

The Černín Women in War: Reflections of War in the Correspondence of Zuzana Černínová of Harasov (1600–1654), Alžběta Myslíková of Chudenice (1624/1625–1645), and Sylvie Černínová of Millesimo (1606–1664) from the 1640s¹

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“My dearest child! I would write to you about the news here, but I know of nothing good [...] Various tidings reach us, and both friend and foe alike take from us, and we too must pay contributions. May God help us!”² wrote Zuzana Černínová of Harasov to her son Humprecht Jan Černín in one of her letters, reflecting not only her personal concerns but also the broader impacts of wartime events on daily life.³ These words, filled with bitterness and anxiety, open a window into the world of three women from the Černín family, whose correspondence represents a valuable source for understanding perspectives on war, society, and family relationships during the turbulent seventeenth century.⁴

The following study focuses on the correspondence of three noblewomen from the Černín family with their closest relatives. Foremost among them is Zuzana Černínová of Harasov (1600–1654), who is already well known in

¹ The funding for the present publication was provided by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for specific research (IGA_FF_2025_026).

² Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 28 October 1645, Prague, in *Korespondence Zuzany Černínové z Harasova s jejím synem Humprechtem Janem Černínem z Chudenic*, ed. Zdeněk Kalista (Prague: Melantrich, 1941), 49.

³ Their correspondence has been published several times in the past, either as a standalone edition—see the already cited Kalista, which serves as a primary source in this study—or as selected letters included in editions of correspondence by the Czech nobility. See *Dopisy české šlechtičny z polovice 17. století*, ed. František Dvorský (Prague: Valečka, 1886); *Srdce a doba: Listy českých žen*, ed. Bedřich Slavík and Vlasta Sisová (Prague: Atlas, 1942); *Staré písemné památky žen a dcer českých*, ed. František Dvorský (Prague: Městská knihovna v Praze, 2013).

⁴ On the topic of recording wartime events in private correspondence, see Jaroslava Hausenblasová, “Reflexe událostí první rakousko-turecké války v soukromé korespondenci Ferdinanda I., Anny Jagellonské a Marie Habsburské,” *Historie – Otázky – Problémy* 6, no. 2 (2014): 125–37; Miroslav Žitný, ed., *Korespondence Štátného Václava Pětipeského z Chýs a Egrberku z let 1600–1610* (České Budějovice: Historický ústav Jihočeské univerzity, 2015).

Czech historiography for her extensive correspondence with her son, Humprecht Jan Černín (1628–1682). Zuzana was already a widow, following the death of her husband Jan Černín of Chudenice in 1642, at the time of the focus of this study. She was managing the family estates, which were supposed to form the future inheritance of Humprecht Jan. During this period, Humprecht Jan was away on his first cavalier tour, which he began in the autumn of 1645.⁵

Another letter writer from the Černín family was Alžběta Myslíková (1624/1625–1645), the eldest daughter of Zuzana Černínová and her husband Jan, often referred to by the diminutive “Bětuška”.⁶ At the beginning of the 1640s, Alžběta was married to the imperial officer Zikmund Myslík of Hyršov, then a colonel in the imperial army, who began courting Alžběta during his stay in the Bechyň region at the end of 1639.⁷ Myslík was successful in his courtship, in all probability also due to the intercession of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm.⁸ The wedding took place on 17 January 1640. From around 1642, she began accompanying her husband.⁹ She passed away at a young age toward the end of 1645.

The final member of the Černín family, whose correspondence is examined here, is Sylvie Černínová, née Caretto-Millesimo (1606–1664), who became the third wife of Heřman Černín (1576–1651) in 1633.¹⁰ Heřman was the

⁵ See Zdeněk Kalista, *Mládí Humprechta Jana. Zrození barokního kavalíra* (Prague: nákladem autorovým, 1932), 156–217; Zdeněk Hojda, Eva Chodějovská, Milena Hajná, and Alexandra Tesaříková, *Na cestě za Alpy a Pyreneje: Kavalířská cesta českého šlechtice do německých zemí, Itálie, Francie, Španělska a Portugalska* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2014), 41–65; Zdeněk Hojda, “Humprecht Jan Černín z Chudenic a jeho benátská ambasáda,” in *Ve znamení Merkura: Šlechta českých zemí v evropské diplomacii*, ed. Petr Pavelec, Martin Gaži, and Milena Hajná (Prague: Národní památkový ústav, 2020), 338–61.

⁶ The letters exchanged between Alžběta and Zuzana were edited and published in *Matěra Zuzany Černínové z Harasova: Listy Alžběty Homutovny z Cimburka a Elišky Myslíkovny z Chudenic*, ed. František Dvorský (Prague: J. Otto, 1890).

⁷ Zdeněk Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík z Hyršova* (Prague: Českomoravský Kompas 1940), 20–3.

⁸ Leopold Wilhelm sent a letter of recommendation to Heřman Černín, see Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 22–3.

⁹ For a brief overview of Alžběta's life, see Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 24–5; Zdeněk Kalista, *Korespondence*, 14–5.

¹⁰ The letters from Sylvie to Heřman Černín were printed in *Dopisy Sylvie hrab. Černínové, rozené Caretto-Millesimovy, s chotěm jejím Heřm. hrab. Černínem z Chudenic z let 1635–1651*, ed. František Tischer (Prague: Královská česká společnost nauk 1908). The correspondence was examined in detail by Veronika Boháčová, “Vztahy Sylvie Kateřiny Černínové, rozené Carettové z Millesima, s jejími blízkými (Část I.),” *Časopis Národního muzea, řada historická* 177, no. 3–4 (2008): 142–161; Veronika Boháčová, “Vztahy Sylvie Kateřiny Černínové, rozené Carettové z Millesima, s jejími blízkými (Část II.),” *Časopis Národního muzea, řada historická* 178, no. 1–2 (2009): 3–28.

uncle of Jan Černín, Zuzana's husband, and the great-uncle of Humprecht Jan. Sylvie assisted her husband in managing the Černín estate during his absences from Bohemia, most notably during his second diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 1644–1645.¹¹

The correspondence of these three women not only maintained family ties through their letters, but also reflected the wartime events of the Thirty Years' War and their impact on the Czech Lands and Europe.¹² As Hans Medick stated in his works on the Thirty Years' War,¹³ the conflict of this era was not merely a matter of military clashes but also deeply affected everyday life, the economy, and social relations.¹⁴ The letters of the selected noblewomen offer a unique perspective on how women perceived the war, how they coped with its consequences in their daily lives, and how they processed the information they received from their relatives, friends, and neighbours.

