

7. In the Empire of Austria

After some time, Charles from Lorraine was called back to Vienna. His place took General Karaffa. Thereupon the Diet met in Fogarasch and the delegates signed a contract on the 8th of May 1688. They placed themselves under the protection of Emperor Leopold, renounced the Turks, pledged to admit Imperial occupation troops into the border towns, and, if necessary, to take up their weapons against every possible enemy if the Emperor had commanded it.

On the 17th of June the Emperor accepted the protective reign and assured Siebenbürgen of respect for the freedom of faith and freedom of the church.

After completion of the contract Karaffa sent his troops to Kronstadt to occupy the castle. The mayor had informed the residents about the contract. At that a great dissatisfaction arose among the people, got out of control, and evolved into a riot. At the top of the insurgents was the guild of the cobblers. Judges, councilmen, and the clergy tried to have them listen to reason. Prince Apafi sent messengers and admonished them in the name of the law to give up their resistance. Karaffa threatened he would not spare the unborn child if he had to take the town with force. Everything was in vain. Judges and the Council were declared traitors by the insurgents and taken prisoners. They equipped the castle for defense. Then, in a short while, 3.000 Austrian soldiers with heavy pieces of artillery and the deployment of the Szeklers stood before the city. The insurgents had to surrender, the Council was freed and the town was ransacked. The guilty were brought to a trial and on the 19th of September, 1689, the five leaders were decapitated on the market. The first to kneel down was Stephan Steiner, after him his fellow-sufferers. Their heads fell under the sword of the executioner. There was a deathly silence among the crowd of people. Then a woman uttered a horrified cry and slumped dead to the ground.

This was the birth cry of a new era, an era that the insurgents did not understand. They hung with all their hearts on to the old independent rights which had been granted to them by kings and princes and which had proven itself in centuries of fight and suffering. The death of these rights was a hard lesson for the people. Their community had to learn that the protection by the Emperor, for which they had brought uncounted sacrifices, now demanded the most difficult sacrifice: to give up their autonomy, trading them for freedom and security of their homeland and their lives. What counted against the losses, which the citizens had endured by pillage and by the great fire, set by friends? The whole city had been destroyed, even the church demolished. With the bells melted down, the altar and organ burnt, the dome split, the walls, still blackened by smoke, rising into the sky, they gave the church a new name, which it carries to the present day: Black Church.

One could pose the question why the circumstances and events, not directly happening in Grosskopisch, are dealt with in such detail? But as I already stated in the beginning, one can understand correctly and evaluate life and becoming, luck and prospering, hardship and ruin of a single place, even if it is the smallest and the most remote, only in the overall view of the history of the land where it is. So were after all the same economic and social circumstances in the homeland the cause for the readiness of all emigrants to leave it. It was the same economic and power-political conditions of Hungary and its kings who called them (the people) into the country. The heyday experienced by craft and trade because the towns were near the European trade routes, as well as their decline, not solely caused by the wars with the Turks, but also by the newly discovered waterways make this as clear as the consequences of the conquest of Hungary by the Turks, the liberation of Vienna, the Reformation, the Thirty-Year War, the Counter-Reformation, or the disruptions that Europe suffered by the revolutionary movements.

Thus, when in the years 1613 to 1719 ten years of the plague were recorded in the country and other places had heavy losses of people, did the disease stop at the border of the Hattert and not affect the residents of Grosskopisch? The registry kept by the Book of the Church, in which the Reichersdorfer pastor, Bartholomäus Bausner, noted in the year 1661, surely applied to all other neighboring villages.

He wrote:

“From the beginning heavy and countless afflictions greeted the pastor: raids by barbaric people, Turks and the Tatars, deprivation and looting, the plague, taxes, additional fiscal duties, total extortion, so that it is not certain what the single person should or could avoid more, the enemy or the plague. Many times the prophecy of Ezekiel 6, 12 was fulfilled in us. ‘He who is afar will die of pestilence, he who is near will fall through the sword, but he who remains and is guarded from that will die of hunger. Therefore I will bring to an end my wrath among them’.

