozási gyakorlata (Paul von Kray and the Order of Maria Theresa. The Practice of the Donation of the Habsburg Monarchy's most Prestigious Military Order) *Kút* (2008) 1. 125–141.