

6. Battle about the maintenance of the territory

In the year 1671 “the people of Grosskopisch submitted most humbly a request to the University that the ‘Patroni Mediensis’ should be obliged to abate some of their taxes and past debts”. Not only did they find deaf ears, but also obtained a strong rebuke. It weren’t the catching words, but the hardship of the all of the people which forced other communities to take the street to Hermannstadt and place the same appeal to the National Unvershardshipity. Among them were also the strongest communities of the Mediasch Chair, Meschen and Birthälm, whose representatives asked the University for a loan in 1690 so that they did not have to submit to “the tiresome fate of serfdom” like their impoverished Kopischer neighbors.” In case they did not get any help, nobody should blame them of negligence of not having complained of their needs in time and having had asked for help. The poverty weighed upon all of the people but mostly on the peasants. Because of the enormous load of taxes and levies their love for their homeland waned. They left their communities and settled in other places in the Saxon land, even on the lands of the Nobles where they became serfs. The National University tried to place a stop to this by their evaluations and decisions. Therefore in 1627 it was ordered that the office should convince the person wanting to leave with good words to stay. If this was unsuccessful, his portion of the public debt of his community should be determined. When he had paid this he was free to leave to wherever he wanted to go. Ten years later it sounded like this: “Since a great evil evolved out of people wandering from one village to the next even into towns to escape some hardship, that in the future it will not be tolerated that somebody can travel from somewhere to another place to settle. This person is to be forced to return.” But even the harshness of this announcement changed nothing. In 1665 the university again discussed the matter and decided: “that these peasants wanting to migrate were to pay all that they had used (?) (versessen) and nothing else. Those who wanted to move to the grounds of the Nobles should be accepted taking with them only a shirt on their body.” Others were allowed to take with them only the hoe (Haue). The fate of the peasants on the grounds of the Nobles was even harsher. Therefore it happened that serfs moved to Turkish grounds to escape the pressure of the Nobles. In those hard times Grosskopisch had three farmers who had migrated to Birthälm, the families Roth, Erger, and Schneider. It is understandable that many sought easement of their fate. The immigrants were allocated a farm and place to live by the village into which they had moved. In Birthälm they did not have to pay taxes for ten years. The books of Birthälm registered as having migrated to Grosskopisch the squire Gerg Gaber whose progeny provided several judges for the community, the farmer Michael Thelman, whose progeny emigrated, and the carpenter Thomas Demeter, whose progeny could not be traced any longer.

It sounds like mockery when Patricians in those hard times spoke of “waggish peasants” and “peasant unruliness” when the folk sang:

“Poverty casts me out of my room; poverty casts me out of the house of my fathers.”

The penury of the peasants also found its fall-out in the traditional customs of some communities, such as the bride asking their bridesmaids not to say good-bye forever, but to visit the newly-weds in their “squalor” out there.

Without glory was also the decision of the council of Hermannstadt from 1691, that in the “Great Church” no maids were to sit down, who were in “the employment of Holders of high office, Council members, or other renowned women of the town.” They were assigned a bench for four people. The others had to stand on the side or go to another church.

In these times of destitution it no longer was about getting acquisitions of goods or rights, it was about a bitter struggle for freedom and continuance of our people. If one wants to understand the reasons for it one has to go far back in history and illuminate three events:

- a) The hostile invasion of the Mongols and Tatars
- b) The invasions by the Turks
- c) The Turk supremacy and the chaos in the country due to fights over ascendancy to the throne

A. Invasions by Mongols and Tatars

At the beginning of the 13th century Mongolia had become a powerful empire through the great Mongol leader Tamudschin, who called himself Dschingis Chan. He had united all the clans of his people and conquered the surrounding countries, killed the old inhabitants and sold the young one as serfs. When he died in 1227 his son Ögödel or Oktai continued the conquest excursions. Russia and Poland fell victim to him. In 1241 the Mongols had advanced to Liegnitz in Silesia, where they defeated a German-Polish army but suffered such great losses that they turned south and crossed the Carpathian Mountains. At the Sajó River in Upper Hungary they met the Hungarian army, which was beaten because the Nobles failed to support King Bela IV. They hated him because he had settled, without consulting the Nobles, the Kumanen in Hungary, who had to flee from the Petschenegen in Moldavia. In addition he had taken away the land that they had acquired illegally. In this battle many leading men were killed. A different Mongolian band broke in through the Rodna Pass. The German miner's town Rodna was conquered, the inhabitants forced to join the army, massacred, or driven into slavery. The Mösner country was vandalized. As the winter came and the rivers froze, the way to the south was free for Oktai and in December he stood at the Adriatic Sea.

Then something unexpectedly occurred. Oktai had died of alcoholic poisoning as newer research shows. On the 11th of December 1242 the Mongols began to pull back because they had to elect a new leader. On their retreat to Asia they touched the south of Siebenbürgen, murdered, robbed, and burned down the communities. The report of a monk who was an eyewitness, captured and taken with them but able to escape, gives a shocking picture of the devastation suffered by the land. All villages had been destroyed. Only the ruins of the towers testified of the young settlements of unhappy people, who had been almost extinguished in many places by hunger, murder, abduction, and pestilence. Hermannstadt now counted only one hundred citizens.