And in Ezekiel 7, 15 'In the alleyways walks the sword, in the houses walk hunger and pestilence. Who is on the fields will die by the sword, but who is in the city will be devoured by hunger and pestilence. Not only myself have been assailed by the plague, I have lost the woman, the two preachers, the rector, all my domestic and I am alone now, *Wehe* – the pain! Spared, mournful and beaten. Because she (the plague) has raged terribly here too, scarcely a house has been spared, no cottage she went past, with indifference she gathered all and everything, only a few were left. Because the village lost its residents through war and pestilence, the fields and the vineyards remained untilled. Since the grain could not be bundled up, it rotted on the ground. To sow the seed grain in the coming year was averted by the plague or the enemy wandering about. All these misfortunes did not hinder the Turkish soldiers to spend the winter here;...ten weeks I was forced to tolerate them with loathing and reside with them on the rectory”.

This report is a rare treasure.

p.66

Before the battle near Grossalisch, from the 23rd of January 1661, when the Turks defeated Prince Kemeny, who had been elected by the leagues without their approval, BIRTHÄLM had 243 innkeepers. A year later there were 165 and in the year 1694 only 137, as the Council lamented: “more dead than alive” innkeepers. In the year 1695 there were 549 decayed farms in the Mediasch Chair (*Mediasch Stuhl*). In the middle of the 18th century BIRTHÄLM had ten fully active farmyards, 104 partly ruined but still habitable farms and 346 farms in total disrepair. In the year 1698, for the purpose of distributing the taxes, a count of the population took place. It was found that in the Two Chairs among 1826 farmers more than half, that is 950, had no cattle. Consequently, more than half of the land remained uncultivated. In BIRTHÄLM, where exact data are known, 638 “*Joch*” were cultivated and “*Joch*” fallow. There is no reason to assume that in other villages it was better. The 2030 landlords of the Two Chairs were burdened by a debt of 160.000 *Gulden*, which naturally had accumulated in decades. So it was no miracle, that many communities addressed the National University for help.

Now, that these statements raised a clear picture of the plight of our people, we turn again to our own community and ask how they helped themselves to get out of their crisis, when they received no assistance by the National University, but received a strong reprimand because of such contagious words (“*einen starken Ausputzer wegen solch ansteckender Worte*”)? Two reports shed a light. First, there is the application of the BIRTHÄLMER to the National University in the year 1690 asking for help so that they would not be thrown into the “exasperating ruin of the neighbors in KAPUSCH”. From this it can be seen, that they (KAPUSCH) borrowed money from a prince. It is known that they demanded for 100 *Gulden* a barrel of wine of 40 buckets as interest. The owners then must work the vineyards because in the fall the creditors came with their armed Haiduks into the village, monitored the vintage and took away the fruit wine. Others asked for a day's work for every *Gulden* on his estate, also as only the interest for the borrowed money.

p.67

Who refused to perform such drudgery, was punished in public on the market with 24 strokes of the cane.

This assumption is confirmed by another document. In the year 1698, the Noble Pater Janos from the Fogarasch region complained about the community before the National University, as follows:

“Weissenburg, Memorandum of Pater Janos

Submitted with confidence to the good and exalted men of the University of the Honorable Saxon Nation from Siebenbürgen.

In devotion I feel compelled to address Your Highness about my countless difficulties with the Saxons from Grosskopisch from The Mediasch Chair, who, in the year 1676, burdened by unsurmountable difficulties, both the mentioned community as well as each person individually asked me, I took pity on their plight. Neglecting myself I have distributed much money among them for a specific pledge by the mentioned village, namely:

For some deserted farmyard places from this village along with the orchards, vineyards, Allodial grounds, gardens, etc. belonging to them,

That, in addition to this understanding,

That I can myself to these deserted places bring my own people, who also would contribute to the yearly community allocations with 3 fl. each. Then, as the levies were increased after the entry of the army of Our Majesty, the crowned Emperor, and my poor serfs had to pay more than was agreed upon, I was forced to make a new deal with the Saxons of the kind, that I took over myself the taxes for one of the three *Porten* which fell on the already mentioned community Grosskopisch.

But when by will and decision of the Diet the division of the *Porten* and taxes was carried out and one *Porte* was written off for the Kopischer people, no relief was given to my people although many of my serfs complained.

p.68

My repeated requests and repeals to the authorities of the Mediasch Chair did not help because they were delayed and kept back, but now the stated acres, meadows, and valleys, which I had legally owned and utilized, were taken away from me through disagreeable injustice and under disregard of legal contracts. For what reason I don't know, although I had asked the Saxons many times to give me the money either as a group or individually and I would have been ready, goodheartedly, to return houses and land to them.

