

Translated by Greg Gorsuch
Volume 2 Part 9

SECOND SIEGE OF ZARAGOZA,

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

19th NIGHT, from 16 to 17 January.

Attack on the right. Four hundred workers and eighty-two sappers were employed to extend the third parallel by one hundred and eighty meters, to the left of Saint-Joseph, and to make a start for this line at the end of the route directed towards the salient angle of the Huebra. The artillery started a new battery No. 12, of four mortars, to replace battery No. 4 which was too far back.

Attack on the center. We opened, behind the bridgehead, the third parallel over a length of two hundred meters.

Attack on the left. A long gallery, intended to serve as communication with the first parallel, was undertaken at the foot of the escarpment.

DAY of 17 January.

At daybreak, batteries No. 9 and 11 opened fire against the enclosure. They soon silenced the battery of four guns and two howitzers, known as Palafox, located behind the wall near the town's oil mill. From then on our journeys could progress, without being too worried, at least for a few days.

The work undertaken the previous night was perfected on the right, center and left. We had two men killed, including a sapper.

20th NIGHT, from 17 to 18 January.

Attack on the right. We opened, behind battery No. 12, a communication of sixty meters, extending to a lined ditch which served as a spillway and from which we made the descent. We joined by zigzags the part of the third parallel executed to the left of Saint-Joseph, with that which was in front of the route pushed on the Huebra salient. Four hundred and sixty workers and ninety sappers were employed on this work.

Attack on the center. The third parallel was extended to the right, and a communication was opened from this parallel to the ditch on the left side of the bridgehead. At the throat of this last

work, a dwelling was made within pistol range of the parapet occupied by the enemy on the opposite bank of the Huebra.

The artillery changed the direction of several embrasures, to reach some pieces that the enemy was moving through the rubble of its batteries.

We had five men wounded.

At two o'clock in the morning, a small boat, manned by five or six men, escaped from Zaragoza down the Ebro. About thirty voltigeurs followed it on both banks for nearly a quarter of a league and fired several shots at it; but the speed of the current and the obstacles of the terrain forced them to abandon their pursuit. It was the third time such a thing had happened. It was proposed to establish a night post in a boat in the middle of the Ebro, and to stretch a line across the river to close the passage; but this project was not followed up, and the navigation of the lower Ebro still remained open to the enemy to communicate with the outside world.

DAY of 18 January.

Four hundred workers and ninety sappers were employed to perfect the third parallel to the right and left of Saint-Joseph, as well as the communications behind it. We began a descent into the bed of the Huebra, below the bridge. The portion of the third parallel opened behind the Pilar bridgehead was also improved.

21st NIGHT, 18 to 19 January.

Attack on the right. Four hundred workers and ninety sappers. To the left of Saint-Joseph, we undertook eight small zigzags to reach the descent of the Huebra begun the previous day downstream of the bridge; we had, in this very difficult and very perilous work, five men wounded, including two sappers. The third parallel was extended, to the right, three hundred meters beyond the paved ditch that we had crossed the previous night; and, after having reached the end of this ditch by a passage, a second descent of the Huebra began there.

Our batteries only fired to silence a few pieces that the enemy had unmasked, and which were bothering our saps. The artillery started two new batteries, namely:

No. 13, to the right of Saint-Joseph, of two pieces of 24 and two pieces of 12, having to breach the surrounding wall near the convents of Sainte-Monique and Saint-Augustin.

No. 15, to the left of Saint-Joseph, of three pieces of 24, intended to open the wall opposite this convent.

Mortar Battery No. 12 was armed and supplied.

Attack on the center. The third parallel was extended to within a hundred meters of the left path of the right attack, following the contours of the Huebra escarpment.

Attack on the left. A hook was made behind the first parallel to connect it with the break in the road at the foot of the escarpment, and work continued on the major communication which was to lead there.

DAY of 19 January.

During the day, the descent of the Huebra, made near the bridge of Saint-Joseph, found itself submerged, and we could not work on it. We continued the descent to the right, started at the end of the lined ditch serving as a spillway. The enemy fired little, and we were able to perfect the other works undertaken on the right, in the center and on the left.

22nd NIGHT, from 19 to 20 January.

Attack on the right. Three hundred and fifty workers and eighty-seven sappers. The third parallel was extended to its extreme right by approximately one hundred and sixty meters, so as to crown the curtain which borders the Ebro. We continued the two descents of the Huebra, although the enemy directed a sustained fire there; the one on the left, drawn in a zigzag, was especially very difficult to make; we had two men killed and one wounded.

Attack on the center. The portion of the third parallel which remained to be made towards Saint-Joseph was completed, which linked the attack from the center to that from the right, and gave us continuous communication along the escarpment of the Huebra, from the bridgehead to the lower Ebro.

DAY of 20 January.