Aristocratic correspondence, particularly within families, constitutes a well-established genre in European historiography for exploring the intellectual landscape of the Early Modern period. Letters functioned not only as a medium of communication but also as a vehicle for self-expression and reflection on contemporary events. They have to be interpreted, however, with critical awareness, as their content may be shaped by rhetorical conventions

¹¹ Heřman Černín's life has been previously examined, particularly due to its richness and the dynamic nature of the era in which he lived. His memoirs from two diplomatic missions to Constantinople have also been published in the past. See *Deník hraběte Heřmana Černína o druhé cestě poselské do Constantinopole l. 1644–45*, ed. Josef Jireček, (Vienna: n.p., 1857); *Zweite Gesandtschaftsreise des Grafen Hermann Czernin von Chudenic nach Constantinopel im Jahre 1644* (Neuhaus: A. Landfrass Sohn, 1879); František Tischer, *Heřman hrabě Černín z Chudenic: Obraz ze života a činnosti jeho* (Prague: Cyrillo-Methodějská knihtiskárna a nakladatelství, 1903–1904); Milena Hajná, "Dvě diplomatické mise Heřmana Černína z Chudenic a turecký stan," in *Ve znamení Merkura: Šlechta českých zemí v evropské diplomacii*, ed. Petr Pavelec, Martin Gaži, and Milena Hajná (Prague: Národní památkový ústav, 2020), 256–81.

¹² The history of the Thirty Years' War is a frequent subject of scholarly research, and a vast number of publications exist on the topic. In this study, the following works were used to provide historical context: Josef Polišenský, *Třicetiletá válka a evropské krize 17. století* (Prague: Svoboda, 1970); Pavel Balcárek, *Ve víru třicetileté války: Politikové, kondotíři, rebelové a mučedníci v zemích Koruny české* (České Budějovice: Veduta, 2011); Radek Fukala, *Třicetiletá válka 1618–1648. Pod taktovkou kardinála Richelieua, díl II: 1630–1648* (České Budějovice: Veduta, 2018); Lukáš Sláma, *Bitva u Jankova 6. 3. 1645* (České Budějovice: Veduta, 2021).

¹³ Hans Medick and Benjamin Marschke, ed., *Experiencing the Thirty Years War: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston – New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013); Hans Medick, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg: Zeugnisse vom Leben mit Gewalt* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018).

¹⁴ Katrin Keller und Martin Scheutz, ed., *Die Habsburgermonarchie und der Dreißigjährige Krieg* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2020).

and authorial intentions.¹⁵ Through the correspondence of Zuzana, Alžběta, and Sylvia, insight can be gained not only into their personal experiences, but also into the broader social and political contexts that shaped their lives. This contribution seeks to advance research on aristocratic correspondence and the representation of wartime events from a female perspective.¹⁶ It examines the wartime correspondence of noblewomen from the Černín family as a valuable source for understanding the social and emotional impact of the 'Thirty Years' War on Bohemian aristocratic estates.¹⁷ The letters record not only troop movements and everyday hardships, but also the suffering of the local population, offering insights into how these women perceived and responded to the unfolding conflict. Due to their elevated social status, the Černín women were embedded in extensive information networks that shaped

¹⁵ For the methodological approaches to correspondence, see e.g. Hana Borovská, "Syntaktická stavba pozdněhumanistické korespondence: Dopisy Zuzany Černínové z Harasova a jejího syna Humprechta Jana Černína z Chudenic," *Studia philosophica facultatis philosophicae brunensis* 49 (2001): 177–190; Beatrix Bastl, "Formen und Gattungen frühneuzeitlicher Briefe," in *Quellenkunde der Habsburgermonarchie (16.–18. Jahrhundert). Ein exemplarisches Handbuch*, ed. by Josef Pauser, Martin Scheutz, and Thomas Winkelbauer (Vienna – Munich: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 801–12; Pavel Marek, ed., *Svědectví o ztrátě starého světa: Manželská korespondence Zdeňka Vojtěcha Popela z Lobkovic a Polyxeny Lobkovické z Pernštejna* (České Budějovice: Historický ústav Jihočeské univerzity, 2005), 22–3; Beatrix Bastl, "Ins herz khan man kein sehen. Weibliche Kommunikations- und Beziehungskulturen innerhalb der adligen 'familia' der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Schwester und Freundin: Zur Kulturgeschichte weiblicher Kommunikation*, ed. Eva Labouvie (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009), 305–20; Lenka Maršálková, "Aristokratická korespondence doby vrcholného baroka – její specifika a možnosti výzkumu," in *Kultura psaní v dějinách*, ed. Ladislav Nekvapil (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2016), 162–82.

¹⁶ In this context, it is important to mention the works of Karen Hagemann, who has focused on the transformation of gender roles in war, particularly the deconstruction of traditional notions about women and men in the context of warfare. Karen Hagemann, "Krieg, Militär und Mainstream: Geschlechtergeschichte und Militärgeschichte," in *Geschichte und Geschlechter: Revisionen der neueren deutschen Geschichte*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Jean H. Quataert (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008), 92–129; Karen Hagemann, Stefan Dudink, and Sonya O. Rose, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Gender, War, and the Western World since 1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹⁷ The Černín correspondence has been partially examined in the context of the 'Thirty Years' War in previous research. The potential for further study of the letters of both Zuzana and Sylvie—particularly in relation to the everyday experience of the war and its reflection in aristocratic correspondence—has been outlined by Marie Koldinská, "Válka a všední den: Odras třicetileté války v každodenním životě české šlechty," *Historie a vojenství* 50, no. 1 (2001): 10–23. Another source for examining perceptions of the Thirty Years' War is the preserved correspondence of Regina ("Rejna"), the niece of Heřman Černín, who resided at Kost Castle between 1646 and 1647, reportedly serving as housekeeper, according to Josef Pekař. In her letters, Rejna regularly informed her uncle about the management of the estate and mentioned wartime events. See Josef Pekař, *Kniha o Kosti* (Prague: Československý spisovatel 1970), 88–95.

their awareness of both local developments and broader geopolitical dynamics. The study is structured into five thematic sections, each addressing prominent war-related themes that emerge from the correspondence. The first four sections focus primarily on the letters of Zuzana Černínová and Sylvie Černínová, while the final section briefly explores key motifs in the correspondence of Alžběta Myslíková.