King Bela IV sought to stabilize the country with big plans, but eventually there were only the Saxons and the Szeklers, who not only were the safeguard and the shield for the country, but were soon to be that of the whole Christendom. The Saxons had recognized that they had to fortify their settlements if they were to be prepared to meet similar assaults. Therefore they began to build fortified places where they could find refuge from the enemy in the future.

Although the Mongols and the Tatars had withdrawn from Siebenbürgen they had made the Ukraine their home land from where they made forays in our home land for over four hundred years. Soon they had become subservient to the Turks. Every time when those undertook a campaign into Hungary or Siebenbürgen, because they wanted to install a prince or punish another, they ordered the Tatars, alone or united with the Moldavia princes, who also were their vassals, to invade into the country from the east, while they with their army came over the South Carpathian Mountains or through the Hungarian Low Plains.

In the year 1285 the Tatars invaded the region of Bistritz and damaged the town to such a degree that the kings had to support them. There is no mention about the surrounding country side despite it had been said that their expedition had covered an area of twelve miles. About King Ludwig I (1342-1382), it is reported that he led successful campaigns against them.

In the 14th century the Roma (Gypsies-Zigeuner) from the western Hindustan escaped their cruelty to flee to Europe. After the year 1417, King Sigismund of Hungary and Siebenbürgen employed and settled them as blacksmiths and gold washers.

After the battle of Mohacs in 1526 Siebenbürgen got placed under Turk supremacy. They had a decisive influence on the land which they often emphasized with the force of the army. Many times they invaded the country to collect tributes, war costs, or punitive monies. In addition they made rich booty on fruits, cattle, and young people, whom they hauled into slavery or, as foot soldiers, trained them to join the dreaded Janitschars. Because the Saxon did not recognize the prince Johann Zapolya, whom they had appointed, the town Hermannstadt was besieged in 1530. The besiegers included Tatars. Also, for the support of the queen Isabella, widow of Zapolya, the Tatars received the command from the Turks, along with the prince of Moldavia, to invade Siebenbürgen.

When in the year 1601, Hermannstadt was under siege again, the Tatars were again involved. During the winter they retreated into the Lower Forest (Unterwald) where they "committed abominable things" according to the contemporary writers.

In the year 1658 the clan of Tatars broke into the Burgenland. Kronstadt was able to buy itself free from robbery, but the surrounding communities were burnt down, the people murdered or taken prisoner. The prisoners were offered for sale outside of the town. An adult cost ten thaler, a child four horse shoes. The people they could not sell they maltreated so that the audience would take them out of compassion. If that did not happen the prisoner would be killed or led into slavery. As two groups they then marched to in front of Hermannstadt. One group left behind destroyed villages and murdered people in the region of Fogarasch, the other in the Repser Chair. In the vicinity of Hermannstadt the villages were sacked, shepherds slain, the herds stolen. In front of the gate of Elisabethgasse a market for trade in humans was held. Among the offerings was the pastor of Weidenbach with his wife and two daughters as well as many people from Hermannstadt who had been taken prisoner outside the city walls and whose freedom had to be bought with heavy sums of money. Prisoner Tatars were asked why they devastated the land so much. They argued that they were poor and had to feed themselves this way.

In this year three Tatars were buried in the cemetery of Birthälm who had died of plague, a proof that even the Two Chairs had not been spared by them. With certainty it can be presumed that they also caused mischief in Grosskopisch, irrespective if they stayed in the location for some time or only came over the hill for robbery. It can be taken for granted that they did not hesitate to take prisoners.

The more respectable and richer a prisoner was the more ransom money they demanded. For Nobles they asked for up to 90.000 Thaler. When the prince Rakoczi II lost a war against Poland, 20.000 men were taken prisoner. On the Diet (Landtag) six hundred Noble women appeared in front of the prince and asked for their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. The Tatar chieftain was also present with a list of the prisoners. To raise the money for the sum of ransom that had been agreed upon in bargaining to release the prisoners it was necessary to introduce a special tax.

Still for another two times the Tatars caused havoc in Siebenbürgen. In the year 1661/62 they committed such atrocities that Ali Pascha, whom they had helped before, had to protect Saxon villages from them. When the Tatars rushed to help the Turk army in Hungary in 1681, they obliterated the Lower Forest (Unterwald). Whole parcels of land had been destroyed and depopulated. Fear and terror due to their excessive cruelty were rooted deeply in the hearts of our people, so that the warning of the mothers: "Be quiet! The Tatars are coming!" caused even the loudest crying and ranting to stop. This warning was still used in this century although the Tatars no longer posed a threat to our home land for quite a long time.