Generals Lacoste and Dedon made a new reconnaissance of the enclosure following the third parallel, and determined the location of eight new batteries, namely:

No. 14, on the extreme right, in front of the third parallel, for four 12-inch guns and two six-inch howitzers, was to enfilade the quay of the suburb of the tanneries, hit the large Ebro bridge and take the suburb on the left bank from behind.

No. 16, to the left of Saint-Joseph and opposite the Quemada gate, two six-inch howitzers, to destroy the barrier which closed this gate and enfilade the street which ends there.

No. 17, two eight-inch howitzers, to take the defenses of Santa-Engracia from the rear.

No. 18, two six-inch howitzers, to ruin the enclosure wall of the gardens of Santa Engracia, and counter the casemated battery that the enemy had in the botanical garden.

No. 19, three pieces of 24 and one of 16, to defeat the convent of Santa-Engracia.

No. 20, of three pieces of 12, to protect the breach battery against Santa-Engracia, and counter-battle the pieces that the enemy had in this convent.

Finally, a battery, of two twelve-inch mortars and two eight-inch mortars, was to be established on the right bank of the Ebro, to hit the suburb and menace the enemy on the bridge. This battery was to be served by the artillery of the Fifth Corps.

23rd NIGHT, from 20 to 21 January.

The artillery started the batteries whose locations had been reconnoitered. Several zigzags were undertaken in front of the third parallel, to communicate with batteries Nos. 14, 16 and 19. On the right descent, two galleries were pushed to the edge of the Huebra, where the fourth parallel was started. We continued to work on the left descent, near the Saint-Joseph bridge, and we began a new one at the Huebra salient, between this bridge and that of Santa-Engracia. The enemy fired heavily; a sapper was killed.

DAY of 21 January.

We worked to perfect the new works.

Mortar battery No. 6, greatly worrying the city, eighty Spanish volunteers, commanded by Captain Don Mariano Galindo, wanted to seize it to destroy it. At four o'clock in the afternoon, they emerged to the left of the Pilar bridgehead, crossed the Huebra, and moved at a running pace to this battery. Our first posts were turned back; but, on the arrival of the reserves, the trench guards having moved to the rear of the enemy, cut off their retreat. Surrounded on all sides, the Spaniards fought bravely; the leader was wounded and taken with another officer and thirty-two soldiers, the rest managed to escape. At the same time, another column, of about four hundred men, emerging from the Carmen Gate, came to attack the Red House, located on the road to Madrid by Calatayud, where the grand guard of the Fifth Light was; the officer who commanded there, having defended himself vigorously, gave time to a few companies of grenadiers and voltigeurs to arrive to its aid, and the enemy was forced to withdraw. We had one man killed and six wounded, including a miner.

24th NIGHT, from 21 to 22 January.

Attack on the right. A tunnel was opened, behind the extreme right of the third parallel, near the Ebro, to establish a direct communication with this parallel, which was completed in the following two days, by means of three other tunnels also running behind. The fourth parallel was extended by approximately one hundred meters on the left. We emerged from the descent of the Huebra, to the left of Saint-Joseph, passing under the first arch, to throw two bridges attached on trestles downstream, one of which could be used to establish a parapet. We thus gained cover to Aguilar's small house, located on the left bank, which the enemy had evacuated, leaving eight thousand cartridges there. The door of this house being on the town side, it was barricaded, and another entrance was made in the wall on the riverside. The enclosure wall, located on the right along the Huebra, was crenellated and guarded by a post of twenty-five voltigeurs. Three hundred and sixty workers and one hundred and thirty-two sappers were employed on this work.

Attack on the center. The descent of the Huebra, begun the previous night between Santa-Engracia and Saint-Joseph, was extended by one hundred and twenty meters. The enemy fired very hard on this work, killing one man and wounding six.

DAY of 22 January.

Three hundred and fifty workers and fifty-two sappers were employed in the attack on the right to perfect the work begun the previous night. The enemy fired continually, from the left flank of Santa-Engracia, on our passage over the Huebra, adjacent to the Saint-Joseph bridge, which made communication very dangerous. To get there directly, we began at the gorge of Saint-Joseph an underground descent which was to lead to the trestle bridge itself, covered on the opposite bank by the small house of Aguilar.

We continued to work on the Huebra descending passage between Santa-Engracia and Saint-Joseph. A miner was killed there.

We have now arrived at the most critical period of the siege. All Aragon was in arms; the gatherings came to confine and starve our troops even in their camps; every night, the peasants lit fires on the surrounding heights to correspond with the place which responded with signals. General Wattier had to leave Fuentes again, with a battalion and seven hundred horses, to meet the enemy on the road to Valence. January 18 at morning, he encountered, in the village of La Zaida, ten leagues from Zaragoza, an advance guard of two hundred peasants whom he routed, and among whom he killed thirty men. The same day, he advanced into the plain of Puebla de Híjar, where General Don Pedro Elola had taken up a position with two thousand Spaniards. He also dispersed this troop, and the next day he went to Híjar, which he captured after putting to flight a crowd of peasants who crowned the heights. He disarmed the surrounding villages, collected grain, and gathered five or six thousand sheep which he sent to Fuentes. The country's news announced that the district of Alcañiz was in full insurrection, and that a convoy of five thousand fusils, sixteen pieces of cannon and four boxes of ammunition, was to be directed from Mequinenza to Alcañiz, to arm the peasants; that Don Francisco Palafox had organized an army of fifteen thousand peasants, to which he had gathered a fairly large number of officers, as well as seven or eight hundred soldiers who had escaped from the battle of Tudela; that the Spaniards had no doubt of the imminent arrival of the Army of Valencia.

