

Translated by Greg Gorsuch
Volume 2 Part 7

SECOND SIEGE OF ZARAGOZA,

BY THE FRENCH ARMY OF ARAGON,
IN 1808 AND 1809.

3rd NIGHT, from 31 December to January 1st, 1809.

Right Attack. One thousand workers and eighty-five sappers emerged from the first parallel and pushed forward along three lines: the right line, directed toward the capital of the northern corner of the convent of Saint Joseph, was led to an irrigation canal, in whose bed the second parallel was to be drawn; the central line was directed toward the southern corner of the same convent; and the left line, toward the point where the Huebra River juts out between the convents of Santa Engracia and Saint Joseph. These works, approximately three hundred meters in length, were carried out without the enemy appearing to notice.

Center Attack. Two zigzags were pushed forward from the first parallel on the right bank of the Huebra, towards the bridgehead. An attempt was made to cut the Monte Torrero road, where the right end of the first parallel rested, with portable undermines; but the fire from the fortress, aided by the moonlight, forced this effort to be abandoned. On the left bank of the Huebra, the first parallel was extended by about one hundred and twenty meters. Communication was continued behind, through the olive trees, towards the bridge that linked the paths on both banks.

Left attack. The parallel was extended by forty meters towards the escarpment of the plateau.

Our total loss was one sapper killed and four grenadiers wounded.

DAY of January 1st.

The three routes leading in front of the first parallel against Saint-Joseph were not deep enough, so the enemy plunged them from the top of the convent walls; we suffered one man killed and two wounded. We set up terraces to the right and left of each exit in the first parallel, over a length of twenty meters, in order to be able to advance to meet the sorties. We continued to cut the Monte-Torrero road in front of the bridgehead; benches were made for firing along the entire length of the parallel of the castle. The Spaniards maintained a brisk fire of musketry and artillery all day.

4th NIGHT, January 1st to 2nd.

Attack from the right. Five hundred workers and seventy sappers were employed to push forward the zigzags of the three routes leading to Saint-Joseph. At the end of the right-hand path, the second parallel

was initiated over a length of a hundred meters in a dried-up irrigation canal. An officer of the 14th was killed in the trench; we also lost several sappers.

Attack from the center. The path begun the day before was extended by a hundred meters on the right bank of the Huebra. At its end, a half-arms square was opened at an average distance of two hundred meters from the bridgehead. The cutting of the Monte Torrero road to the right of the first parallel continued, as well as the improvements to the works begun the day before.

Marshal Mortier, commander of the Fifth Corps, had received orders to occupy Calatayud and Medinaceli in order to ensure communication between Zaragoza and Madrid, which the Emperor deemed important to maintain in order to receive news of the siege. Accordingly, he left during the night with the division of Suchet and the Twenty-first Chasseurs, leaving Gazan's division, reinforced by the Tenth Hussars and half a battery of horse artillery, to continue the blockade of the suburb on the left bank of the Ebro, and to observe the road to Barcelona. General Gouvion Saint-Cyr, commander of the Seventh Corps in Catalonia, had received orders to advance by this road to Lerida, in order to establish communication with the French troops encamped before Saragossa; but the Catalans prevented him from carrying out this project.

The departure of Suchet's division brought some changes in the distribution of the siege troops to occupy the part of the line that was thinned. The division of Grandjean remained on the right, extending from the Ebro to Monte Torrero; the division of Musnier occupied the line from Monte Torrero to the Huebra; the division of Morlot pressed on the left to occupy the space between the Huebra and the upper Ebro. This division being too weak to keep such an extensive line, the Thirteenth Cuirassiers was placed in the rear with two artillery pieces, at Monzalbarba, between the Alagon road and the Ebro. Two marching squadrons also occupied Santa Fe, near the left bank of the Huebra and on the road to Madrid by Daroca. To further strengthen this line between the Écluses Road and the Alagon Road, General Lacoste reconnoitered the location of three redoubts, each of which was later armed with two field guns. Two other guns were placed behind a breastwork on the Écluses Road, at the ambulance house. The remainder of the Third Division's artillery was held in reserve to move forward as needed.

The number of laborers provided by the infantry was reduced to five hundred men for the right attack and three hundred men for the center attack. Of this number, the artillery had about one hundred men at its disposal for the construction of its batteries, independent of the permanent auxiliaries assigned to the artillery companies of the siege crew.

DAY of 2 January.