This true and just demand, also the injustice I endured, I beg respectfully, Your Highness, to give the appropriate attention to the described above, to resolve the issues, to ease the *Porte* of my underlings and at the same time to make good for the wrong inflicted upon me, so that I am not forced to appeal to the distinguished councils of my country, based on the legal contracts that I own, to the permanent harm to the Saxons."

From this application one can conclude many things. First, one can see that also in Grosskopisch the number of residents has declined markedly so that one could assign abandoned farms to the serfs of an extraneous prince. Similarly, we now find out about the number of *Portens*, which originally had been set up for Grosskopisch. In the 16th century BIRTHÄLM had been served four *Porten*, Grosskopisch half as much. This means that the economic strength of Grosskopisch had been estimated to be about half as strong as that of BIRTHÄLM. This document now speaks of three *Porten* while at the same time BIRTHÄLM complained that their assigned number of eighteen was much too high and overestimated their economic capacities. This leads to the conclusion that the productivity of Grosskopisch had decreased by a third compared to before since BIRTHÄLM paid not only twice but six times as many taxes compared to our community. Estimating the number of innkeepers, there were not any more people in the years 1692 to 1696 that had to pay 2000 Gulden for military purposes in addition to taxes and levies as compared to the number at the beginning of the settlement.

p.69

But when the creditor Pater Janos voluntarily took one *Porte* for himself this means that he used at least one third of the acreage of the community as security and rightfully spoke of "acres, meadows, and valleys". This way he not only used the land located in the Marheit, the so-called "Meadow of the Gentleman" – 'hernwisz', but the whole Marheit, the Brallerücken, and the woods up to Fettendorf. A portion of the woods is called "Hanhalf", another "In the Shelled Oaks", which point to the naming of woodlands which were used privately. On the edge of the Herrenwiese (Gentlemen's Meadow) the Romanic farmer, Negru Ilarion, according to the story of his son, had unearthed stones of a foundation wall. It is possible that houses for the shepherds and stables for the cattle had been built there, for the cattle to graze on the Brallerücken (Back of the Bralle).

With certainty it can be assumed that the serfs of the Nobleman discussed here were Romanians. The most commonly used family name among the native families was Calborean, which indicates that they came from the Fogarish region and the bearers of this name came from the community of Kaltborn, in the Romanic language Calbor, next to Grossschenk.

What happened next, and how the conflict was settled, is not known. Perhaps another document not yet known will appear which would give an answer to this question. The Romanian serfs for certain have stayed in the community and became incorporated into the community as free residents of the Saxon lands. As such they had to contribute to the redemption of the burdens which grew out of taxes and levies for the community, and were entitled to claim legal rights. When and under what conditions they received their freedom from the bondage under the nobleman is not known.

The financial burdens of the residents of Siebenbürgen did not decrease at first by the interfacing with Austria because the peace had to be secured first. Therefore armed forces were present at all locations to take care of order and security inside the country and to protect the people from attacks outside.

p.70

Then also in Grosskopisch was a small corps of cavalry. They had the quarters in the house at the corner of Neugasse, which is now in the possession of the family Binder. On the first aerial image of the countryside in 1769-73 the "Officer's House" was spoken of as "a solid building of stone". At the "Old Pond" they had their training ground, even today called "School for Riders". In addition to high deliveries in natural products such as oats, wine, meat and hay the country also had to pay high levies for their upkeep.

In the basic contract between the states of Austria and Siebenbürgen, the so-called Leopold Certificate, the emperor had insured that to protect the recognized religions, to leave the rights and freedoms of the peoples and churches intact, and to allow local people as officials. The country was to pay taxes of 50.000 Gulden during peace times and 400.000 Gulden

during times of war. About the distribution of taxes a bitter dispute arose because the representative of the Saxons, Sachs von Harteneck, made the proposal the taxes should be distributed among all residents without consideration of class or nationality, only based on the level of income. With this idea he was far in advance of the social thinking of his time and it is regrettable that he could not extract himself from the moral decay of his time, and he was executed in 1704. He had been one of the most capable men of our people.