The successes of General Wattier did not prevent the general uprising of all the villages behind our camps. Near Villa de Muela, Maria and Épila, the peasants had taken up arms, and our establishments in Alagon were daily threatened. The peasants of the mountains of Soria had moved in force towards Tarazona, and raised fears for Tudela, a point so interesting from the double point of view of the navigation of the canal and our communications with Pamplona which was our place of depot. But it was especially on the left bank of the Ebro that our position became more critical. As early as 20 January, General Gazan, to know what to think of the reports he had received concerning the enemy's gatherings in his rear, had sent Adjutant Commander Gasquet on the road to Barbastro, with an elite battalion and fifty horses. This column met at Perdiguera an advance guard of two thousand men of infantry and two hundred horses of the army that Perena had organized in Huesca. The fight began and lasted until nightfall. The adjutant-commander Gasquet, having been unable to force

the enemy, requested reinforcements. The Tenth Hussars, several companies of infantry and three pieces of cannon came to join him; but, on the other hand, Spanish troops were advancing through Almudévar on Zuera. General Gazan, feeling too weak to make new detachments, therefore saw himself at the moment of finding himself between two fires, and of being obliged to lift the blockade.

Such was the state of things on 22 January, when Marshal Lannes arrived at the camp under Zaragoza. He took command of the Third and Fifth Corps, which, charged with participating in the same operation, were finally united under a single leader. From then on, we saw the birth of the whole which constitutes the strength of armies, all efforts being directed by a firm and unique will. Even before his arrival, Marshal Lannes had given the order to Marshal Mortier to approach Zaragoza with Suchet's division and the Twenty-first Chasseurs. These troops set out on 20 January in two columns, heading via Épila and Longares towards Utebo, where they arrived on the 23rd. They immediately crossed to the left bank of the Ebro, heading towards Perdiguera against the army of Perena. The Spaniards retreated to N. D. de Malagón and Leciñena, where they presented a force of about eight thousand men. This troop, newly levied, but commanded by former officers and supported by a few line regiments, showed good demeanor and seemed ready to support our fire. Marshal Mortier approached them, at the head of Suchet's division, drove them from their position, and had them pursued by the cavalry. The enemy lost a thousand men and left in our power two flags and four cannons. At the same time, Adjutant-Commander Gasquet headed, with three battalions, towards Zuera, where he dispersed a gathering of two to three thousand men who had captured this town. Marshal Mortier pushed parties towards Huesca, Sariñena and Pina, in order to disperse the rest of the Spanish bands. Then, Suchet's division remained under observation at Villamayor, on the road to Lleida, to hold the campaign; the Fortieth Regiment was detached to reinforce the left of the camps of Morlot's division in front of the castle.

General Wattier had also received the order to take the offensive, and to march from Híjar to Alcañiz, the capital of the insurrection, where General Elola was located, at the head of six thousand armed peasants and a battalion of line troops. The Spanish general had taken up post behind the Guadalupe, a river bordered by marshes and difficult to ford; the town itself was surrounded by a wall and protected by a castle. On 26 January, at ten o'clock in the morning, General Wattier appeared in sight of this position with eleven hundred infantry men, seven hundred horses and a battery of light artillery. He forced the passage of the bridge while a column turned the left wing of the enemy line. Our troops entered the town, where they killed six hundred peasants. The cavalry, having set out in pursuit of the fugitives, slaughtered many more of them. This vigorous helping hand had a great influence in the country. Caspe submitted, as did many surrounding villages. However, the insurgents kept Mequinenza as a point of support to revolt the surrounding area. General Wattier remained in Alcañiz to monitor the roads to Valencia and Tortosa. He gathered fifteen to twenty thousand sheep, fifteen hundred bags of grain and flour, oil, vegetables and provisions of all kinds, which he had taken to the camp under Zaragoza.

While these expeditions were taking place, the operations of the siege had not been interrupted. During the day of the 22nd, Palafox, having noticed the departure of some French troops,

believed the moment was favorable to retake the convent of Saint-Joseph, and therefore prepared a major sortie for the following night.

25th NIGHT, from 22 to 23 January.

At nightfall, all the pieces we had in battery fired several salvos to celebrate the victory won at Uclés by Marshal Victor over the Duke of Infantado. The local artillery responded to this cannonade and caused us to lose an artillery officer at battery No. 17, and an auxiliary soldier at battery No. 9.