Soldiers in Bohemia and on the Černín Estates

Zuzana and Sylvia mentioned the movement of troops on the Czech territory in every letter they addressed to their loved ones. This was due to the timeliness of the topic in contemporary Czech society,¹⁸ but also for economic reasons, as they were responsible for managing estates and stewarding entrusted property.¹⁹

Both correspondents used terms such as “friendly” or “imperial” to refer to the Emperor’s troops, while terms like “hostile” or “the enemy” were used for Swedish forces.²⁰ Imperial troops were mentioned in a positive context until situations arose where both the “friendly” army, meant to drive out the enemy, and the “hostile” army treated the population with equal ruthlessness: “Various news here, indeed, both the friend and the foe take, and we ourselves must also contribute.”²¹ This was the case when it came to forcing entry into towns and villages, occupying estates for winter quarters, imposing forced

¹⁸ The general impact of the Thirty Years’ War on the Czech Lands was mapped by Petr Maťa, “Epizentrum und Bebengebiet: Die böhmischen Länder im Dreißigjährigen Krieg,” in *Die Habsburgermonarchie und der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, ed. Katrin Keller and Martin Scheutz (Vienna: Böhlau, 2020), 53–74. The consequences of the war, using the example of the South Bohemian region, were summarised by Zdeněk Kalista, *Století andělů a ďáblů. Jihočeský barok* (Jinočany: H&H 1994), 80–113. Marie Ryantová examined the role of aristocratic women as estate managers in her study based on Early Modern noble correspondence, see, Marie Ryantová, “Ženy v pozadí, či jako aktivní hospodářky? Podíl šlechticů na hospodaření a správě raně novověkého velkostatku,” *Theatrum historiae* 32 (2023): 31–48.

¹⁹ Concerns about advancing troops and the welfare of noble estates and towns appeared in the correspondence of the Czech nobility throughout the Thirty Years’ War. František Dvorský published several letters from Czech noblewomen, preserved in the Slavatovský archive in Jindřichův Hradec and, for example, also in the Lobkowicz archive in Roudnice. Dvorský, *Staré písemné památky*, 361–64, 366, 370–74.

²⁰ For the topic of friendly and enemy armies and their perception, see the works of Jan Kilián, “Paměti Michela Stüelera (1629–1649) jako zdroj pro historické i jiné vědní disciplíny,” *Bohemiae Occidentalis historica* 5, no. 1 (2019): 65–79, here 75.

²¹ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan Černín, 28 October 1645, Prague, in Zdeněk Kalista, *Korespondence*, 49.

contributions, stealing livestock, grain, or horses, and committing violence against the civilian population.²²

As Sylvia mentioned in a letter from July 1645: “Our troops near Sušice are taking and plundering worse than the enemy.”²³ In a subsequent letter from the same period, there are again references to how the imperial army is causing harm rather than helping.²⁴ In a similar vein, Zuzana lamented in November 1645: “God, how strangely things are tangled in Bohemia, it is bad from both our side and the enemy.” In December, during the winter quarters, Zuzana complained: “It is bad, very bad, it has never been worse, from both sides [...] They plunder and loot, and we ourselves must still pay taxes. It is impossible to describe the hardships of the people.”²⁵

Zuzana feared winter quarters until the end of the war, as they represented a significant financial burden: “It is very difficult with money now because of these winter quarters; it seems to me that thousands will be spent on them.”²⁶

The year 1645 was referred to in the correspondence of both noblewomen as the worst year of the war compared to previous years. Sylvia informed her husband about the dire state of the Czech Lands and the imperial army early in the year: “I inform Your Grace that it is so bad in our country that it has never been worse: we have the enemy here as well as our entire army, and it is in such a miserable state that it has never been worse after any battle. In summary, we are utterly ruined.”²⁷

The Swedish army entered Bohemia on 25 January 1645, advancing from the Bohemian-Saxon border through the Ore mountains to Kadaň, where it established its main camp. Swedish raids into Czech territory had been occurring, however, since the end of 1644, as Torstensson had been operating in Saxony for some time. In March 1645, Swedish and imperial forces clashed at

²² Reflections on these events can be found, for example, in the correspondence of the Slavata family within noble circles. Josef Hrdlička, “Jak se ubránit před válkou? Snahy šlechticů o ochranu vrchnostenských měst za třicetileté války (Vilém Slavata a Jindřichův Hradec 1631–1633),” *Theatrum historiae* 16 (2015): 61–76. The long-term impact of soldiers on cities has been extensively studied by Jan Kilián, “Vojenské násilí ve městech za třicetileté války: se zvláštním přihlédnutím k Plzeňsku,” *Folia Historica Bohemica* 29, no. 1 (2014): 5–29.

²³ Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 12 July 1645, Prague, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 77.

²⁴ Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 12 July 1645, Prague, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 78.

²⁵ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 29 December 1645, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 79–80.

²⁶ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 2 April 1647, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 164.

²⁷ Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 5 January 1645, Prague in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 64. The same letter is also mentioned by Josef Pekař in connection with the Kost estate, see Pekař, *Kniha o Kostí*, 68–74.

Jankov, in what would later be described as the bloodiest battle of the Thirty Years' War.²⁸ Neither Zuzana nor Sylvia mention the Battle of Jankov or its outcome. Sylvia was likely staying with her husband at the time, as her letters from late January and subsequent correspondence from late April 1645 have been preserved.

In the case of Zuzana's correspondence with Humprecht Jan, few letters from the period before his Grand Tour, which began in the autumn of 1645, have survived. It is therefore surprising that Zuzana mentioned the Battle of Jankov in a letter from December of that year. In this instance, however, she used the battle primarily for dating purposes: "[...] you fell ill that very week after the unfortunate Battle of Jankov."²⁹ Her comment would indicate that she was informed about the battle and its consequences, which she felt in the management of her estates in the surrounding area. After the battle, the Swedes retreated to Jihlava, where they established their main base for an extended period and launched raids into the region, threatening nearby towns and estates.³⁰ Zuzana frequently referred to the siege of Jihlava in her letters, as her estates were frequent targets of Swedish raids: "If only God would grant that the enemy be gone from Jihlava, what joy it would bring to all of us in the surrounding area!"³¹ The siege also prevented her from returning to her estates.³²

The movements of enemy troops across Czech territory not only caused material damage and constant anxiety for both noblewomen, but also complicated travel between their various estates. These difficulties were particularly pronounced for Sylvia, who often travelled long distances, not only between the Černín properties, but also to visit her husband, for example, in Vienna. The movements of troops caused her significant problems: "My dear, what troubles me is that, to my misfortune, I cannot travel to you; this terrible situation prevents me from doing so. I know you would like to know that the enemy holds the bridges and fortifications and patrols up to two miles from

²⁸ For further details on the battle, see Sláma, *Bitva u Jankova*; Fukala, *Třicetiletá válka II*, 83–7.