The Council of the government and the military both practiced tyranny. The government determined the taxes without asking the Diet. The nobility was taxed and its power restricted. In Hungary the Protestants were again suppressed and in Siebenbürgen the Jesuits made unjustifiable claims. Many citizens therefore were of the opinion the Sultan had been exchanged for the Emperor. The dissatisfaction grew everywhere and led to an insurrection under Franz Rakoczi, from where it spread into Siebenbürgen, and where it degenerated into a small warfare. Everybody burned and murdered. The rebels were called Kurutzen by the people. Their remembrance is preserved just like the one of the Tatars. If in a house there is an indescribable mess, one speaks of "It looks like a Kurutzen war".

p.71

Our ancestors had to suffer a lot during the insurrection because of their loyalty to the Emperor. The rebels ransacked the Saxon villages. Even BIRTHÄLM, which serves again as an example, was conquered and pillaged. Bishop Lukas Hermann was stripped down to his shirt in the church and abused. The community was robbed to the degree that, according to a contemporary report, "not a single resident still had neither an intact dress nor a shoe on his body". All cattle were driven away. It is most likely that from such a fate also Grosskopisch was not spared. Certainly not, when even a year later, 16.000 soldiers camped in and around BIRTHÄLM and were eating up the newly acquired cattle and nutriment. Only seven years later this battle ended by the Peace of Sathmar in 1711, including the danger from the Turks. The Protestants of Hungary again were reassured of their freedom of religion.

The rebellion of Franz Rakoczi indeed was seen as a national uprising, but its victory would have meant a fallback under the dominion of the Turks, because he would not have had the power to withstand them. The country again would have had the destiny of disastrous servitude under which burdens the population had moaned for two centuries. Their consequences had been great poverty and general moral corruption under which the Saxon community suffered too. The arbitrariness of the government would have rubbed on many an official. Even among the Saxon population there were complaints about embezzlement, infamy, oppression and immorality. How great the poverty was is evident from the level of the debt. The Saxon nation owed in the year of 1712 a sum of 1.248 257 Gulden and interest of 384.378 Gulden. The total sum of debt of the population was estimated to be three millions. How high the burden of debt was for the individual cannot be ascertained. So it was no wonder that the farmers neglected or even left the soil when in the fall the creditors took away the harvest. All responsible powers, synod, National University, magistrate, community councils, and neighborhood groups tried to remedy the situation.

p.72

Many of their decisions provide evidence of their efforts. This went as far as that the neighboring fathers were obliged to go to the houses in the morning and send slackers to work in the fields.

The Peace of Sathmar set an end not only to the dominion of the Turks but also to the reign of the princes. These had been centuries of battle, insecurity and hardship. The Diet judged it as follows:

"For all time in the tables of history will be inscribed those dreadful fates of sorrow which were endured by this country under the Turkish patronage and the discord among its princes."

With this heavy legacy Siebenbürgen began its painful way towards integration into the Austrian state. The count of the population had markedly fallen. A heavy burden of debt weighed on the survivors. Close to hundred villages had lost their German residents. In their place stepped Romanians who were welcomed as workers and tax payers. But more than a burden of material losses weighed the lack of courage among the people. The commanding general of Hermannstadt, prince Königsegg, judged that the Saxons were so tired and weak that they dropped all courage and dealt with the thought to let go of their nationality and to "naturalize" with the nobility and the Szeklers. How this came about is easier to understand if you keep in mind the great sacrifices the Saxon people made in their loyalty to the German house of emperors. This had been acknowledged with highest praise by many different sovereigns. But now it not only expected words for its loyalty and sacrifices it had brought but also help as a German community. But this was met on part of the officials with incomprehension for its characteristic and earned exceptional position. About that the Saxons were disappointed. Through their battle for Austria it had acquired the enmity of the Nobility and of the Szeklers.

p.73

This conflict had not been eliminated by the government, but had been deepened, as had been counseled by Karaffa, so that the individual ethnic constituents could be governed more easily. He had named the Saxons as the strength and embellishment of Siebenbürgen. They should be supported but with caution. Soon they had to recognize that in the Court of Vienna the opinion was that "it was about time that they should crawl after the Imperial benevolence" that is to beg for leniency, or said simply, to do without objection whatever was asked of them. This was difficult for them because, as humiliating as it was perceived by them, they had to beg for understanding and goodwill, instead of insisting on centuries-old rights; when in the past, one could influence writing the laws in the Diet, now, one had to defend oneself with the weapon in the hand against unjust infringements. Under the new situation and with the methods applied by the government, which consisted of issuing decrees and commands which became known only as they were carried out there was no other choice but to contact the Court of Vienna with repeated petitions.