In the attack on the right, the fourth parallel was extended by about sixty meters to the left, and the beginning of a passage was made ahead, descending towards the Huebra, to prepare a second passage which it was intended to execute the next day. The Huebra trestle bridge was consolidated, and the underground descent continued which, from the convent of Saint-Joseph, was to communicate with it.

At four o'clock in the morning, at the signal of a cannon shot, three Spanish battalions left the town and headed towards Saint-Joseph. The post which occupied Aguilar's small house, although surprised, nevertheless managed to withdraw. The enemy, after setting fire to the gate facing the town, took lodgings in the house; but the engineer captain Duriveau recaptured it soon after, with a company of the Third Vistula. General Laval, who commanded the trench, brought forward a battalion, and the Spaniards, having still committed only part of their troops, were forced to withdraw. We had two men killed and two wounded, including an officer.

During this attack, another column of three hundred Spaniards had emerged from the Santa Engracia gate to attack batteries Nos. 5 and 6. It divided in two to cross the Huebra, to the right and left of the bridgehead. The left detachment was strongly repulsed and lost a few men; but the one on the right had a moment of success: fifty men crossed the parallel, reached battery No. 5, where, having killed three gunners, having wounded two and putting the others to flight, they pinned down two 12-pounders. The trench guards united and cut off the retreat of the Spaniards, who lost a dozen men killed and thirty prisoners, including two officers. Our loss was six men killed and five wounded, including a sapper. The two 12-pounders of Battery No. 5 were uncapped and immediately resumed their fire. A third column had advanced in front of the parallel attack on the castle, but only to create a diversion. It returned at the same time as the other two.

DAY of 23 January.

Four hundred workers and seventy-five sappers were employed in perfecting the work begun the previous night. In the attack on the right, we continued the underground descent to the gorge of the convent of Saint-Joseph, and we repaired the shouldered bridge of the Huebra, whose trestles had sunk into the sand. Ramps were made to lead the artillery to battery No. 14. When attacking the center, we continued around the bridgehead the improvement of the third parallel and the descent of the Huebra, begun at the salient of this river, between Santa-Engracia and Saint-Joseph. The enemy fired a lot and wounded a few men.

26th NIGHT, from 23 to 24 January.

Attack on the right. Four hundred workers and seventy-five sappers. The descent undertaken the day before in front of Battery No. 9 was extended, and a new bridge was thrown across the Huebra, shouldered on the left side like the first. The fourth parallel was extended to the gorge of Saint-Joseph, and we emerged from this parallel by a new descent onto the Huebra. We rebuilt the parapet of the first shouldered bridge, whose trestles had sunk into the sand, and we began upstream, to the left of battery No. 15, a direct communication to reach the underside of the large stone bridge of Huebra.

Attack on the center. The descent undertaken at the Huebra salient was perfected, as was the third parallel, where ramps were made for the artillery. At seven o'clock in the evening, the Spaniards, coming out of the convent of Santa Engracia, fired very hard fire on our riflemen for half an hour. We had four officers wounded, including a battalion commander of the Fourteenth.

Attack on the left. The completion of the redoubts begun on the front of the Third Division, and the arrival of the Fortieth Regiment detached from Suchet's division made it possible to resume the routes to the castle, which the lack of workers had caused to be suspended since the completion of the first parallel. Fifty sappers and two hundred workers emerged to the left of the first parallel via two zigzag branches.

A Spanish deserter from the Calatayud Volunteers escaped from the city and came to present himself at the outposts of the division. According to his reports on the state of the city, there was a considerable number of sick people, and the mortality was very great; residents had evacuated the neighborhoods threatened by the attacks, and the streets were barricaded; the bread was very bad, and there was a shortage of basic necessities. At each gate of the city, there was a monk and a priest responsible for administering the sacraments to the wounded, and for receiving the prisoners, whom they had escorted to the governor, to protect them from the fury of the populace. Finally, Palafox was much loved, and his former tutor, Father D. Bazile, exercised great influence.

Marshal Lannes wrote to the governor to inform him of the latest victories won by the French over the English army of Sir John Moore, and over the Spanish armies of the Marquis de la Romana and the Duke of the Infantado, hoping that this news would induce him to surrender. Palafox responded immediately by sending him a copy of the Zaragoza gazette of 16 January¹.

27th NIGHT, from 24 to 25 January.

Attack on the right. Four hundred and eighty workers and eighty-two sappers. A new parallel one hundred and sixty meters long was opened with the flying sap, on the left bank of the Huebra and in front of the crenellated wall which attached to Aguilar's little house; the enemy had little trouble with this work. A reconnaissance was carried out to the isolated oil mill of Goicoechea, located in front of the enclosure. We established on the bank of the Ebro, behind the third parallel, two barbette batteries for field pieces, in order to keep the enemy away from the left bank of the Ebro between the confluence of the Gállego and the suburb, and to prevent him from

¹ See supporting documents, n° 16 and 17.

coming to take over our works on the right bank. We continued the descent begun to the left of battery No. 15, to reach the underside of the large Huebra bridge near Saint-Joseph. The underground gallery undertaken at the gorge of this convent was also extended.