²⁹ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 2 December 1645, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 67.

³⁰ The reason Torstensson decided to occupy Jihlava is explained in his letter to Queen Christina: "According to my orders, we are now planning to proceed to Jihlava and ensure its capture. I had originally planned to head to Tábor and launch an attack there, but in the meantime, it became clear that the siege would be prolonged, and I cannot afford to waste time." Sláma, *Bitva u Jankova*, 63.

³¹ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 24 February 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 97. In her letters from 1647, Zuzana regularly wrote about the movements of Swedish troops in the Jihlava region.

³² Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 28 July 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 111.

Pressburg [Bratislava]. I would have to go via Passau and travel more than 60 miles [...].³³

The Swedish troops, operating in the Jihlava and Pelhřimov regions, also made travel difficult for Zuzana. She spent most of her time in Prague, as she informed Humprecht Jan about the more expensive life in the city, and as evidenced by the dates of her letters.³⁴ When her daughter Alžběta fell ill in November 1645 and was taken to Klatovy, Zuzana did not dare to travel to her, fearing the presence of soldiers moving in the region.³⁵

The Struggles of Everyday Life in the Černín Households During the War

The war affected the lives of people in all areas where military operations took place or through which armies passed, negatively impacting the population's standard of living. Both rural and urban inhabitants had to adapt to a new daily reality, which included the constant presence of soldiers, the threat of violence, and the fear of losing their livelihoods and loved ones.³⁶

In the context of daily uncertainty and constant fear, the correspondence of the Černín women frequently discusses contributions: their amounts, the frequency and destinations of payments, and potential avenues for reduction or exemption. This issue was closely tied to the management of a noble household, as it was necessary to calculate how much needed to be paid and how much would remain for the inhabitants of a given estate. Both Zuzana and Sylvie not only referred to contributions levied on their own estates but also to those imposed on the estates of neighbouring nobles and towns. They highlighted the hardship these levies caused.

The payment of contributions was a recurring and sensitive topic for both writers. The negative impact on individual estates and the broader economy was a source of considerable concern, which, in Zuzana's case, was reflected in her letters to her son. His ongoing Grand Tour and its continuation were directly influenced by Zuzana's ability to manage household finances and balance

³³ Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, April 22 1645, Petršpurk, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 69.

³⁴ "So, I was happily preparing to go home, but once again I will not be able to, because of that dreadful enemy, who is causing such a disturbance in our region, while here I am dealing with such a gross outrage [...]." Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 28 July 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 111.

³⁵ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, December 16, 1645, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 70.

³⁶ Medick, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, 95–161.

various expenses.³⁷ Sylvie sent detailed reports to Heřman on the condition of the individual estates, the amount of contributions, and the individuals with whom she was actively negotiating these payments.³⁸ Pekař repeatedly assessed Sylvie's approach to managing the estates in *Kniha o Kosti*, where he emphasised her extensive knowledge and uncompromising attitude towards the noble officials, particularly with regard to the accounts, which she meticulously scrutinised.³⁹ In terms of content, Sylvie's correspondence can be compared to that of Polyxena Lobkowicz of Pernštejn, as Polyxena also regularly informed her husband about the state of the Lobkowicz estates.⁴⁰

Direct experience with both friendly and enemy troops, as well as with the Emperor's representatives in various regions, evoked various, predominantly negative, reactions. In some cases, confrontations even led to conflicts, as Sylvie mentioned in a letter from April 1644: "Regarding the contributions, which have been imposed for another three months beyond the initial two, so that the subjects give nothing, only from drinks. But I have already had a strange dispute with Mr. Kolovrat about it, yet I will not take on anything I cannot handle; I will complain to Count von Wertba, but do not intervene; I will manage it."⁴¹

Zuzana also faced conflicts. In her case, it involved accumulated feelings of injustice stemming from the fact that, despite paying contributions, soldiers still took whatever they pleased: "How many times have they marched across my fields to Pelhřimov and elsewhere, so they could carry away my fields on their horseshoes, on top of the largest contributions, and still they take."⁴²

³⁷ Zuzana expressed concerns about financing the Grand Tour from the very beginning in her letter from November 1645. Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 24 November 1645, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 62–3. Throughout the correspondence over the years, Zuzana expressed her concerns regarding the journey, as well as her joy when she successfully sent funds to Humprecht for his further travels. Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 23 February 1647, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 152.

³⁸ For example, in September 1644, she wrote to Heřman about the Velichovsky estate, which she found in very poor condition upon her arrival (Velichovsky was a Černín estate located in eastern Bohemia near Jaroměř). Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 11 September 1644, Velichovsky, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 54. The management of Sylvie's husband's various estates is a comprehensive subject that not only provides detailed information about the condition of noble estates during the Thirty Years' War but also offers valuable insights into aristocratic estate management in general. The topic of estate management on the Černín estates has previously been explored by Josef Pekař.

³⁹ Pekař, *Kniha o Kosti*, 70–1.

⁴⁰ Marek, *Svědectví*, 28.

⁴¹ Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 23 April 1641, Petršpurk, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 47.

⁴² Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 17 November 1645, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 55.

Similarly to Sylvie, she also expressed criticism of individual imperial officials who imposed additional contributions: “In our Bechyně region, many regiments are stationed, and I pay three contributions, every day 169 portions and for 29 horses also portions. How can I manage? Our regional governor, Mr. Vratislav, imposed this on me, and on top of that, I must have it transported to Budějovice.”⁴³ Two years later, Zuzana was already praising her relations with the regional governors: “I have no complaints about the governors; they would willingly support me both in Bechyně and in the Vltava region.”⁴⁴

The constant concerns about individual estates, reflected in the pages of their letters, were intertwined with worries not only for their family members but also for the safety of the Černín subjects, neighbours, and friends. Both Zuzana and Sylvie, as estate managers, were responsible for the inhabitants of their estates, their servants, and above all, the members of their households.

Sylvie often travelled between various estates, which makes it difficult to identify the people closest to her. In her letters to Heřman, she mostly mentioned the administrators of the individual estates and the circle of noble friends she visited.⁴⁵ Her closest person, and the one whose well-being she cared for the most, was Heřman.

In contrast, Zuzana's household consisted of more members. In her letters, she frequently mentioned “the maiden aunt”, whom Kalista identified as Hedvika Ropalová of Riffmberk, a distant relative of the Černíns.⁴⁶ Hedvika Ropalovna lived with Zuzana's family at least from the 1630s onwards, as evidenced by early letters from Humprecht Jan to his mother.⁴⁷

⁴³ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 2 December 1645, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 68. The governor of the Bechyně region from 1645 to 1649 was Václav the Younger Vratislav of Mitrovice. Helena Sedláčková, “Krajští hejtmané v Čechách (1537–1848),” PhD diss., (Charles University Prague, 2016), 239.