b) The invasions by the Turks

The 14th century was a golden period for our ancestors. Craft and trade flourished in the towns. The guilds which the craftsmen had joined gave themselves a new order for the guild in 1376 which granted scrupulously workmanship. The wagon trains of the artisans and traders could be met on the streets of Europe from Istanbul (Constantinople) to Holland. They also built commercial establishments in large towns like the ancestors of Maximilian, who called himself Transilvanus and who was the secretary of the emperor Charles V on the Reichstag in Worms. The merchants were promoted by the king and also by the rulers of neighboring countries in granting them customs freedom. The Saxon cities became rich and were surrounded by flourishing villages as the peasants were equal in diligence, thrift, and entrepreneurship. Their wealth gave the opportunity to survive the chaotic times which were to close in on them. Those were evoked by the constant invasions of the Turks and quarrels about the ascendancy to the throne lasting almost 200 years which were most closely associated after the year 1526. For this reason this association will be described in more detail under a different heading following this chapter. This is also necessary because of a legal difference that exists in the sense that up until that year the Turks raided Siebenbürgen stealing and robbing while later they sent well-ordered troops or punishing expeditions into a vassal state. That these orderly dispatches also turned into raids is due to their cruel manner. The Turks as well as the quarreling indigenous princes had the same attitude towards the Saxons by mainly trying to enrich themselves from the wealth of the local population. Wealth not only carries prestige and high regard, admirers and friends, but also envy and enemies.

Who are the Turks? They are an Asiatic tribe which had settled in Asia Minor. From there they came over the Bosphorus to Europe to support the city of Constantinople, who had asked them for help, in the battle against the Serbs. They procured the town Adrianople, made it into their new capital city and engaged from there into conquering raids into the neighboring countries. The Hungarian kings recognized the danger which also threatened their country. Therefore Ludwig I moved to assist the Serbs in 1366 but was beaten. In 1391 the Turks ransacked Hungary. Therefore King Sigismund formed an

alliance with the prince of the Walachei, Mircea the Elder, and recruited knights for his army in the countries of Europe. When he marched down the Danube the army counted one hundred thousand men. At Nikopolis a battle took place in 1396. The Turks won. Among the Christians twenty thousand soldiers fell. Another ten thousand prisoners were massacred.

From then on the Turks were a constant threat to Hungary and that included Siebenbürgen. In 1420 they destroyed Broos, in 1421 they conquered Kronstadt. In 1432 Hermannstadt and Kronstadt withstood their siege, and again in 1437. Every time the surrounding villages were robbed and burned, their inhabitants murdered or hauled into captivity. From 1432 on Hermannstadt employed 2.000 border guards who watched the border from the Fogataxrasch Mountains down to Hatzeg.

The town Mühlbach suffered a particularly hard fate in 1438. The town was conquered, burned down, and likewise all villages of the Chair (Stuhl). The Two Chairs shared the same fate. In May 1455 Nikolaus von Kopisch obtained a tax rebate for the Two Chairs because they had not yet recovered from the heavy consequences of the Turkish invasion. The war had lasted 45 days. 70.000 people had been displaced.

Among the prisoners was also a student from Mühlbach who could escape after twenty years of slavery and who died in a monastery in Rome in 1502. Not only did he write down his experiences, but he also reported about the history of the Turks, their faith and their customs. His notes were also translated into German and Martin Luther was so impressed by the objective style that he wrote the preface to the edition in the year 1530.

In 1442 Hermannstadt was besieged again. Hen Johannes Hunyadi came to the aid of the town, the Turks were beaten. Hunyadi now led the whole power of the army against them. He wanted to wage war outside of his own country so that the war events with their devastating consequences remained far away from him. He beat the Turks and forced them to a peace accord. But King Wladislaw broke it and lost in the battle of Varna the fight and his life in 1444. Four years later Hunyadi was also beaten and had to escape. He lost 17.000 warriors. Always the Saxon military unit was present. In 1453 the Turks captured Constantinople and made it their capital. From then on they called it Istanbul. When they besieged Belgrade in 1456 Johannes Hunyadi, the Woiwode of Siebenbürgen succeeded in liberating it. No wonder that the Turks with 40.000 men invaded Siebenbürgen in 1479. A battle took place on the field of Brod (Brodfeld) near Broos. Georg Hecht led the Saxon contingent. With the support of the prince of Temeschburg, who had come to help at the moment of highest risk, the enemy was defeated. In the battle 30.000 Turks and thousands of their own warriors perished. The largest portion of the inhabitants of the Low Forest (Unterswald) had been murdered. When an army invaded Siebenbürgen in 1493 through the Red Tower Pass and ransacked the vicinity of Hermannstadt for five days, the Saxons blocked their return through the pass and crushed them. During the same year the Burzenland also was ravaged by the Turks again.