In the year 1713 the "Pragmatic Sanction" had been enacted. With this law, which was recognized by all provinces of Austria, it was determined that all of them now belonged together and were not divided. They should be united under one ruler and committed to defend each other. The Diet of Siebenbürgen accepted the Pragmatic Sanction in 1721 out of gratitude for the liberation of the country from the foreign rule of the Turks. Through it the basis for a uniform State structure was created. That this was not totally realizable without hardship is understandable and was well-founded by the dissimilarity of the provinces. Even so the assurances of the "Certificate of Leopold" soon were ignored in Siebenbürgen too. The government in Vienna soon stopped to ask the constituents (Stände) and instead simply just issued orders in which they tried to win over one or the other of the Nations by granting them small perks until they could eliminate them through their influence and power. The promise of recognition of the confessions was not retracted, but the Catholic Church was made dominant and the Counter-Reformation was promoted with all means possible.

p.74

Evangelical churches were taken away and given to the Catholics. At least half of the city councilmen had to be Catholic. To attend foreign colleges was forbidden. If the Jesuits did not reach a goal, the Commanding General would push it through with the demand "To pay respect to the religion of the most gracious sovereign".

In the year 1758 two processes were pinned on the Saxons. They should provide evidence of their right to the Tenth. The Golden Letter of Freedom (Goldener Freibrief), which had granted that right and had been recognized for over five hundred years, was declared invalid. The Tenth was expropriated for the clergy. Emperor Josef II then gave them back a portion of it. Furthermore the Nation was sentenced to pay 387.000 Gulden back-pay for Martin's interest (Martinszins). It was also said that they were "Kronbauern", peasants of the crown, which means serfs of the State. In this penury God sent our Nation Samuel von Brukenthal, a man who was able to step into service for his people and persuade Empress Maria Theresia to protect the people in their freedom. He closed his petition to her with the words: "A people which has to be afraid at all times is not happy when it is brought to scorn itself, throws itself away and is no longer able to see any value in it so that it is truly unhappy." The Empress protected the Saxons in many cases, but without losing the goal out of sight of rendering the state Catholic. She also suggested to Brukenthal to become Catholic. He declined humbly but decisively with the words of his motto: "I will serve my faith and my people". Such an attitude and his work for the well-being of his people strengthened the people in its fight for faith and individuality.

Through the Counter-Reformation regents and government pursued the goal to destroy the Evangelical faith in Austria. Their followers were cruelly persecuted.

p.75

The German Diet intervened and attempted to obtain the right to emigrate for the Protestants, but this was unsuccessful. They were shackled and even sold to Venice as slaves for the galleys. Many fled their homeland. In the year 1731 Vienna issued the Emigrant Patent whereupon many Protestants emigrated to Germany but also to other countries. At that the government had the idea to direct the stream of emigrants to Siebenbürgen where as a result of the many wars there was a lack of people and where, it was said, the "the pestilence of Luther's teaching" could not be eradicated. In this way a number of families from the Salzkammergut and from Kärnten were sent to Siebenbürgen after 1734. Their descendants, the so-called Landler, still live today in Neppendorf, Grossau, and Grosspold, insofar they have not moved away or emigrated. After 1744 people from Baden-Durlach immigrated into Mühlbach and brought new life to this city. During the Seven-Year-War the government settled 1500 prisoners of war in the Saxon cities. For the most part they were craftsmen who in part moved away again after the war.

These measures showed that the government strove for the well-being of the country. Finally, the work of Brukenthal, who became governor of Siebenbürgen in 1777, extended beyond the narrow framework of their own people and interests. He worked for the economic and cultural progress of all ethnic groups of people, of the Saxons, the Magyars, and the Romanians equally. This way our people learned to measure its small relationships with a larger yardstick and to view

themselves placed into the larger context of the world affairs. This gave our people a new spiritual lift, and it recovered again out of its own strength.