⁴⁴ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 16 March 1647, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 158. The governor of the Bechyně region remained Václav the Younger Vratislav of Mitrovice, while the office of governor of the Vltava region was held between 1646 and 1651 by Vilém Václav František of Talmberk. Sedláčková, “Krajští hejtmané,” 239, 247.

⁴⁵ Sylvie rarely mentioned the running of the household or related activities in her letters. She acted and wrote more as an estate manager. Veronika Boháčová, in her thesis and subsequent articles on Sylvie's life, attempted to contextualise the surviving correspondence within the framework of available contemporary sources and literature. These are theoretical perspectives on the topic, however, as Sylvie focused on other subjects in her letters. Veronika Boháčová, “Život barokní šlechtičny. Sylvie Kateřina hraběnka Černínová, rozená Caretto-Millesimo,” MA diss., (Charles University Prague, 2007).

⁴⁶ Kalista, *Korespondence*, 235.

⁴⁷ Humprecht Jan to Zuzana Černínová, 2 September 1638, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 41.

Over time, Zuzana accepted as her companion “Miss Sekerkovna”, Anna Kateřina Sekerkovna of Sedčice: “From what I know of her, and from what seems to me, I believe she will likely suit me well. She comes from a good and noble lineage, of knightly status, and does not appear to be spoiled or foolish. I do not know what the future holds, but it seems to me that she is suitable for me. I would estimate her to be around twenty-two years old.”⁴⁸ The decision to expand the Černín household was, according to Zuzana, taken poorly by her aunt, which only added to her worries. Regarding the conflict with her aunt and why she decided to take on a companion, Zuzana expressed herself as follows: “I would always like to have my godmother close by, though you know well her moods. I do not know what to say about it; she gets angry for no reason and forgives just as easily. She herself does not want to travel with me from Prague, nor does she wish it for anyone else.”⁴⁹

According to her own words, Zuzana was seeking a companion who would not be afraid to travel beyond the city gates, likely to the Černín estates, which were considered dangerous territory. She undoubtedly did not want to undertake these journeys alone. In the autumn of 1644, another member joined Zuzana’s household: her granddaughter, Zuzanka, the daughter of Alžběta and Zikmund Myslík. Alžběta, who was staying with her husband in the quarters of the imperial army, entrusted the care of her daughter to her mother.⁵⁰ Zuzana regularly wrote about little Zuzanka in her letters to Humprecht Jan, and the lines dedicated to Zuzanka were among the happier ones in her correspondence. For a certain period, the household also included a wet nurse for little Zuzanka and a nanny.⁵¹

Zuzana also frequently mentioned her younger daughter, Eva Polyxena, whose husband, Albrecht Kapoun of Svojkov, spent most of his time away from home as a soldier. As a result, Eva Polyxena often stayed close to her mother. Another occasional member of the household was the youngest son, Heřman Václav.⁵²

⁴⁸ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 28 July 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 110.

⁴⁹ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 28 July 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 110.

⁵⁰ Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 38.

⁵¹ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 28 July 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 110.

⁵² Zuzana mentioned Eva Polyxena primarily in connection with family events such as childbirths or lunches with relatives. Heřman Václav was repeatedly mentioned in relation to Humprecht Jan’s grand tour, as Zuzana hoped that her younger son would also represent the family well in the future. Zuzana’s wish would remain unfulfilled, however, as he would ultimately come to be regarded as the most troublesome of the Černín brothers. See Jiří Hrbek, *Barokní Vladštejnové v Čechách 1640–1740* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2013), 522.

Informants and Social Circles of the Černín Women

The nobles and noblewomen with whom the Černín women were in contact form an important part of their correspondence. As repeatedly mentioned, both noblewomen were well-informed about events in Bohemia and often cited assistance from their aristocratic connections. For both Černín families, the husband of Zuzana's eldest daughter Alžběta, Zikmund Myslík of Hyršov was undoubtedly a significant figure.⁵³ As František Tischer pointed out in his brief biography of Zikmund Myslík, Myslík assisted or sought to assist the Černíns in ensuring that the movement of troops had as little or no impact as possible on the Černín estates.⁵⁴

Mentions of Myslík's protection appear as early as 1640, during the lifetime of Zuzana's husband, Jan Černín.⁵⁵ It seems, however, from the surviving letters that Myslík exerted his influence more significantly only in the last two to three years of the Thirty Years' War. In July 1647, Zuzana mentioned that no soldiers appeared on the estates around Budějovice because Myslík had intervened and arranged for the imperial army not to march through the Černín domains.⁵⁶ In addition to references to Myslík's assistance in protecting the Černín estates, Zuzana also documented his military career in her letters.⁵⁷

Following Alžběta's death, Zuzana continued to maintain a cordial relationship with Myslík, and Humprecht Jan likewise remained in contact with him. Their correspondence and subsequent interactions appear to have been unaffected by Myslík's later marriage.⁵⁸ Myslík also maintained correspond-

⁵³ Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 25.

⁵⁴ František Tischer, *Oberst Freiherr Sigmund Mislik von Hirschov. Historisches Zeitbild aus der zweiten Hälfte des dreissigjährigen Krieges* (Neuhaus: Al. Landfrass Sohn, 1875), 10. Kalista followed Tischer's lead in this regard. The preserved letters in the Černín archive, housed in Jindřichův Hradec, attest to the communication and interactions between various members of the Černín family and Zikmund Myslík.

⁵⁵ Tischer, *Oberst Freiherr*, 11.

⁵⁶ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 29 December 1645, Prague, in Zdeněk Kalista, *Dopisy*, 76–7.

⁵⁷ Zuzana regularly informed Humprecht Jan about where Myslík was currently located, where he was planning to go with the army, what command he had been entrusted with, and who held negative opinions about Myslík in connection with his career advancements. Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 9 March 1647, Prague, in Zdeněk Kalista, *Korespondence*, 154.

⁵⁸ Myslík was remarried in October 1651 to Johanka Eusebia Barbora of Žďár. Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 56. The letters Myslík addressed to Humprecht Jan were written predominantly in Italian. State Regional Archive in Třeboň, Jindřichův Hradec Department, Černín Family Archive, cartons 107, 112, 115, 119.

ence with Heřman Černín,⁵⁹ but whether he was in written contact with Sylvia cannot be confirmed.