The importance of the cities for the defense of the country grew more and more. Their fortifications were expanded and improved more and more so that could resist successfully the attacks of the grim enemy. But the surrounding villages were defenseless prey to the cruelty of the enemy. They were often ransacked and burned down, their inhabitants murdered or abducted if they could not flee in time. The small number of ancestors who stayed alive had to rebuild their villages over and over again. After much suffering they also started to erect fortifications in which they would bring lives and nourishment to safety in the future when danger arose. The churches were set up to be used for defense, surrounded by new walls for defense, or the existing walls were reinforced. In this way in most communities the church castles originated, also in Grosskopisch, but more about this in a separate chapter later. To wage war one needs not only men and castles but also a lot of money. Due to the impoverishment of the population there was often a lack of it. The Imperial Bank was always empty and had to be filled by extra taxes which burdened the Saxon especially. Until the year 1663 they had to raise no less than 2.400 Porten, also called pay houses, from the land taxes, while all other inhabitants of Siebenbürgen only had to pay 1.300 Porten. At the beginning of the 16th century King Wladislaw II was in such dire absence of money that he could not cover the needs of his own housekeeping. The Nobles said they had him 'by his shock of hair'. At this time the adage proved true that 'the fish at first gets bad in the head'. At the Imperial Diet (Reichstag) abusive language, cursing, and saber rattling were the order of the day. When the king died and an Imperial Council took over the business of government in lieu of his under-age son, Ludwig II, the members of the council were pulling on each other's beards and slapped each other on the ears. At the occasion of the king's marriage and for the queen's coronation the Saxons contributed 12.000 Gulden, while the city of Bistritz had to raise 1.760 Gulden to erase

their debt. Such was the great need, materially and morally, of the country when, in the year 1526, the Turkish Sultan Soliman with 200.000 men invaded the country. The young king Ludwig II met him, forced by the nobility, at the top of his army of 24.000 men in the vicinity of Mohacs and was defeated. 23.000 Hungarians fell in the battle; the king fled, stumbled with his horse in a swamp and lost his life.

c) Under Turkish governance. Unrest in the country due to disputes about the line of succession

While the Mohacs battle sealed the downfall of Hungary, the prince Johann Zapolya stood with his army of 40.000 men from Siebenbürgen only sixteen miles away from the battle field and did not intervene. Quietly he observed the Turks plunder the towns, burn them down, and expel 200.000 people. Through the death of the king the throne of Hungary was free and by contract entitled to Ferdinand of Austria, who had married the sister of Ludwig II, Anna. So the nobility friends of Zapolya stepped up before Sultan Soliman and begged for Zapolya to become king. He fulfilled their desire and promised to support him, even if he then would remain with only one Muslim (Muselman). The Saxons refused any acceptance of him and denied him any support, for which reason he threatened them to slay all, men, women, and children. Ferdinand praised their fidelity and promised help, but he was far away; in country the followers of Zapolya raged. One after the other of the Saxon cities had to surrender. When Hermannstadt at last gave up its defenses, fewer than one thousand men descended from the walls. All the others had succumbed to hunger, the plague, and war.

In the year 1538 Ferdinand and Zapolya made peace, let him have the dignity of royalty, but only for his lifetime. He designated his underage son Sigismund to be his heir, while in the meantime instead of him his mother, Isabella, reigned. The Turks, who had conquered Ofen in 1541, accepted her. Out of fear of the Turks and their desire for peace she was also acknowledged by the Saxons, but at the same time they negotiated with Ferdinand for support against her. Only when Ferdinand no longer had to assist his brother Charles V in his fight with the Protestants and had negotiated a truce with the Turks, he sent an army under J.B. Kastaldo with 3000 Spaniards and three regiments of Germans, who occupied Siebenbürgen, after the Queen Isabella had fled. The towns opened their gates to them. When their pay from Vienna did not arrive, they robbed and looted. Kastaldo himself admitted: "There never were such disorderly, obstinate, and bestial people. Everywhere they showed themselves to be so cruel, that the citizens much rather would be slaves of the Turks, than have those in their homes." He demanded help from the cities to sustain and pay his troops. No place was spared. Hermannstadt alone had spent 30.000 Gulden for them. With the help of foreign troops they were defeated and Isabella was returned to the country. She reigned another three years for her son. Her frivolity, waste, a high tributary, and many presents for the Turks had the effect that the Royal treasure chest was always empty. In eleven months thirteen oppressive taxes were raised.

When Isabella died in 1559 her son Johann Sigismund took over the government, for which he was unfit due to lack of vigor and independence. No wonder that in 1562 the Nobles and a little while later the Szeklers revolted against him because they were diminished in their freedoms. The Szeklers were cruelly subdued and lost even the last appearance of their freedom. Under his reign the Saxons lost the town Klausenburg to the Hungarians. After the death of the king in 1571 succession went to several princes of the House of Bathori.

First prince Stephan Bathori was elected as prince. When he became king of Poland after a short while, his brother Christoph took his place. After his death in 1581 his son Sigmund was elected as prince. He entrusted the country to the German emperor Rudolf II and went as king to Poland, but returned before the emperor had taken possession of the country. After a few weeks he forced his cousin, Cardinal Andreas Bathori to assume the title of prince while he left the country.

There appeared in 1599, Michael, the prince of the Walachei, in the country. The Szeklers joined him out of vengeance over the rights they lost in 1562. The villages of the Burzenland fell into ashes. Andreas Bathori was defeated nearby Schellenberg and murdered on the flight by Szeklers. The country was vandalized to such a degree that Michael had to waive taxes for the Saxons in the year 1600. He forced the guilds to pay homage to him. The nobility was afraid to be obliterated. Therefore they planned a revolt and asked the Court in Vienna for help. The Court sent commander Basta to Siebenbürgen against Michael. A battle ensued. Michael was defeated and fled to Prague to Emperor Rudolf II, who declared him governor of Siebenbürgen and ordered Basta to unite with him and against Sigmund Bathori. Sigmund Bathori had ascended the throne again with the help of Turkish, Tartaric, and Moldau troops. He was beaten at Gorosio and fled into the Moldau. Then Basta and Michael fell into a dispute and Basta had him murdered.