When the Empress Maria Theresia died her son Joseph II followed her on the throne. His motto was: "So I want so I command!" He implemented a series of reforms. At first he passed the Patent for Tolerance, which was intended to bring freedom for all confessions. In reality it brought by the practice of unlimited sovereign omnipotence a step backwards.

p.76

The Patent for Tolerance specified that the Emperor was entitled to the last decision even in affairs of the church. This was a large infringement of the existing law. From now on the Consistory of the Evangelical Church was forced to submit the reports of the discussions in their meetings. Also soon afterwards the non-Catholic confessions were still tolerated but did not have equal rights.

When the Catholic monasteries were forbidden to beg and the school salaries of the Saxon teachers were placed under the same ban it put them in great financial distress.

In the year 1781 education was unified for the whole country. With it the school money for the gymnasiums (high schools) was increased remarkably but without considering the Saxon circumstances which made the studies there more difficult. The renegade Cloos von Kronenthal was appointed Royal Judge. Even greater agitation was caused by the new survey of the land and the repeal of the Saxon land holdings, which meant that now everybody could acquire the land and build houses on it. Emperor Joseph ordered the splitting of the community wealth and gave property of forests belonging to the Saxon community to other communities.

The biggest injustice which was inflicted upon the Saxons was the sentencing of the Nation to pay the Martin's interest in 1782 which had been incorporated into the general tax in the year 1705 with the revision of the taxes at that time. Now the Martin's interest was demanded back-dated for fifty three years and needed to be paid in full. Only in the year 1823 the backlog was paid off. The last Martin's levy was asked for in 1855. In this one instance the Golden Letter of Freedom was left intact and used as tool for injustice.

When in 1784 a revolt of the Romanians arose because of the suppression of the serfs Emperor Joseph II eased their lot by enacting the Urbarial Patent in 1787 which abolished the hereditary bondage. For many this meant the beginning of a human life. But the emperor suppressed the revolt which had the liberation of all slaves as a goal.

On the fourth of July 1784 the constitution of the country was canceled and the country divided into counties. The Saxon Nation was declared extinct.

p.77

When the Emperor ordered the German language as official language the Nobility and the Szeklers were outraged. The Saxons saw in it an injustice. Brukenthal tried to exert all of his influence with the Emperor to clarify for him that these commands were inconsistent with the laws and the constitution of the country and therefore must cause great confusion for the people. Consequently he was fired from his office.

In the meantime the resistance in the country had organized. Hungary and the Szeklers went before the Emperor and presented him with a letter of refusal. The Saxons presented only a petition. While the Letter of Refusal by the two political constituents (Stände) was placed with the Chancellery, the Saxons received a strong rebuke, "because they had dared to consider the property of Royal grounds as goods of the Crown for them." To send similar petitions in the future was forbidden for them. Finally, the Emperor felt compelled to enact the Edict of Restitution. Through this measure all of his reforms were repealed, except the Patent for Tolerance which assured toleration of the Protestants and the Urbarial Patent, which cancelled the hereditary bondage. The joy over this was great all over the country.

These years of revolution from above were not without benefit for our people. It had been forced into a battle for survival and had to search for weapons to fight for its rights against arbitrariness and incomprehension. It had to be demonstrated that the rights of the Saxon people had not fallen into their lap but were rewards for faithful service for the homeland and the German Imperial House. To prove this all historical sources had to be collected and researched so that they would be forearmed for renewed attacks. For this battle the whole population had to be prepared and equipped. People had to be made aware of their past. For this purpose in Hermannstadt the first newspaper came out in 1784: "The Siebenbürger Herald". The "Quartalsschrift" – Quarterly, which came out since 1790, endeavored to strengthen the spiritual and intellectual connection to Germany.

p.78

By the publication of “Kritische Sammlungen zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen – Selective collections to the history of the Germans in Siebenbürgen -” by A.L. Schlözer, scholar from Göttingen, not only wide circles in Germany were informed about the Saxon people, but the Saxons were also strengthened in their self-conscience. This was urgently needed, because by the abolition of the Constitution of the ranks and the National University by Joseph II the self-understanding of our people had been crushed. Until then our people had been the support beam of the power of the state. With one blow it had, by arbitrary reforms, become a small ethnic and confessional minority. It had been of importance to the country not by the numbers but by its economic performance and its acknowledged rights.