Attack on the center. We pushed the descent directed towards the salient of this river to the edge of the Huebra. The left of the third parallel was perfected.

The artillery armed and supplied all its batteries, except No. 19, the construction of which was delayed by the difficulties of the terrain. The mortars of Battery No. 6 were transported to No. 5; they thus found themselves brought about eighty meters closer to the enclosure. These mortars and those of Battery No. 12 continued to bombard the city night and day. Towards the evening, Batteries No. 17 and 18 fired a few shots to dislodge the enemy from the cover they occupied on the left bank of the Huebra, and from where they prevented the progress of our saps (diggings).

Attack on the left. Two hundred and fifty-five workers were employed to push the paths and open a portion of the second parallel, one hundred and sixty meters from the castle. The enemy fired heavily on this work and wounded five men. The artillery began in the first parallel to the left of the Alagon road, a battery for two twelve-inch mortars and two pieces of 8.

28th NIGHT, from 25 to 26 January.

Attack on the right. Five hundred workers and seventy-six sappers perfected the accommodation on the left bank of the Huebra and the descents leading there. At the end of the first trench, located in front of the left end of the second parallel, a communication was opened with the ditch on the unflanked face of Saint-Joseph, on the side opposite the city where we were protected from the blows of the besieged.

Attack on the center. As soon as the night was dark, a third bridge was thrown across the Huebra at the end of the descent which had been made at the salient of this river, and immediately one hundred grenadiers of the Hundred and Fourteenth and a detachment of sappers moved to the left bank, behind the cut-off wall of the garden of Santa-Engracia, which they crenellated and where they maintained themselves despite the fire from the place. The shooting lasted all night. The work was supported by fire from Batteries Nos. 17 and 18. We had twelve men wounded, including Battalion Chief Muntrel of the Hundred and Fourteenth and a sergeant of miners.

The artillery completed the arming and supplying of Battery No. 19. All the other batteries were also made ready to fire.

Attack on the left. Two hundred and fifty workers and fifty sappers extended the second parallel at its two ends; and, to communicate with the one on the right, we began, from the first parallel, a new zigzag communication.

DAY of 26 January.

At daybreak, thirteen batteries, Nos. 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20, offering a total of fifty cannon, began to thunder against the city. No. 5 and No. 12 continued the

bombardment with ten mortars, while No. 10's four howitzers launched shells. Battery No. 14 directed its fire on the works at the head of the Faubourg des Tanneries (Tanneries District). Battery No. 16 defeated the Quemada Gate and the enemy's guns at Saint-Michel Church. There Battery No. 18 pulverized the Spanish casemated battery in the botanical garden; and, in a short time, the greater part of the enemy's pieces were reduced to silence. Batteries No. 9, 11, 13 and 15 opened three breaches in the enclosure: the first on the upper terrace of the convent of Sainte-Monique; the second, called the center, corresponded to the lower garden of the same convent, near the town's oil mill; the third was opposite Saint-Joseph, and near the Palafox battery. The isolated oil mill of Goicoechea was also beaten by Battery No. 11: a few shells having set it on fire, a dozen Spaniards who occupied it abandoned it. Batteries Nos. 19 and 20 counter-battered the large battery of the Martyrs, established in the convent of Santa-Engracia. They opened the wall from the front of this convent, as well as the surrounding wall of the garden adjoining it, which was also taken from the rear by battery no. 17. A fog which was quite thick to prevent objects from being distinguished, having suddenly risen, forced the fire to be slowed down. The masonry of the wall being very solid, the breaches started could not be made passable during the day.

All parts of the parallels with a view of the enemy were covered with earth bags. We continued the underground descent of Saint-Joseph, as well as the communication begun the previous night in the ditch of this convent. The passage of the Huebra, towards the salient of this river, was perfected; two men, including a sapper, were injured there.

Colonel San-Genis, who commanded the engineers in the place, was killed by a cannonball in the Palafox battery, while he was examining the progress of our attacks.

29th NIGHT, from 26 to 27 January.

Attack on the right. Three hundred workers and forty sappers. At dusk, an opening was made in the exterior wall of the isolated oil mill of Goicoechea, and we found accommodation in this building. An underground communication, which led there from within the city, was barricaded; we just watched it. The isolated oil mill was linked by a zigzag trench to the accommodation established on the left bank of the Huebra, which itself was extended to the right, up to a few portions of walls providing cover: two men were injured in this work. We reconnoitered the breaches, which were not found sufficiently practicable. We completed the descent of the Huebra started to the left of battery No. 15, as well as the underground descent of Saint-Joseph.

The artillery repaired several of its embrasures and changed the mounts which had suffered. The mortar batteries continued the bombardment of the city and set it on fire in several places. The chancery of the courthouse was reduced to ashes.