Basta's troops now traveled the land looting and extorted tremendous amounts of money. Bathori came into the country with an army of Turks, Tatars and Moldauers. Villages were despoiled and burned, people were murdered. The city of Bistritz had to surrender to the Szeklers and pay them 20.000 Gulden. Mediasch was outwitted and robbed. The same fate incurred to Schäsburg. When the Szeklers withdrew the estimated damage was a half a million Gulden. Kronstadt had to submit to Bathori. For that Basta wanted to punish it. He came again into the country in 1602. In front of the walls of Bistritz his crude soldiers beat down the peasants, amassed glowing coals on the bodies of tied down citizens, and others they hanged from their feet, excised their navel, and committed atrocities of a sort that Turks and Tatars never had done. Basta besieged the town. When the walls were already riddled with bullets a courageous blacksmith jumped into the breach, other men followed him fended off the enemy. But in the city hunger and plague already raged. So it was that the citizens bought the peace for 32.000 Gulden. Basta promised the Szeklers free withdrawal. They loaded a hundred wagons with booty and left town. As soon they were outside the city they were assaulted by Basta's soldiers and slain. The booty changed owners. The hardest losses suffered by the city were the 13.000 people who found their death by hunger and pestilence. Basta and Bathori made peace, and Bathori left the country.

The dictatorship of Basta weighed so heavy on the country that the nobility and the Szeklers dared an insurrection. Their leader was Moses Szekely. The misery reached its peak when Basta's troops were placed into the homes of the villages and had to be supported by the villagers. During six months in the year of 1604 the sum of 800.000 Gulden were spent for this purpose by the Saxon communities. Two years earlier all grain had been looted and burnt. Even the cattle had been consumed. In order to work the soil eight men harnessed themselves in front of the plow, one held the steering stick (Sterzen), so this was now their method of plowing. A distant memory of these difficult times still lived in the tales of our grandfathers, who told them that they took the straw from the roofs to the threshing floor to thresh it one more time to find a rare seed kernel. The famine was great and along with the plague took so many lives that in many villages less than ten residents survived.

When the war came to an end, the plague ceased, and Basta's troops, the Walloons, withdrew, the people took a deep breath. Emperor Rudolf II installed a new administrative counselor for Siebenbürgen. Our ancestors gained new courage and new hope. They took their complaints to him. Their main matter of concern was not maybe the request for a rebate on their taxes, but more importantly the request to protect their freedom which had been guaranteed to them in the Golden Rule (Goldener Freibrief). He may let their schools and the Augsburg Pledge of Faith remain untouched and recognize them as a distinct unity under the city of Hermannstadt. Basta and his advisors suggested to the emperor to leave religion alone (ungekränkt). In addition, their unity should remain valid, but assemblies should be permitted only for the purpose of distributing levies. They advised the emperor also in other matters to rule the land without the resolutions of the Guilds, only with decrees and commands. The Emperor introduced the Jesuits back into the country. In 1588 they had to leave "for all time" upon a resolution of the Diet of Mediasch. Their glances were directed especially towards the Saxon land. They complained about the free election of the preachers. In some communities the Protestant priests were expelled, from others they took the keys to their church and hindered them in this way to preach the Gospel. The Bishop Matthias Schiffbäumer complained about this to Basta and he ordered to not touch the freedom of the Protestant church. For this the clergy had to lend him 15.000 Gulden and present him with a gift of 5.000 Gulden.

In Hungary the Emperor was not so tolerant. He forbade the Protestants the free practice of their religion and reintroduced punishments for non-Catholics. In Kaschau their church was taken away and the clergy expelled. Therefore a riot ensued in which many Nobles from Siebenbürgen participated, who had fled Basta's persecutions. The leader of the revolt was the Siebenbürgen Noble Stefan Bocskay, who had been elected as the prince of Siebenbürgen by them. The Turks acknowledged him and requested the Saxons to acknowledge him and depart from Austria. Because they did not do this, an army of his followers came into Kokel Valley to insist upon it with force of arms. Their headquarters was Epeschdorf, from where they plundered the communities of the Kokel Valley. In a report from those times it is written: "On the 17. of May, 1605, the disloyal Szekler destroyed the market Grosskopisch with fire and robbed the church." How many people were murdered then, and how many stayed alive is not given. Who can even state assumptions about it? When in the year 1967 to secure the sacristy the ground was excavated to place two corner pillars one found in the Northeast corner of it, in about two meters depth an old mass grave. Untold skeletons of people of all ages lay crisscross all over each other. Are these the remains of the victims of that raid and the fire? It is not excluded because even in the epidemics of the plague not that many dead could be placed in one grave since their death did not follow in such a short sequence one after the other so that they could be buried in one grave.