From the morning, the enemy began a very heavy artillery and musketry fire along the entire line. Around eleven o'clock, they made a sortie from Saint-Joseph, boldly advancing as far as the second parallel. The Spaniards were repulsed, leaving several dead on the field, including an officer in the trench itself. We suffered seven killed and thirty wounded.

In the afternoon, the enemy made another sortie on the left bank of the Ebro with four battalions, three squadrons, and two cannons. They moved toward the camps of General Gazan's left brigade to cut off the battalion on the lower Ebro and attempt to clear the main road to Catalonia. The lowering of the waters in the Gállego River allowed the Spanish cavalry to unexpectedly fall upon one of our outposts and saber a few men; but the other troops of the division quickly rushed up, and the enemy was driven back to their positions in disorder.

5th NIGHT, January 2nd to 3rd.

Attack from the right. The second parallel was extended by eighty meters to the left in the irrigation canal where it had been begun, and tirailleurs were positioned there to fire at the embrasures of the convent. On the right, two 4-pounder guns were placed in battery to act against the sorties. As the center advanced, three new zigzags were made toward this parallel; and on the left, they debouched from the first parallel by a section of trench about sixty meters long, to reach the emplacement of the No. 2 indirect fire battery. Five hundred workers and seventy sappers were employed in this work.

Attack from the center. The first parallel was extended by forty meters to the right of the road that descends from Monte Torrero to the town, and the right of the half-arms square built along this parallel was extended by a few meters. On the left bank of the Huebra, a position was placed at the left end of the parallel for two 4-pounder guns, intended to support the trench guards.

Left Attack. The portion of the parallel already completed was perfected, and work began on the redoubts begun on the front of the Third Division.

6th NIGHT, January 3rd to 4th.

Right Attack. The left of the second parallel was extended by about one hundred meters into the irrigation canal; terraces were formed there to be able to advance in front of the sorties. The central advance was pushed back by about forty meters; the left advance was advanced thirty meters, towards the salient angle of the Huebra. Three hundred workers and seventy sappers were employed in this work.

The artillery began, in front of the first parallel, two batteries:

No. 1, with two 16-pounder guns and two six-inch howitzers, to enfilade the south face of the Convent of Saint Joseph and destroy the adjacent angle.

No. 2, with two 12-pounders and two six-inch howitzers, to enfilade the eastern side of the same convent.

Attack of the center. Communications were widened and the Monte Torrero road was completed. The artillery began three batteries, namely:

No. 5, with two 24-pounders and two eight-inch howitzers, to counterattack and destroy the bridgehead.

No. 7, on the left bank of the Huebra, with two 12-pounders, to strike from behind and ricochet the left branch of the bridgehead.

No. 8, on the same bank, with two 24-pounder guns and two eight-inch howitzers, to attack the Huebra Bridge at the same time as the bridgehead and cut off its communication with the city.

Left attack. We extended the first parallel to the left as far as the escarpment. We continued to work on the redoubts begun on the front of the Third Division.

DAY of 4 January.

We continued the improvement work, both on the right and in the center and left. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy directed two guns from the Convent of Saint-Joseph against the left end of the second parallel, which they could see from the side, and laid down a sustained fire, which our musketry responded to.

We had one man killed and eleven wounded.

General Junot had distributed papers to the Spanish outposts announcing our army's entry into Madrid. Palafox, who knew that strength lay in public opinion, seized this opportunity with more skill than modesty, to demonstrate a confidence that would increase that of his troops. He went so far as to address a proclamation to the inhabitants of Madrid in which the following sentences were noted: "As soon as I have rid myself of the rabble who dared to attack my walls, I will fly to your aid.....I barely have enough time to clean my sword, still stained with the blood of these wretches...If I attack them, I am victorious; if they attack me, they return punished for their audacity¹."

7th NIGHT, January 4th to 5th.

Right Attack. The second parallel was extended twenty meters to its left; the enemy's proximity made this work very perilous. The central and left paths were undermined; the enemy fired several grapeshot shots against them, wounding five of our men. The necessary ramps were built for the passage of the heavy artillery.

Center Attack. The communication with the first parallel was extended to the rear. A loop of about twenty meters was made at the right end of the half-platform to protect it from sorties.

Left Attack. Work continued on the first parallel and the redoubts. The left one was converted into a single battery.

DAY of 5 January.

It was discovered that the enemy had opened a line of counterapproach against the central attack and on the left bank of the Huebra, to take our half-platform from the right bank from behind. The first parallel was extended to the left, in an attempt to enfilade this counterapproach.