In the year 1790 the Diet met in Klausenburg. It was supposed to give back its old constitution to Siebenbürgen. This was not easy because the reforms of Josef II had brought about deeper consequences than it had been assumed. Nevertheless, the negotiations had been crowned with success. The resolutions laid the groundwork for further development of the country. Afterwards Siebenbürgen was an independent country with its own constitution and belonged to the crown of Hungary. The Diet which consisted of Nobility, Szeklers and Saxons as well as representatives of the cities created laws which, confirmed by the king, and were also changed often. They had to be sealed with the seal of the three Nations, otherwise they were not valid.

Until then votes were taken by representatives of the three ethnic-political groups (Stände). Now it was decided that from now on single-person votes were to be counted. This created an overwhelming disadvantage for the Saxons, because from 419 Representatives in the Diet they only counted 35 members. When in the past they had been able to hinder the resolution of a law by simple objection, now they had left only the opportunity to withhold the seal of the Nation. In extraordinarily difficult cases they had made use of this possibility.

As the resolution of single-person ballots was a step toward democracy, even then one can also easily recognize the fateful limitations of the newly awakened Nationalism, which prevented further advances in this direction.

p.79

Subsequently the relations among the Nations of Siebenbürgen were loaded to the point of intolerability. Although the Romanians had the majority of the people, they were represented in the Diet only by a few bishops appointed by the Emperor. Also they had only an advisory vote. In the year 1791 the Romanians registered clearly their rightly claims in a petition to the Emperor. On Saxon grounds they were free, could acquire property, but had only limited political rights. On the grounds of Nobility they were still without rights and consigned to the capriciousness of the foreign owner of the grounds. The ideas of the French Revolution had caused awareness among the parties that there must be founded a solution, but only the Saxons recognized this and avowed that every person is born free and that it is ignoble to degrade him to serfdom. The bondage was cancelled and liberty permissible, but this did not change anything in the present circumstances. It took another generation before a total concession to human rights and democracy was enforced by the storm of the revolution of 1848.

For questions about the faith, the people returned to the old legal provisions, by which the four recognized religions had their full autonomy. They could build churches, establish schools, and print religious books. How different the conceptions of the ethnic-political organizations (Stände) were came to light again and again. So also at the orders for criminal prosecution yet to be determined, when the Nobility, disregarding long accepted Saxon rules of law, wanted to extend the punishment by beating to the Saxon Nation, and could not comprehend that a free nation never would have accepted such a punishment because they saw in it a disgrace of human beings. Through a resolute advocacy by its representatives the usual punishment by having to pay a fine was kept intact in the law for further use in the Saxon Nation.

This Diet had also decided that the Saxon Nation, their university, that is, all of the population, and its individual members was to be maintained according to a “legally within the Diploma of Leopold condition”.

p.80

But, as if this decision never had existed, the Court Chancellery in Vienna passed the so-called “Regulations” within the years 1795 to 1805. In these the long established administrative orders for the milk business was accused of mismanagement and replaced by a new system, managed totally by the government. Also the church was brought into dependence of the government by new regulations. Their jurisdiction about marriages was taken away; the priests had to be elected annually like the judges. The autonomy was trampled, the Emperor was made supreme judge and the Supreme Consistory was degraded to a humble petitioner. Now it should only fulfill the task “to make cheap proposals to the advantage of moral and religious culture”. The Chancellery of the Court was the mistress of the church, she exercised and switched (schalten and walten) arbitrarily, let the proposals of the Supreme Consistory be presented to her, made changes as she saw fit, as if there never had been laws of religion in Siebenbürgen, sacred by century-old utility.

Despite of this the Saxon Nation, forever faithful in its loyalty, brought also this sacrifice for the homeland as it raised his own fighter battalion (Jägerbattalion) in 1808 and 1813 against Napoleon. Also in the military units of the country the Saxons served at the highest commando posts, like General Melas, to whom a sword was presented by Napoleon in acknowledgment of his military acumen, or Captain Hensel who defended to his death a strategically important position. Whether of Grosskopisch a sacrifice of blood or life was demanded in these wars is not known.