In July 1605 the Saxon accepted Bocskay as prince of Siebenbürgen. Their Sacrifices for a free homeland had been in vain, because in the peace treaty of Vienna in 1606 the country was entrusted to Bocskay and with him to his superiors, the Turks. The only gain of his revolt was that freedom of religion was assured to the Protestants in Hungary.

Already in 1602 the people of Hermannstadt had imprinted coins with the inscription: "Ahead and behind us doom. God be merciful in the end!" When Bocskay died in 1606 and Gabriel Bathori was elected prince the dictatorship rose immeasurably. He demanded 25.000 Gulden from the Saxons. A year later he requested four times as much. After that he called for the Diet in Hermannstadt, accompanied with his whole army, took the keys to the city, and seized the walls. On the Diet he accused the city of treason. The Saxons supposedly had not let him without deliberation; they had supported rioting Nobles, and called the Wallachian prince, Michael, into the country thereby causing the death of Andreas Bathori. All residents were sentenced to death. The judgment was passed on the basis of false testimonies without granting the accused the right to defend themselves. After that he designated 147 citizens who should atone with death for the city. For 50 Gulden ransom he "pardoned" them – and what a mockery – the Diet thanked him for this mercy to spare the inhabitants. The Diet transferred the city to him with all its wealth as his residence. Thereupon he disarmed all citizens and distributed the weapons among his mercenaries. Many citizens had to flee facing his and his mercenaries' activities. When he could not occupy Kronstadt he returned to Hermannstadt and asked for 100.000 Gulden. Because it was not possible to raise such a sum, he jailed the Council of the city, and then he expelled through the gates of the city all the people with only a stick in the hand. He kept back only a small number of craftsmen whom he needed for his army. The city was desolate. The horses of the soldiers stayed in the houses and in the alleyways millet was planted. He had asked the Turks for assistance with Kronstadt. When he heard that they stood in front of Kronstadt, he set off in such a hurry that he ignored Schässburg, which had not taken his warriors into the city and moved on without fighting. The Turks stood outside Kronstadt and besieged it. But when they heard from the mayor Michael Weiss about the atrocities of the prince they withdrew. Such an injustice they did not want to help to victory. Bathori returned to Hermannstadt and accused the totality of all Saxons of treason, declared all their possessions and properties as his own and picked up for himself the Tenth of the clergy on October 1, 1611. He ostracized Kronstadt, he raised an army, pulled up in front of the city and asked the city to surrender. On the 16th of October 1612 an open battle erupted near Marienburg, in which the Kronstädter citizens, which had been led down by the allied Wallachian troops, were defeated. The mayor Michael Weiss was slain. With him thirty-nine high school students lost their lives.

As enemies arose in his near vicinity the prince, gave an account of himself that – according to the words of Michael Weiss – "with beheadings, spears, murder and burning one cannot earn respect, and even less love from subordinates". He made peace with Kronstadt in 1613 and gave back the Tenth that he had stolen from the clergy. The Turks also had advised restraint; otherwise he would lose the principedom.

The waves of this time of most cruel dictatorship were carried also into the remote valley of Grosskopisch. Its residents not only carried the burdens which led the country close to disaster, but they too learned princely capriciousness in their own realm. In the year 1613 the religious University had unseated the preacher of their community, Christian Schiffbaumer, because of a "crime". But the preacher had called on the prince for clemency and forgiveness. Based on the intercession of the royal judge Daniel Weihrauch from Reps he was pardoned. Weihrauch stood in favor of Gabriel Bathori because in the year 1611, when Bathori was defeated and was on the run, he entertained him in his house and had him brought with his horses to Hermannstadt. A year later he was sent by the prince and the Diet to Kronstadt, together with the Bistritzer judge, with the purpose to negotiate an armistice with the people of Kronstadt. His attempt failed because of the tenacious determination of the Kronstadt citizens to rather die than to live like the residents of Hermannstadt.

On the 23rd of January Gabriel Bathori informed the Religious University (Geistliche Universität) that he had granted grace to the preacher Christian Schiffbaumer of Grosskopisch for his "crime". He had not offended, as it was claimed, the reputation, the honor of their leaders, or the municipal authorities of Mediasch, but committed an act of rejection and abuse of his own, and of the prince and his dignity. But he had pardoned him with the expectation that he keep away from such a crime in the future.

What, then, was now the "crime" of Schiffbauer? According to the testimony of the prince it could have been about insulting words and invectives about him. After the withdrawal of the total income from the Tenth of the Saxon clergy, he might have ventilated his anger about the arbitrariness of the act of the prince and used similar words as he had about the

mayor of Mediasch, whom he had called a “thieving gypsy” and “gallows handles” (Galgenhenkeln). Because of that he was forced by the bishop Zacharias Weihrauch on the Synod 1612 in Mediasch to humbly ask for forgiveness.