At the left end of the parallel, in front of the castle, the artillery began a two-gun battery to batter the Ebro plain at the foot of the escarpment.

Within twenty-four hours, we suffered twelve men killed and thirty-seven wounded.

8th NIGHT, January 5th to 6th.

Right Attack. Two hundred and fifty workers and seventy-five sappers were employed to extend the second parallel eighty meters to the left, and to push the central advance to this parallel. The left advance was halted by the difficulty of defiling (through) its zigzags from the Pilar bridgehead and the Convent of Saint Joseph. Throughout the night, the enemy directed a very heavy artillery and musketry fire at our works. They even threw hand grenades that only reached the foot of the parapet of the second parallel. We suffered only a few men killed or wounded.

The artillery deployed three new batteries, namely:

No. 3, on the reverse side of the second parallel, with two 24-pounders and two 16-pounders, to breach the southern face of the Convent of Saint Joseph.

¹ See supporting documents, no. 7.

No. 4, to the right of No. 2, with two 12-inch mortars and two 8-inch mortars, to crush the buildings of the same convent.

Attack of the center. The enemy continued the line of counterapproach they had begun the day before on the left bank of the Huebra and supported their efforts with very heavy artillery and musketry fire. We continued to extend the first parallel to the left, to enfilade this counterapproach.

The artillery deployed Battery No. 6, with four twelve-inch mortars and two eight-inch mortars, to attack the bridgehead.

DAY of 6 January.

One of the trenches of the central route, towards Saint-Joseph, being enfiladed by the convent of Santa-Engracia, we were forced to build four traverses to cover it. The enemy stopped working on the counterapproach line they were pushing to the right of the bridgehead, although we had not been able to successfully enfilade it.

Our first batteries were completed; but only a very small portion of the equipment had yet arrived². Artillery service was delayed by the shortage of transport and the frequent interruption of navigation on the canal. General Junot placed two hundred horses from the Third Corps at the disposal of General Dedon.

The Spanish laid down a very heavy artillery and musketry fire all day, to which we could only respond with gunfire. We had four men wounded, including two sappers.

Palafox had copies of a proclamation written in six languages thrown at our outposts, urging our soldiers to desert.³ That very day, a priest, dressed in his priestly robes, dared to leave the suburb on the left bank and advance, crucifix in hand, on one of the posts of the Gazan Division. When he reached within fifty paces of ours, he stopped and began to preach with great unction, representing to the soldiers, astonished by such boldness, that they were supporting a bad cause, and urging them to abandon the party of error and the path to hell to follow the path of virtue and paradise. The sentries, not understanding Spanish, and seeing this action as nothing more than foolish bravado, fired a few shots into the air to drive away the preacher, who hurried back into the suburb.



² See supporting documents, no. 8.

³ See supporting documents, no. 9.

No. 7.

*Proclamation of Palafox addressed to the inhabitants of
Madrid.*

Headquarters in Zaragoza, 4 January 1809.

My fate still holds me between the cannon and the bayonets of the enemy. These dogs barely give me time to wipe my sword, still stained with their blood; but this city will be their tomb: these invincible walls are the reef where they will break, and where they will find the testimonies of our love for our Ferdinand. Yes, valiant inhabitants of Madrid! yes, heroes! yes, my brothers! here we will not surrender. We cannot die; we cannot succumb under the weight of misery and under the number of our enemies: we will live for posterity; and when heaven, granting my wishes, removes such infamous enemies from our sight, I will fly myself to your aid. Moncey wrote to me that Madrid had capitulated; And, despite my ignorance of your fate, I could not believe it, and I made it known to him, assuring him of the little importance I paid to the threats of his emperor and his army. I cut three of his columns to pieces; my cavalry dropped their swords on their haughty necks, and my infantry pinned them with their bayonets. If I attack them, I am sure to defeat them; if they attack me, they will return punished for their audacity. Courage! brave inhabitants of Madrid: the provinces are fighting fiercely; and, in victory, we will sing hymns in honor of our idolized Ferdinand.

Signed: PALAFOX.



No. 8.

Situation of the siege equipment on 6 January 1809.

Translators note: following translation includes the words: charrettes à boulets; triqueballes; étoupilles and lancers à feu. I have done my best to find English substitutes.