Attack on the center. We continued to crenellate the cut-off wall, which was at the head of the Huebra passage. By going up this river on the left bank, we wanted to reconnoiter the breach made at the convent of Santa Engracia; but this was prevented by a transverse wall which was at the foot of the convent, and to which the enemy's shooting prevented the miner from being attached: it was necessary to wait until the artillery could strike this wall. We lost two men, including a miner.

Attack on the left. Three hundred workers and fifty sappers were employed in pushing the right communication towards the second parallel; all that remained to be done was a zigzag branch.

DAY of 27 January.

At daybreak, our batteries began firing again with activity. At eleven o'clock in the morning, the gaps in the center and left seemed passable; Marshal Lannes ordered the assault. The whole army took up arms and three columns were assembled in the trenches for the attack on the breaches.

The first column, approximately three hundred strong, under the orders of Chief of Battalion Stahl, of the Fourteenth Line, was placed in the isolated oil mill of Goicoechea, to assault the breach in the center, which was opposite. It had at its head a detachment of sappers under the leadership of an engineering officer. That day, we gave up attacking a breach which had been started in the upper garden of Sainte-Monique, this breach not being passable.

The second column, under the orders of Captain Guettemann, was intended to assault the center breach near the Palafox battery. It was reunited in the parallel portion located on the left bank of the Huebra, near Aguilar's small house; it also had at its head a detachment of sappers and an engineer officer.

These two columns, which General Habert commanded, were supported by the troops of the First Division, which occupied the trenches to the right and left of Saint-Joseph. Five hundred workers were held in reserve, ready to march.

The third column, intended for the attack on Santa-Engracia, was made up of the First Vistula Regiment, commanded by Colonel Chlopiski; it was placed behind the unflanked wall of the Santa Engracia vegetable garden, and in the communications which were behind it. Twenty-five voltigeurs commanded by Captain Nagrodcki, and a detachment of sixty sappers, led by Engineer Captain Second, were at the head of this column, which had as reserve the brigade of General Brun and the rest of the Second Division. The Third Division, commanded by General Morlot, took up post at the Red House, on the road to Madrid via Calatayud, to repel the sorties, and make a false attack on the city, between the Pino tower and the Carmen gate.

At the signal given around noon, the troops set out. The right column, posted in the isolated oil mill, emerges full of enthusiasm and crosses the small gap which separates it from the wall. At this moment, the enemy brought into play two explosive mines established in the underground communication which ran from the enclosure to the oil mill, but, without being hit by the explosion, our brave men reached the breach in the center; there, they are obliged to stop, given that this breach made too high in an unearthed wall offered a projection of about ten feet on the side of the town, and opened into a low garden surrounded by high terraces. The Spaniards, posted on the facing terrace, less than twenty-five meters away, fired grapeshot from a piece of cannon at the head of the column, and directed a lively firefight there. On the right terrace, formed by the upper garden of the convent of Santa Monica, they had two pieces of cannon which, as well as the fires of the convent occupied by Villacampa with seven or eight hundred

volunteers from Huesca, took the column in flank. This column was finally caught in the rear by the fire starting from the so-called house of Gonzalès, located in front of the entrenchments of the Faubourg des Tanneries. Battery No. 13 having made an opening at this house, four companies, led by Battalion Chief Brayer, occupied it for a moment; but finding themselves too exposed to the fire from the city walls, they were forced to withdraw: Commander Brayer was wounded. The column which was in the breach of the enclosure was still making useless efforts to emerge; it had already lost many people, and its commander, Chief of Battalion Stahl, had fallen wounded by a bullet, when General Habert had it withdrawn, leaving on the wall only the men necessary to occupy a small accommodation that the engineer Battalion Chief Haxo had established there. We communicated with this accommodation by a caponier made part with gabions crowning the funnels of the two mines that the enemy had used, part by means of the underground gallery itself which was cleared.

The second column responsible for attacking the breach near the Palafox battery was more successful than the first. It entered the town's oil mill leaning against the surrounding wall, and came out onto Rue de Pabostre, which they crossed to occupy the island of houses located opposite, between Rue Neuve and Rue del Gato. The enemy tried several times to dislodge them, but in vain. We immediately began communication to advance from Aguilar's little house to the foot of the breach, using a portion of the double caponier built by the enemy. Unable to follow Rue de Pabostre to approach from the breach on the right which could not be forced, we extended ourselves internally into the buildings of the oil mill of the city, where we found a door which, pierced in the surrounding wall and covered by a crenellated drum, gave us a convenient communication from the outside to the inside, without forcing us to pass through the breach.

Our loss in these two assaults was thirteen men killed and eighty wounded, including eight sappers. The Spaniards left around twenty men killed on the ground, including an officer.