Another of Zuzana's sons-in-law, Albrecht Kapoun of Svojkov,⁶⁰ the husband of Zuzana's daughter Eva Polyxena, was mentioned in the letters primarily in connection with military and family events. There is no evidence to suggest that he assisted in protecting the Černín estates, as Zuzana does not mention him in this context. On the contrary, similar to her observations of Myslík, she closely followed his military career. Zuzana informed her son about Kapoun's capture and subsequent fortunate rescue in February 1646: "Lord Kapoun also experienced both misfortune and luck. He was travelling somewhere with thirty horses near Kamenice in our region when a troop of over 200 enemy horsemen appeared. They captured him and led him along the nearest road to Jihlava. In the meantime, a troop of his soldiers, or perhaps more, caught up with them. By God's grace, our men succeeded so well that they killed nearly two hundred of the enemy and captured about fifty, as they say."⁶¹ Several months later, Humprecht received news, for example, that Kapoun was besieging the strategically significant town of Frýdlant.⁶²

Sylvia, in contrast, mentioned Kapoun with a slight bitterness in connection with one of the Černín estates. In a letter from early July 1644, Sylvia informed Heřman that Kapoun and his regiment were supposed to be stationed at the Černín estate in Silesia, at Šmidberg. She did not fail to mention, however, that she had already informed Lobkowitz and requested the withdrawal of the regiment.⁶³ It seems that Kapoun was not in Sylvia's "good graces." Zikmund Myslík was not, however, the only nobleman-soldier with whom the Černín women were in contact. Sylvia also mentioned Piccolomini,⁶⁴ with whom, according to the preserved letters, she was acquainted and who likely served as one of her informants. Other contacts included Rudolf Colloredo.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ As evidenced by Myslík's surviving letters addressed to Heřman from the years 1642–1645. State Regional Archive in Třeboň, Jindřichův Hradec Department, Černín Family Archive, cartons 40, 41, 44, 45, 47, 56.

⁶⁰ Kapoun owned Votice, which was near the Černín estates in the Bechyně region. It is evident from Zuzana's correspondence that she was in frequent contact with Kapoun and her daughter Eva Polyxena. Briefly about Kapoun: Zdeněk Kalista, *Mládí Humprechta Jana Černína*, 167.

⁶¹ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 24 February 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 97.

⁶² Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 25 August 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 113.

⁶³ Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 6 July 1644 Vienna, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 50.

⁶⁴ Ottavio Piccolomini (1599–1656) was an imperial general. He owned the Náchod estate and thus, he was a neighbour of Sylvia and Heřman in Silesia.

⁶⁵ This is likely Rudolf Colloredo (1585–1657), an imperial general and field marshal. In the correspondence of Zuzana, Sylvia, and Humprecht Jan, "Colloredo" is mentioned, as seen in

Count Wrtba, Cardinal Arnošt of Harrach,⁶⁶ Berka of Duba, the Waldsteins, the Lobkowiczs, and the Talmberks were among the non-military circles with whom both women were in contact.

It remains true that, in most cases, it is impossible to determine the exact source of Sylvia or Zuzana's information unless they explicitly mention their sources. Both women were, however, more than well-informed about events in their surroundings, the movements of troops, and developments within the imperial army.

The Reflection of "Great" History

The marches of both imperial and Swedish troops across the Czech Lands appeared in almost every letter in the correspondence of both Sylvia and Zuzana, as mentioned in the previous sections. Zuzana and Sylvia obtained information from their friends, acquaintances, and likely also from newspapers that were already circulating among the nobility.⁶⁷ It can be demonstrated that Zuzana received information from her daughter Alžběta between 1642 and 1645. Humprecht Jan also regularly informed his mother about political and post-war developments on the continent (from autumn 1645). In the case of the young Černín, it is possible to identify the source of his information in at least a few letters, as well as who his informants were. In one of his letters to his mother, he mentioned that he exchanged "news" or information,

Humprecht Jan's letter: "I heard from the highest Colloredo that (God forbid) the enemy might march toward Prague." Humprecht Jan to Zuzana Černínová, 3 November 1645, Venice, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 51.

⁶⁶ Ernst of Harrach (1598–1667), as the owner of Červená Řečice, was a neighbour of the Černíns, Kapouns, and Myslíks. Zuzana occasionally mentioned him in the context of Humprecht Jan's cavalier journey. The Cardinal mentioned his neighbours in his diaries and "tagzettels," but he also reflected on the events of the war. Therefore, it can be assumed that there was a transfer of information between the Černíns/Kapouns/Myslíks and Harrach. Katrin Keller, Alessandro Catalano, and Marion Romberg, ed., *Die Diarien und Tagzettel des Kardinals Ernst Adalbert von Harrach (1598–1667)*, vols. 1–6 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010); Katrin Keller, "Der Kardinal und der Krieg: Ernst Adalbert von Harrach (1598–1667) in seinen Selbstzeugnissen," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie und der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, ed. Katrin Keller and Scheutz (Vienna: Böhlau, 2020), 261–281.

⁶⁷ On the issue of newspapers during the Thirty Years' War, briefly Zdeněk Šimeček, *Počátky novínového zpravodajství a novin v českých zemích: Do devadesátých let 18. století* (Brno: Maticе moravská 2011), 185–97. The author also mentions Alžběta/Eliška Myslíkovna and Humprecht Jan in connection with reading newspapers, but it has not yet been possible to prove fully that they read newspapers during the observed period.

with the Viennese Bishop Philipp Friedrich Breuner.⁶⁸ “The Prince-Bishop of Vienna always sends me news, and I send him news in return whenever I receive something.”⁶⁹

Zuzana was aware, however, that the news she received might not have been entirely truthful, and this fact had to be considered: “It is said that the enemy is besieging Pardubice and that it has burned the suburbs near Pardubice. You know how unreliable the news here can be; still, it is said that soldiers, including His Majesty’s princely troops, are supposed to arrive here.”⁷⁰

Thanks to her position as the wife of an important imperial court official, Sylvie obtained information from various social events she attended. She would then pass this information on to her husband, often with a critical comment. In December 1644, she informed her husband that “once again, we find ourselves in the greatest confusion, and this is because Callas has once again put on his uniform and consumed his army to the ground.”⁷¹ She continued with a further list of imperial failures, primarily the failures of Matthias Gallas:⁷² “For the second time, when Kalas marched his camp towards Magdeburg, the enemy struck at the rear of his forces.”⁷³ Sylvie repeatedly returned to the military operations around Magdeburg, the advance of the Swedish armies, and the imperial efforts to halt this progress in her letters from the turn of 1644/1645. This is not surprising as these events and the defeats of the imperial forces threatened the existence of the Černín estates in the Ore Mountains region.⁷⁴

The content of the Černín correspondence serves to demonstrate that the Černín women did not only follow the movements of troops in the Czech Lands, but were also actively interested in events beyond their borders, as they were aware of the direct impact on the domestic situation. In the

⁶⁸ Filip Fridrich Breuner (1597–1669), appointed as the Bishop of Vienna in 1639.

