

## 8. In the Kingdom of Hungary

In France a revolution broke out on February 24, 1848, which, under the motto liberty, equality and fraternity, spread all over Europe in a few days with the exception of Russia and Turkey. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March the government in Vienna was swept away, and, as early as on the 15<sup>th</sup>, an assembly of the people in the streets of Pest (Budapest) demanded the liberty of the Hungarian Nation, equal treatment of all citizens in military and tax duties and the merger of Siebenbürgen with Hungary. A few days later these decisions were adopted in the Diet (Landtag) with the provision that the Diet of Siebenbürgen also should discuss and decide about the merger. The Siebenbürgen Diet met on May 29 in Klausenburg. Hungarians and the Szeklers agreed from the outset to push through the union of the Princedom with Hungary and signified to the Saxons that the merger would happen even without their consent. They also declared "publicly and sacredly" that the nationality of the Saxons should be respected. The representatives of the Saxons consented to the union, adding a few provisions on the next day. In their nightly council the young idealistic representatives of the majority, who believed a people that fought for its freedom with such passion like the Hungarians, would also respect the freedom of other peoples. Soon they had to realize that they had been wrong. Their Diet brought forward a decision to abolish the serfdom. This was received with great enthusiasm by the subservient Saxons of the county soil. A week after the publication of this law the Festival of the Crown (Kronenfest) was reinterpreted as the Day of Achieving Freedom from Serfdom. Also, the levy of the Tenth was abolished. This action was also enjoyed by the people of Grosskopisch. They no longer had to give a Tenth. But after this Diet (Landtag) a passionate controversy broke out about the union among the Saxons. Those who were discontent felt they had been betrayed.

As the Hungarians advanced their secession from Austria, Austria intervened and there were warlike confrontations.

The clashes also spread into Siebenbürgen claiming many victims among the population because they were split into two camps. Hungary and the Szeklers stood on the side of the revolutionaries, while the Saxons and the Romanians fought for a united homeland.

At the end of December 1848 a Hungarian army under General Bem came to Siebenbürgen. When the Imperial troops had been beaten, the Emperor called Russian troops for assistance. There were various battles, among others the battle at Weisskirch adjacent to Schässburg, in which there were many soldiers killed in action on both sides. Among them was the Russian General Skariatin and on the side of the revolutionaries the Hungarian poet of freedom Petöfi Sandor who had participated in the fight as Adjutant of General Bem. Bem had been beaten. The Imperial forces also won in Hungary. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of August the revolutionaries had to surrender. The revolution was over. Now a savage trial began against the leaders of it. Hundreds were shot, or hanged, which lowered the reputation of Austria in the whole world.

This time, too, our people had to bring heavy sacrifices. Our community, however, was spared because it was located offside of the main street of the army. But the hard fate of Stephan L. Roth's has deeply moved for sure the people of Grosskopisch. Roth was sentenced to death by a Hungarian tribunal and was shot on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, because he had worked by assignment of the government in the Kleinkogler Comitatus to ensure peace and order of the population. Everybody knew him from the pulpit of the church and from the street of their community.

Already on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April the National University had agreed on the full equal right for the Romanians on Imperial grounds. In the year 1862 the university presented detailed proposals to Emperor Franz Josef for the implementation of national equality for the Romanians. Like the Hungarians, Szeklers, and Saxons they should be assigned a place to live according to their nationality and their language should be, along with Hungarian and German, the language of the country. Their proposals were not heeded.

Through the so-called equalization process (Ausgleich) which the Emperor settled with Hungary in 1867, he was declared King of Hungary and crowned. Thereby Hungary was linked to Austria only by the person of the Emperor-King, the joint commando of the army and the representation to the outside. The Great-Princedom Siebenbürgen, Croatia, Slovenia, and Fiume dissolved into the Hungarian State. From now on, its administration was managed from Budapest, whose ministry received the power of attorney to issue the decrees in administration and justice which it deemed were necessary. In this way Siebenbürgen was handed over to a tyranny whereby the Saxon advocates of the merger were bitterly disappointed.

Hungary was a state with multiple people, in which the Magyars and the Szeklers made up the relative majority of forty percent but they did not have the absolute majority. Therefore they feared about the continuance of the state and

attempted consequently to Magyarize members of other tribes. Magyaric was the language of the state. The use of other mother tongues was more and more narrowed down by the offices and in the courts, until they were no longer allowed to be used and placed everywhere in front of the eyes of people with other languages with the admonition: "You eat Hungarian bread, speak Hungarian!" He who leaned to become Magyar or had a name sounding Magyar was privileged in all domains. In the year 1894 a state-owned registry for university applications was introduced, in which state-owned meant Magyaric because in the list of names of the Matriculation office there were no German First names. Three years later all names of villages, towns and cities were Magyarized, but the most outstanding instruments of Magyarization were the state schools.