When the prince announced the pardon of Schiffbaumer and ordered to keep him in his office, the resident of Grosskopisch had already elected Johann Adami from Tobsdorf as their pastor. Therefore they obtained from the prince the permission to introduce Adami in his post, since his election had taken place before the pardon of Schiffbaumer, and he already had taken over the keys to the church. Based on a repeat intervention by the Royal Judge from Rebs the prince withdrew his previous command and ordered to leave Schiffbaumer in his office because he had written the letter of pardon earlier than having given the command that the people of Grosskopisch had requested. Even if Adami had already been introduced into his post, he should be removed because of secret dispatches. Two days later the prince appointed the Clerical University, bishop, General Dechant, and pastor of the Protestant church of Siebenbürgen to mediate the disputes about who should occupy the office of the clergy in Grosskopisch. On the same day, the 27th of February, he ordered Schiffbaumer to wait for the verdict and then to accept the judgment.

The Synod condemned him to lose his office. Then the prince died. The residents of Grosskopisch asked the Synod to let Schiffbaumer continue to keep the office. Probably Adami would have given back the keys and the community would have been without a priest. Perhaps they were of the same opinion as their preacher superseding the prince whom they no longer had to fear. But because he was left in and not removed from his office a fierce dispute erupted between the mayor of Mediasch and the Synod. When the Synod convened in 1615 in Mediasch the mayor attempted to stop the bishop and the members of the Synod of having the meeting by closing off the gates and placing guards in front of the rectory of the town. A delegation of the Synod, who requested an explanation of the situation, received an insufficient excuse. Therefore the Synod wanted to impeach the former favorite of Bathori. But the Nations University asked in 1619 not to be bothered, God have mercy, with this matter of the mayor of Mediasch. One can see how the legal concepts too had changed in one's own population.

Gabriel Bathori, the cruelest prince of Siebenbürgen, had been murdered on the 27th October, 1613, outside Grosswardein, by his own guard. He was on the run from the Turks, who wanted to impeach him, and had just given the command to kill the residents of Hermannstadt including wives and children.

Under his successor Gabriel Bethlen the country experienced a time of inner peace. He joined the Protestant Germany and also fought for freedom of religion for Protestants in the country. He called for German artists and scholars to his Court and supported a high school in Weissenburg, where German teachers taught as well. At the University of Heidelberg he let study up to twenty students at his expense. When, after the death of Bathori, the Turks left Kronstadt and took with them many prisoners he negotiated with them so that let go of 16.000 prisoners.

On the 10th December, 1613 the National University in Schässburg convened and renewed the old agreement. They pledged to defend together all attacks on faith, beliefs, freedom, and property, whether they are directed toward all, or toward a single person, and to bear the costs for this together. “For the welfare and preservation” of the Saxon people twelve articles were decided, the content of which shows how much the spirit of the times in the chaos of the wars also had poisoned the Saxon community. Half of the articles were directed against arrogance, anarchy, and aberrations of the people in office. It was required from them to be a mirror of the fear of God, and the pious life. Their power should not be abused to satisfy their passion and vindictiveness. It was made their duty to inform the public of all hardships and pleasures, so that all could share the burden. Even the single person should receive help with his needs. In loss of office or honor they would be urged not to reveal secrets to strangers out of friendship or profit. Other articles prohibited excessive pride and worldly splendor because they would be an abomination before God. Everybody should live modestly in attire and housekeeping after the example of the ancestors. Therefore even big feasts were forbidden on occasion of weddings and other opportunities, because man was not created for guzzling, boozing, arrogance, and lust. In this way the leading men cared for the preservation of their folks.

With the prince the evacuation of Hermannstadt was negotiated. In 1614 he handed the city over to the remaining fifty three landlords. He did this with the words: “Remain good and faithful; May God be with you!” When, in 1626, the prince married Katharina, the daughter of the electoral prince of Brandenburg and traveled with her through the German towns, he was, out of joy about the German princess, but also out of respect for him, received in such a festive manner, that nothing was noticeable about the poverty under which the population sighed.

Bethlen went to war three times against the German Emperor about the freedom of religion for the people of Hungary, Bohemia, and Moravia. He won and received seven counties (Komitate) from Hungary who offered him the king's crown. But he already was ill and died in 1726 at the age of 41, mourned by the Saxons, whose rights he had protected with all means, a true prince.

He was followed by Georg Rakoczi I who saw it as his task to enrich himself before all other things. The taxes and extortions weighed heavily on the people. In addition, the plague raged in the country. In the year 1633 11.000 people died in Kronstadt, in Mediasch 800, while in Schässburg 1602 residents perished. G. Rakoczi I declared he wanted to make Schässburg to his refuge in case of war. He demanded admission of a garrison and the right to break the surrounding wall for his own gate. The city turned him down which evoked the unforgiving hate of the prince for the mayor Martin Eisenburger. When the prince, despite the objection by the Saxons, built a dairy on the land property of Bodendorf and drove his sheep over there, mayor Eisenburger arranged that it was burned down. Thereupon the prince accused him of treason. He was sentenced to pay a very large fine of money and could no longer hold a public office. This judgment and the fact that upon defending the rights of his people he was let down by all, sickened him to such a degree that he died in 1640.