During the attack on Santa-Engracia, the engineer Colonel Rogniat, who had been responsible for directing the assault, took the precaution of only committing the troops in detachments, in order to avoid confusion. Two companies, preceded by sappers, first advanced along the surrounding wall of the garden of Santa Engracia. When they were close to arriving at the foot of the breach, two other companies moved forward to support them, and successively the entire Vistula Regiment. The front wall of the convent had been demolished over a great length, but there was another wall behind it, in which there was only a hole quite narrow giving entrance to the convent. Some brave men rushed there, and successively the whole column paraded through this opening. The enemy, who occupied Santa-Engracia with twelve hundred men, made a terrible fire; but our troops took its batteries from behind, captured the convent, and debouched on the square, which was in the rear. They immediately took lodgings in the houses of this square and in the small convent of the discalced nuns, called de las Capuchinas, from where they took the entire wall from Santa Engracia to the tower of Pino. The Spaniards, obliged to evacuate this part of the enclosure, previously blew up six mines prepared on the exterior esplanade. Our attack taking place on the opposite side, the explosion did us no harm. The enemy only occupied the Torre del Pino, a neighboring house, and the entrenchments which were at the outlet of the Huebra bridge. About twenty carabinieri from a company of the Fifth Light, which occupied the parallel of the left bank of the Huebra, seeing the Spaniards withdraw, rushed to the entrenchments near the Tower of Pino, climbed through the embrasures and arrived

on the rampart; there they still cried *forward, forward*; a battalion of the Hundred and Fifteenth, which was on guard in the parallel on the opposite bank, then unable to contain its ardor, crossed the Huebra to join the carabineers of the Fifth Light, pushed to the left chasing the enemy and reached the convent of the Trinitarians, where it took up position, after having seized fifteen pieces of cannon. The Spaniards, who, in an initial panic, had fled without fighting, retraced their steps and reoccupied the houses neighboring the convent, from where, firing almost point blank at our troops, they caused them considerable loss. General Lacoste rushed from Santa Engracia, and had the troops withdraw to the rear of the Porte del Carmen, where he placed them behind a kind of entrenchment which gave them cover. The enemy then advances to retake the convent of the Trinitarians; but at this moment two battalions of the brigade of Rostolland arrived, one of the Fifth and the other of the One Hundred and Twenty-first Light; the Spaniards are again put to flight and the convent remained in our hands. All these unforeseen and thoughtless movements caused us to lose many brave people, for the sterile glory of chasing the enemy from some part of the enclosure, which he was going to be forced to abandon, by the position we occupied at Santa Engracia, and especially at the convent of las Capuchinas, which was in front. In this affair we had forty-three men killed and one hundred and thirty-five injured.

During the attack on the convent of Santa Engracia, the Spanish lost two hundred men killed and fifteen prisoners, including an officer. Ours only amounted to seventy men put out of action, including twenty sappers or miners. Engineer Captain Second and Captain Nagrodcki, who were the first to enter the convent, were mortally wounded. Colonel of Engineers Lejeune, Aide-de-camp of Prince Berthier, was knocked down by a cannonball while heading towards the convent of the Trinitarians; Engineer Lieutenant Fournier was injured at the accommodation on the Huebra bridge².

The Duke of Abrantès appointed Colonel Chlopiski commander of arms at the convent of Santa Engracia. The brilliant part that this officer had played in the capture of this convent deserved to him the honor of keeping this conquest. The Santa Engracia square, located in front of the convent, served as our parade ground. The crossings of the abutting streets, and a battery of two pieces and a howitzer taken from the enemy, were immediately turned against it.

Here begins a new series of operations which particularly distinguishes the siege of Zaragoza. The regular defenses had yielded to our efforts; the exterior walls were destroyed, but in falling they showed what still was the inner strength of the city. Resolved to defend the ground step by step; the Spaniards had made strong cuts in the streets and castellated the houses. The palaces, convents and main hotels had been transformed into real citadels, and were occupied by garrisons equipped with weapons, food and ammunition. It was felt that a strong attack against an enemy who had made such arrangements would be a rash move that would cost dearly, without being able to be justified by success. We therefore resolved to move under cover as much as possible, and to move slowly, but surely, so as not to put off the troops by excessively heavy and excessively multiplied losses.

² See supporting documents, nos. 18 and 19.

No. 16.

Letter from Marshal Lannes to Palafox.

Headquarters before Zaragoza, 24 January 1809.

Monsieur General,

The good of humanity compels me to order you to surrender the fortress before I reduce it to ashes. You have already been able to ascertain that I have four times the forces I need to take it by assault. I will briefly describe your situation: the English army has been completely routed; it was forced to embark at La Corunna; we captured all its artillery, its supply trains, seven thousand men, and three thousand horses. The troops of the Marquis de la Romana surrendered along with the generals who commanded them; and La Romana alone embarked with the English. Marshal Victor took eighteen thousand prisoners of line troops from the Duke of Infantado on the 13th of this month at Uclés; he also captured forty-two flags and all his artillery. You had armed several thousand peasants near Pina and Perdiguera; they were cut to pieces by our troops; very few escaped into the mountains, all the rest were killed or taken prisoner. The contents of this letter, General, are the absolute truth, I assure you, on the word of a man of integrity. If, despite these facts, you persist in defending the fortress, you will be most reprehensible; consider carefully that its one hundred thousand inhabitants would fall victim to such imprudent obstinacy.