⁶⁹ Humprecht Jan to Zuzana Černínová, 19 January 1646, Rome, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 87.

⁷⁰ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 28 October 1645, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 49.

⁷¹ Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 9 December 1644, Petršpurk, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 60.

⁷² Matthias Gallas (1588–1647) was an imperial general.

⁷³ Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 9 December 1644, Petršpurk, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 60. Sylvie mentioned the march of the Swedish armies under the command of Torstenson and their move towards Magdeburg in November 1644. The Swedes then began to move into Bohemia, as was already mentioned in the previous section. Fukala, *Tricetiletá válka*, 83.

⁷⁴ Sylvie regularly mentioned the Swedish campaign around Magdeburg in her letters from December 1644 and January 1645, describing to her husband the situation in the occupied regions in relation to contributions and the conscription of peasants. The advance of the Swedish troops had a significant impact on the Černín estates of Nejdek and Kysibl. Sylvie Černínová to Heřman Černín, 5 January 1645, in Tischer, *Dopisy*, 64–5.

correspondence of Sylvia and Zuzana, one can find information about the movement of Swedish troops in the Empire, the situation in German cities (in Sylvia's case, this concerned the already mentioned Magdeburg), as well as information about the French army moving through Europe. Zuzana looked with hope towards the peace talks that had been ongoing in Münster since 1644, and with noticeable frustration, wrote to her son about the state of the negotiations: "[...] they say that everyone has already left Münster, and there is no longer any hope for peace."⁷⁵

Humprecht Jan kept his mother informed about events in France, Rome, and Florence, sometimes in detail.⁷⁶ Thanks to this information, Zuzana gained some context for the domestic situation. The question remains, however, to what extent Zuzana was able to reflect on these events, and whether she was familiar with geography and knew where each country or city was located, and to what extent she understood the politics of other countries. While Zuzana primarily received information about foreign affairs (from Humprecht Jan), Sylvia actively informed her husband about these events herself. The frequency of these updates makes it apparent that she was genuinely interested in them, putting the events into context and passing them on to her husband.

Similar questions arise when considering the monitoring and reporting on major events occurring in Bohemian, Moravian, or Silesian territories. Both Sylvia and Zuzana kept track of the occupation of key regions or cities, estates, and noble residences. They carefully informed their counterparts about the military successes of the enemies and any subsequent counteractions by the imperial forces. Over the years, they repeatedly mentioned the sieges of Litoměřice, Frýdlant, Mělník, Klatovy, and Olomouc. Finally, Jihlava, which was occupied by the Swedes after the Battle of Jankov, was frequently mentioned, especially in Zuzana's letters, due to its close proximity to the family estates.⁷⁷

Reflections on the War in the Correspondence of Alžběta Myslíková

As mentioned in the introduction, Alžběta married the imperial officer Zikmund Myslík of Hyršov at the beginning of 1640. The life of the couple

⁷⁵ Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 15 September 1646, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 122.

⁷⁶ Humprecht Jan to Zuzana Černínová, 19 January 1646, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 87–88.

⁷⁷ Zuzana regularly complained that, due to the presence of troops, not only in the Jihlava region, she could also not return to her estates (most likely Radenín).

after the wedding is not documented in the correspondence of either the couple or in Alžběta's correspondence with other family members. The reason is simple—after the marriage, Alžběta stayed with her family because Myslík had not yet acquired an estate where he could introduce his wife as the lady of the house. Furthermore, after the wedding, he was once again called back into the army.⁷⁸

The first surviving letter from Alžběta, addressed to Zuzana, dates back to 1642, as after the wedding, she mainly stayed at Radenín, as evidenced by letters from Humprecht Jan, in which he frequently sent greetings to “the lady sister.”⁷⁹ Although the correspondence between Zuzana and Alžběta is not extensive, sixteen letters have survived,⁸⁰ which, in terms of content, reveal the world of a noblewoman married to an imperial soldier in an interesting way. Unfortunately, it is a great loss that the correspondence between Myslík and Alžběta has not survived.⁸¹ It would have undoubtedly had great evidential value and would have complemented the letters addressed to Zuzana.

The surviving letters indicate how Alžběta perceived the war and reflected on the events of everyday life as a wartime wife. Alžběta did not view the war as negatively in relation to the actual military events as her mother, Zuzana. For Alžběta, the war was mainly the reason she spent most of her days without her husband and felt abandoned: “Please believe, my most gracious lady mother, that I would rather wish for death for myself than to live as I am, with my husband elsewhere and I also being elsewhere.”⁸²

The most frequently mentioned concern of the young Myslík's wife was the health of her husband and the well-being of her family in Bohemia: “That, praise be to God, they are all healthy, I am truly glad of that, but being so troubled by those soldiers, I sincerely wish you were spared from that. God! May He be your helper in this and rid you of those soldiers.”⁸³

⁷⁸ Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 23; Tischer, *Oberst Freiherr*, 10.

⁷⁹ These include letters from September 1641 and March 1642, both dated in Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 42–4.

⁸⁰ All sixteen letters were published by Dvorský, *Mateř a dcera Zuzany Černínové z Harasova* (Prague: F. Dvorský, 1890). Several letters were included in his edition *Staré písemné památky žen a dcer českých*, see Dvorský, *Staré písemné památky*, 459–66, 474–75.

⁸¹ “The rich life of Eliška, daughter of Zuzana Černínová, is also supplemented from very scarce sources, because the letters she wrote to her husband Myslík, which were sometimes kept in the noble archive in Pacov, were destroyed along with other old Czech documents.” Dvorský, *Mateř*, 9.

⁸² Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, undated letter, 1645, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 54.

⁸³ Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, February 26, 1645, Passau, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 51.

Myslík eventually purchased the estate of Pacov from Zuzana,⁸⁴ and thus a new topic appears in the correspondence: concern for the estate,⁸⁵ payment of contributions and plundering,⁸⁶ but also dealings with the estate officials. In June 1645, she wrote to her mother about troubles with the likely captain of Passau: "I would bite our steward out of great anger, he sits in Tábor and indulges himself [...]"⁸⁷ This topic, however, did not dominate the correspondence to the same extent as it did in the case of Zuzana and Sylvia.