Like his predecessor, Rakoczi I participated in the thirty-year war. He died in 1648, a short time before the Peace Treaty of Westphalia was ratified, which set an end to this devastating war. Thanks to the participation of Siebenbürgen under the leadership of the two princes Bethlen and Rakoczi I the Saxon church too, with her constitution and freedom, was placed under the European laws with the peace treaty.

After Georg Rakoczi I. followed his son who had the same name, Georg Rakoczi II. In 1653 he invaded Moldavia, a year later the Walachia and strived for the throne in Poland. When he returned from the Poland campaign with heavy losses, the country received him with displeasure. From the Sultan the command came to the three classes, the nobility, the Szeklers, and the Saxons to elect another prince. Rakoczi resigned, but returned a short while later. Thereupon the Grand Vizier set off with 100.000 men toward Siebenbürgen. The Tatar Khan (Tatarenchan), the Pasha of Silistra, and the voivodes (Woiwoden) of the Romania princedoms invaded the Burzenland. Kronstadt bought itself free from pillage, murder, and conflagration. The surrounding villages devastated and their populations, insofar they could be reached by their enemies, were taken prisoner, murdered, sold, or displaced.

The prince fled into the mountains, the nobility sought refuge in the Saxon cities. The enemies turned against Hermannstadt. The villages on their way sank into ashes, among others also Dunesdorf. At the end of August 1658 the Turks, the Tatars, the Cossacks, Moldavians, and Walachians stood before Hermannstadt, robbed the herds, burned down the villages, and took prisoners. The city bought itself free. Thereupon the enemies marched over Mühlbach, Weissenburg, and Klausenburg, which paid a ransom of 100.000 Gulden, to Grosswardein. When here they crossed the bridge over Kreisch, the Grand Vizier had the prisoners counted. There were 18.000 adults, and 800 youths which then were given to him as a present.

The country sent a delegation to the Grand Vizier at Temeschburg with the request to spare the impoverished land. He demanded, in place of a sum of 15.000 ducats as a yearly tribute, now 50.000 ducats, and a war compensation of 500.000 Thalers. He took with him the Royal Judge Johannes Lutsch and two Nobles as hostages to Constantinople. He appointed Achatius Bartschei as prince. The Diet started to distribute the heavy penalties. Already in 1659 80.000 thalers were put up, of that, a wagon loaded with silver, but which already got lost traveling through Siebenbürgen. Therefore, only 50.000 Gulden arrived in Constantinople. Johannes Lutsch died in 1661 as prisoner in Constantinople. Bartschei resigned in same year, and the guilds elected Kemeny as prince. The Turks did not recognize him. With strict emphasis they requested the war compensation and 160.000 Thalers interest. Ali Pascha came into the country; Broos and Mühlbach were burned down. Then the delegates from the cities went with rich presents to Neumarkt/a.M. where he had erected his headquarter. He just had the prisoners be counted. There were 170.000 men. Now he was seeking a prince. When the Szekler Earl Stefan Petki declined this honor Ali Pascha had part of the Szekler country pillaged. The bishop Lukas Hermann, who had been a pastor in Grosskopisch before, rejected the offer of taking over the office of the prince. Finally, they hit upon Michael Apafi, who had returned home a short while before from Tataric captivity. Ali Pascha sent (a messenger) immediately to Epeschdorf, had him come and received him with great honors. He took the oath of the prince's office on the 14th September, 1661 at the Diet of Kleinschelken.

Ali Pascha demanded the war tax. Because nobody could pay it, he stipulated half of it to the Saxons despite the fact that they had already paid their portion to Bartschei. The councilmen of the cities who could not raise the sum demanded of them were put into chains and spears laid before their feet. The prince and the nobility were threatened that they were to be drowned if the money did not come in. In addition to these hardships the plague was joined, which took uncounted numbers of people. In Birtzhalm 260 people died in two years. How many residents of Grosskopisch were lost in this epidemic is noted nowhere. Kronstadt had to employ an "extraordinary plague preacher", because the existing clerics could no longer perform all the funeral rites for the people who died.

Prince Michael Apafi constantly was out of money. One tax chased the next. He had to obey the Turks blindly. Often he had to perform military service, thus he too had to send his Siebenbürger troops to war against Austria. Eight hundred wagons brought supplies from Siebenbürgen to the Turkish army. When the Grand Vizier besieged Vienna in 1683, Agfi stood before Raab. Council men from Mediasch and Hermannstadt stood by him.

Although the leading men of the country had a historically justified distrust toward Austria in reference to freedom of faith, the desire increased more and more to be liberated from the growing arbitrariness of the Turks. Negotiations with Austria had been started repeatedly, but out of fear of the Turks those would be broken off again and again. When, in 1683, their strength had been broken by the siege of Vienna, in 1685 delegates of the ranks (Stände) went to Vienna, where they signed a contract a year later. In the and came with Austrian troops to Siebenbürgen. With them came freedom, but also new burdens, because the country had to raise the costs of their up-keep. Well it was a burden, but, if upon the partitioning of it, not unpredictable arbitrariness is observed, but instead a noticeable endeavor for fairness and justice, then the burden is perceived half as oppressive.