The Marshal, Duke of Montebello, Commander-in-Chief of Navarre, Aragon, and the Army before Zaragoza,

Signed: LANNES.

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No. 17.

*Reply of Palafox to the previous letter.*

Zaragoza, 24 January 1809.

Marshal Lannes is not the arbiter of the lives of the one hundred thousand inhabitants of Zaragoza, and Spanish generals do not surrender without a fight. The conquest of this city will bring great honor to the Marshal if he does it openly, with the sword, and not with bombs and grenades, which only frighten cowards. I know the system of warfare employed by France; but Spain will show them how to fight. I know exactly what forces are besieging me, and I declare to you that it would take ten times as many to force me to surrender. This city will be honored by its ruins. The general who commands it knows no fear and will not surrender. The enclosed gazette will inform you of my situation<sup>3</sup>.

*Signed:* PALAFOX.

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<sup>3</sup> This gazette was the Zaragoza edition of January 16<sup>th</sup>, which reported the false news of the French armies' defeat in Spain.

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No. 18.

General Habert's Trench Report, 27-28 January 1809.

Yesterday at noon, the two breaches were occupied on the right flank by three hundred light infantry, sappers, and laborers. As the cannon fire did not have the desired effect on the right-hand breach, they were content to establish a quarters there and entered the town through the left-hand breach. In this area, we occupy eleven houses, some of which are very large, including a sizable oil mill. The quarters are very well prepared in the occupied houses; communications are well established, and there is no fear of the enemy dislodging the positions we have set up there.

The evening was spent constructing a traverse and a communication trench that runs from the oil store to the right-hand breach. The large convent opposite the isolated house was occupied yesterday by seven or eight hundred Spaniards. This morning, I ordered Commander Roquefert to direct some of his artillery at this point, and once it has had its effect, it will be easy to capture. This convent will be very useful to us in supporting our right flank.

The isolated house on the right was taken twice; but it was impossible to hold it, as the enemy's artillery and musketry were all directed against it. A battalion commander from the Vistula and two officers were wounded in these attacks; a sapper captain was killed. I estimate our losses in killed and wounded at sixty to eighty men in the last twenty-four hours: among them, the brave battalion commander Stahl, commanding the light infantry, had a bullet pierced his thighs. A young officer of the Second Vistula Light Infantry, aged seventeen, who had already received five wounds at the first siege, was hit by two bullets at the breach where he had been the first to advance. A sergeant and a light infantryman of the Fourteenth displayed great bravery among all the others; the former, amidst a hail of bullets, went to retrieve Commander Stahl from the spot where he had fallen; the latter, with his back to the wall of the convent on the right and near the window from which the enemy was firing, repeatedly took the barrels of the rifles firing overhead.

I think it would be necessary to station a battalion commander permanently in the houses we occupy, who would command that sector and report to the trench general.

I also think it would be advisable to have only one regiment manning the positions in the town every forty-eight hours. This regiment would even provide the laborers; this service would be performed on a rotating basis, and the trench guard duty would be abolished.

Brigadier General,

Signed: HABERT.

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No. 19.

*Report of General Brun, commanding the First  
Brigade of the Second Division of the Third Army Corps,  
and in charge of the attack on Santa Engracia, 27 January 1809.*

The brigade I command, composed of the First Vistula Regiment and the One Hundred and Fourteenth Line Infantry Regiment, moved into the following position: the First Vistula Regiment in the works in front of the Huebra River, and the One Hundred and Fourteenth in the third parallel.

The attack took place at eleven thirty in the morning, and the column was composed as follows:

A detachment of twenty-five light infantrymen from the First Vistula Regiment, commanded by Captain Nagrodcki, was charged with initiating the attack: immediately afterward, a detachment of sappers, commanded by the Engineer Captain Second, two companies of light infantry, then two companies of grenadiers, and a battalion of the Vistula Regiment, successively advanced on the breach.

Despite the heaviest artillery and musket fire, these troops routed all twelve hundred Spaniards who attempted to defend the breach, and they captured Santa Engracia, although communication with the convent was extremely difficult.

The result of this engagement was five artillery pieces captured (one 16-inch cannon, two 4-inch cannons, and two 6-inch howitzers), fifteen prisoners, including one officer, and approximately two hundred killed.

Our losses in killed or wounded are insignificant.

Colonel Chlopiski, who commanded the first battalion of his regiment, made a particularly significant contribution to the success of this expedition through the intrepidity, composure, and intelligence he displayed. Following his example, all the officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers demonstrated the highest valor. This colonel rightfully deserves the favor of His Majesty the Emperor and King.

*Signed: General Brun.*