The many wars waged by Austria demanded heavy material sacrifices from all of its residents. The country drove towards bankruptcy. To avoid it the churches were claimed. In the Commemorative Book of the church community is a validation of it. In 1811 a monetary reform was undertaken, which together with the earthquake in 1802 and with the crop failure that followed, led to years of severe famine, which brought the people to the edge of ruin. More people died of hunger than in the wars.

p.81

More oppressive than this external distress was the tyranny of the government, which disregarded all passed down rights of Siebenbürgen and Hungary. There were forced recruitments and taxes charged without consulting with the Diet. Therefore, around 1825 in Hungary and Siebenbürgen a fight started about the rights of the country. In this the Saxons participated because their right to elect the king's judge was ignored and because the church had been robbed of its authority, and also, because their tax money was utilized for other communities in the country.

In the beginning the three Nation organizations (Stände) were united. But soon the dissimilarity of the opinions broke through. The command of Josef II to use the German language instead of Latin as language of the state raised in Hungary the desire to determine the language of the Magyars as official state language. In Siebenbürgen the question about the official state language became relevant also and led to a language fight because the other people's groups put up a defense. To reach a success the Magyars advocated Magyarization and annexation to Hungary. From both measures they hoped for a strengthening of their position. The Saxons saw in it a threat to their national characteristic and tried to strengthen their own people's awareness. The contrasts became greater and greater because each people's organization (Stand) was only concerned about their own advantages, but not on the progress of the whole country. When the Saxons in the negotiations about the recruitment filed the application that the Nobility should also have a compulsory military service, it came, - like at the law about abolition of serfdom - to bitter confrontations. But when the Saxons were forced to make a contribution to the founding of a Magyar National museum in Klausenburg they picked at the last resort that they had at their disposal to deny to put their seal under the decision, it came to stormy conflicts in the Diet.

In this battle one soon recognized that the right to exist of our people was only proven by the ability of each individual in the totality of the community.

p.82

To strengthen their proficiency a series of collaborations developed after 1840, such as the agricultural co-op, which set their goal in raising the level of agriculture by further education of the farmers. The craftsmen joined in commercial associations and founded commercial schools. They envisioned founding factories and other economic plans, the financing of which was enabled by establishing savings banks, whose profits were targeted for public purposes. The Society for Regional Studies (Landeskundeverein) which was founded in 1842 united the intellectual creations and reassured the connection to Germany.

To raise the level of agriculture Stephan Ludwig Roth, who had studied in Tübingen, called Swabian peasants to Siebenbürgen. They were to establish master farms here. He also pursued the plan to divert the stream of emigrants to America and direct them to Siebenbürgen. This created such a big nuisance for the leading Hungarians that his action foundered under their opposition and also was one of the reasons for him being sentenced to death.

Special awareness was directed to education at this time. The elementary school received a new order; the gymnasiums received a new plan of studies and next to them new practical schools (Realschulen) were built. In Hermannstadt a College for Law was opened which unfolded a beneficent activity from 1844-to 1884.

To raise the level of education also had been an urgent matter of concern for Stephan L. Roth. He had been a disciple of the great Swiss educator Heinrich Pestalozzi. When he returned home from Switzerland he issued an appeal in which he "appealed to the nobleness and the philanthropy of the Saxon Nation" to raise the necessary means for improvement of the education of teachers. In which he expressed his conviction: "The existence of our nationality is closely tied to, like maybe as with no other people in the world, church and schools". When he turned his desired goal to raise the level of education as a teacher in a public gymnasium into action he spent his holidays often with the in-laws on the spacious rectory in Grosskopisch. Here he also wrote his treatise on the history of the world, which he taught.

p.83

Which echo the quest to retain the ethnic characteristic through intensive teaching of the mother-language and the history of their ancestry was found in the people is shown in the increased concern about it and about creating the external conditions for it, even in the most remote villages. This was also the case in Grosskopisch where in 1832 a school for girls and in 1847 a school for boys was built. I will report more about that later.

The great significance of the mobilization of the mental and spiritual forces of all of the people was to be proven convincingly in the coming century.