Alžběta regularly recorded the events of everyday life in her letters. She described whom she met and which churches she visited, but there are also descriptions of two places of residence. The first description comes from a residence in Kłodzko, from which she sent a letter to her mother Zuzana in September 1642. It was probably the first place she stayed after Myslík called her to join him in the autumn of 1642.⁸⁸ "I think it could be a residence, with two rooms and a chamber, along with cellars and a stable, where all the horses can stand, and both carts can fit, although it was a little further down the street. I really wanted to have it in the market square, but I could not get it."⁸⁹

It is impossible to determine exactly whether the second residence that Alžběta described comes from the period after the birth of her daughter Zuzanka (November 1644), or if Alžběta stayed in Passau during her pregnancy: "I do not think there could be a more cheerful place than here, and on top of that, we have such a lovely residence, right by the water, where we can see everyone sailing by, everything we see in all directions."⁹⁰

During her stays in Kłodzko, Passau, and Linz, Alžběta visited the wives of other imperial soldiers. In a letter to her mother, she proudly wrote: "My dearest lady mother! Please believe me, I do not know what I would do here with my sorrow if there were no other ladies-in-waiting. There are several of the highest rank, and many other soldiers' wives, and we always meet together. When I arrived, the very next day, they all came to greet me. There is also the highest-ranking Rochau, who is the Countess of Pumstorf, and the

⁸⁴ Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 36.

⁸⁵ The occupation of Pacov by the enemy was mentioned, for example, in an undated letter from 1645. Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 55; Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, undated letter, 1645, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 55.

⁸⁶ Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, undated letter, 1645, Linz, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 57–8.

⁸⁷ Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, 17 July 1645, Linz, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 66.

⁸⁸ Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 38.

⁸⁹ Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, 8 September 1642, Kłodzko, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 37.

⁹⁰ Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, undated letter, 1644, Passau, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 40.

stepdaughter of the mayor of Nové Město. I have not spent a day without her; we are always together, and she is incredibly refined.”⁹¹

Zuzana later informed Humprecht Jan about Alžběta's contacts with other wives of imperial soldiers. With a certain degree of pride, she wrote to her son in a letter from 1645, mentioning the company that surrounded Alžběta was in: “Bětuška [a diminutive of “Alžběta”] is always with Princess Holstein and Countess Gallas, having only lain in the field three times, always staying in the headquarters.”⁹²

The letter in which Alžběta mentions this to her mother has unfortunately not survived.

Alžběta spent most of her time without her husband, so she carefully noted where Myslík had gone, where he and his regiment were currently stationed, and where the army would move next. The army's movement influenced her situation, and she often described possible transfers between cities, or the difficulties associated with travelling, such as the inability to pass through certain territories. The surviving letters describe Myslík's military successes and promotions, as well as the reaction of those around him. In August 1645, she informed her mother: “This man has such terrible envy among people; other officers speak so badly of him, saying that he only served as a general quartermaster for three months and was immediately made a field marshal-lieutenant, and that the army was handed over to him right away. Gallas can eat his heart out.”⁹³ Myslík's career was on the rise throughout the year, and he received rapid career advancement, which, if we are to believe Alžběta's words, was met with disapproval in some circles.⁹⁴

Unfortunately, Alžběta did not have long to rejoice in her husband's successes. As early as 1645, her letters began to mention various health issues, and by November of that year, she contracted the so-called “Hungarian disease”, likely typhus. Myslík had his wife transported to Klatovy, where she died in December. Alžběta's death did not end, however, the communication between Myslík and the Černíns. On the contrary, for Zuzana, he remained her dearest son-in-law, and she continued to take an active interest in his future.

⁹¹ Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, 8 September 1642, Klodzko, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 37.

⁹² Zuzana Černínová to Humprecht Jan, 17 November 1645, Prague, in Kalista, *Korespondence*, 55.

⁹³ Alžběta Myslíkovna to Zuzana Černínová, 30 August 1645, Passau, in Dvorský, *Mateř*, 72.

⁹⁴ Kalista also referred to the same. Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 41. Kalista further notes that the relationship between Myslík and Gallas was strained, see Kalista, *Zikmund Myslík*, 37.

Conclusion

The information provided by the noblewomen in the analysed correspondence served several purposes. Primarily, it aimed to provide information about the dire conditions in Bohemia, the poor state of estate management, and the current situation on individual properties—essentially, to report on the state of the estates. Another purpose was to update family members about the daily lives of the correspondents, expressing their concerns and struggles. In this regard, they did not deviate from typical correspondence of the time. Lastly, they informed the recipients about how they perceived the world around them. Both noblewomen mentioned similar types of information—movements of troops, fears for their estates and inhabitants, and concerns about the future.

The difference lay primarily in the intensity of their expressions, the depth of their messages, and the aspects they chose to emphasise as important to convey. Zuzana was well-informed, and her interest in surrounding events seems to have been motivated mainly by concern for the estates—her son's inheritance—as well as by fear for the safety of her closest family members. If she received information that could affect Humprecht's journey or his future career, she did not hesitate to mention it to her son.

In most cases, Zuzana focused primarily on domestic news, writing to her son about the daily suffering and hardships caused by the war. Her world revolved around her estates, her social circle—which included her granddaughter, subjects, family, and nearby nobles. In contrast, Sylvia's correspondence reveals a clear, active interest in events in Bohemia, politics, and even "gossip" from behind the scenes of the imperial army. She particularly enjoyed commenting on the failures of Matthias Gallas.

The example of Myslík's wife presents the world of a capable imperial soldier's spouse. This is also reflected in his life story and career steps, recorded between 1644 and 1645 by his wife and, after her death, by his mother-in-law. Alžběta viewed the war and military events from the perspective of a woman who primarily longed for the presence of her husband. While she informed her mother about wartime events and other significant occurrences, these were not the main focus of her communication. Her correspondence is valuable primarily because it captures life in military quarters, the social circle of a soldier's wife, and reflections on her husband's career.

Abstract

This study delves into the wartime correspondence of three noblewomen from the Černín family during the Thirty Years' War: Zuzana Černínová of Harasov, Alžběta Myslíková of Chudenice, and Sylvie Černínová of Millesimo. Their letters provide a unique perspective on the impact of war on daily life, family relationships, and societal structures in the seventeenth century. The correspondence reveals the women's roles as estate managers, their interactions with both friendly and enemy troops, and their efforts to navigate the challenges posed by the war. The study highlights the importance of aristocratic correspondence as a historical source, offering insights into the intellectual and social world of the Early Modern period. Through their letters, these women not only maintained family ties, but also became keen observers of significant historical events, reflecting on the broader social and political contexts that shaped their lives.

Keywords: familial correspondence; gender; Thirty Years' War; Zuzana Černínová; Sylvie Černínová

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