DESIGNATION OF THE OBJECTS.			QUANTITIES.					OBSERVATIONS.	
			by direction of H. I. M.	existing in the siege park.	at Alagón.	at Tudela.	at Pamplona.		
Artillery pieces	{	Cannons	of 24	10	10	"	"		
			of 16	5	5	"	"		
			of 12	15	11	4	"		
		Howitzers	8 inch	4	4	"	"		
			6 inch	6	4	"	4		
	{	Mortars	12 inch	6	4	2	"		
			8 inch	8	8	"	"		
		{	Cannons	6 inch	10	2	4	"	
				of 24	15	13	1	1	
				of 16	8	5	"	2	
Gun carriages	{	Howitzers	of 12	22	10	4	2		
			8 inch	6	4	1	1		
			6 inch	9	4	"	4		
		{	Mortars	12 inch	9	4	4	"	
				8 inch	12	8	"	"	
	{	Projectiles	6 inch	15	1	2	"		
			of 24	10,000	1,920	428	1,119		
			of 16	5,000	1,134	1,860	"		
			of 12	15,000	994	2,916	2,723		
			12 inch	6,000	409	140	612		
Vehicles	{	Bombs and shells	8 inch	12,000	1,325	1,838	2,062		
			6 inch	16,000	732	209	2,435		
			Carts for cannon balls	300	11	9	40		
		{	Carriages	For cannons	50	22	6	4	
				For munitions	180	14	"	"	
	{	Munitions	Field forges	3	1	1	1		
			Triqueballes	2	1	"	"		
			Gun powder (kil.)	250,000	26,450	5,050	1,950		
			Infantry cartridges	2,000,000	15,225	"	364,410		
			Wicks	50,000	36,400	"	100		
Explosives	{	Fuses		7,500	2,223	"	"		
				15,000	5,740	"	"		
				20,000	3,575	"	617		
		{	Firing sticks		8,000	1,650	"	400	
					60,000	26,486	3,370	24,100	

From the headquarters before Zaragoza, 7 January 1809.

Division General commanding the artillery equipment for siege,

Signed: DEDON SENIOR.

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## No 9.

*Palafox proclamation, addressed to French  
troops 6 January.*

French,

It is time that you know your real situation; the victories you obtained in the North had started with the desolation of your families, with the loss of your property, that men who had nothing appropriated, and they ended with intrigue and perfidy. These victories had you dazzled, until the crazy temerity of your Emperor, who had lost more than sixty thousand men in Spain in the last months of last year, drew you from the North where you were necessary for the conservation of his conquests so praised, and to support the Tilsit Treaty. But Spain is the school of truth: you come here, at the expense of the greatest sacrifices, see torn the veil of iniquity that tyrannizes you. Here, where gold loses all its power, where the intrigue is not favored by the good Spaniards, it is your only courage that you have to expect everything. So think that tactics and value are nothing, can do nothing against the insurmountable forces that eleven million warriors who defend their outraged freedom. No matter was advantageous to you in Spain; the smallest victory cost you streams of blood; and what were the results? devastate the villages, massacre the unfortunate defenseless without defense, violate the temples and frighten women: these are excesses unworthy of the French name, crimes that tarnish your honor, and make you aberrant to all the peoples of the continent. The heroic defense of Zaragoza; the Baylen action; the memorable day of 2 May in Madrid; the defense of Valencia; the progress of the reserve army in Navarre; action at Tudela, which cost you too much, and where the plan could not do anything in your favor; the sad success you obtained in the villages on the edges of the Jalón; and the last event of the 21<sup>st</sup> of the last month at the foot of the walls of Zaragoza, let you know how much your Emperor has been mistaken in his calculations and in his expectations, and that you will be sacrificed to his whim before succeeding in his insane project. Brave French, this is your real situation. In the midst of an enemy province, not yours, but your Emperor, you are victims of whim and ambition; while you could be as happy as we are, if you abandon the unfair cause you follow, and use your noble courage for the defense of your properties, and the acquisition of new titles to glory and more worthy laurels. Italians, Polish, Germans, your homeland calls you; your families are looking forward to you. Abandon a war that makes your reproach and come and put yourself with noble confidence under the protection of this generous government, which will return you to your grieving families. You will be received as friends, treated and rescued as brothers, with the generosity proper to the character of this valiant nation, whose greatness is as brightly showed in punishment as in the forgiveness of those who offend him. Far from you the fatal error where you are maintained on the ill treatment of your prisoners, while there are several who enjoy Now with them the tranquility and happy fruits of their confidence. The same fate awaits you if you follow their example. Open your eyes, French, think about your situation, and, since you know there are no cowards in Spain, choose.

*Signed: PALAFOX.*