The Saxon schools of the church kept the German language of teaching, but were exposed to constantly rising pressure which reached its high point with the Apponyic (?) Law of Schools in 1907.

It was only natural that this pressure set off a defensive reaction in the peoples who were oppressed in this way. In the Saxons such a reaction had already started at the time of the fights about selecting the appropriate state language, which is before 1848. It intensified when ...

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Legend for the full page image: The choir of the church in Kronstadt 1973



Der Kirchenchor in Kronstadt  
1973

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...when the National University now was broken up for good and our people lost their political unity. As a result the Evangelical church took up the legacy, unified all forces and thus emerged the cultural unity of the Saxon people who felt they were a part of the German cultural nation. They searched for the closest spiritual connections to the motherland Germany without becoming disloyal even in thoughts to the fatherland Hungary. People had their homeland here for centuries in the bend of the Carpathian Mountains, felt good here and did not want any disputes about this land, but wanted to prove their rights for this homeland and cultural identity respected in history and present times. They attached the greatest value on the care of the mother-tongue in church and school as well as in the cultural realm. For this purpose they founded social clubs which cared for speech and literature. Theatrical performances were regular events not only in the cities but also in the smallest villages. Choirs and clubs for music regularly gave concerts. In the course of this cultural development Grosskopisch, too, founded a music club in the year 1853. A little later the teachers of the Presbytery asked for permission to join the co-educational orchestra of Birthalm. A mixed choir and a choir for men provided for more beautiful arrangements of the services of worship and the cultivation of the old traditional songs, while a book club strove

to arouse and to satisfy the intellectual and spiritual interests of the village people. The more aggressive the attacks were on the national characteristics, the more the people reacted on it with waxing self-confidence.

When instead of the clerical a civil policy for matriculation was introduced this measure caused neither astonishment nor offense. But when it became clear that the Magyars had stood Godfather in this matter it raised no small aggravation among our peasants. In the year 1902 the emigrant to the United States Martin Löprich/Neugasse published a booklet in his own publishing press with the title: "The Country of Love", in which he castigates with bitter words the Magyarization of the baptismal names. He writes full of bitterness:

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...“The main wound lays there, about his nationality, his German name, his most valuable legacy, inherited from his ancestors. I believe it will remain unforgotten by every brother in nationality, this scandalous deed of our Hungarian overlord and ruler of our little country that drove us to Magyarization like into a pond which depth nobody knew in advance.

Is the German father not branded when he has to announce his newborn child in the chancellery of the community...? ...also one has to be ready for the question....of the leader of matriculation. "What shall be the name of the child?" Naturally it is difficult to say the name because the child so far has none, nor a baptismal name. But finally the father announces a name, be it for example Johann, so it will be imprinted Janos. If he is supposed to be named Martin, he will be inscribed Marton, shall he be named Franz, he will be written in the book Ferencz, and so on. In oppressive dissatisfaction the father comes home and almost does not dare to open up his mouth so as not to aggrieve the mother ...isn't the mother also branded because she knows she is German-born, that she has German parents and now a German man? Now her darling, her newborn baby, shall bear the name of a Zakel? I myself find no answer to these questions: Where do you find the patience? Where do you find peace and reassurance about such oppressive injustice?"

This was not the only thing that tormented him in the foreign country. The economic distress, which had driven him and many others into this alien land, did it in equal measure.

When, in the year 1914, the First World War broke out, all peoples of the Double Monarchy stood up to defend the fatherland common to all. Likewise the men of our people fulfilled their duty, as always. From 230.000 Saxons there were 37.533 war participants. Among them were 3.532 fallen soldiers. Missing in action were 1318 men, many more were taken prisoner. Back home 4346 orphans and 1665 widows were left. Ten years after the ending of the war a monument was erected in the garden of the seminary of the diocese (Landeskirche) as a reminder for the fallen teachers.

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Twenty years later it stood there, desecrated. The inscription and the names of the fallen soldiers were chiseled out with rough tools. Grosskopisch, too, had losses in the First World War. Among the seventy war participants eleven were fallen or missing in action. Left behind were widows and orphans.

When the kingdom Romania withdrew from the middle powers (Mittelmächte) in the year 1916 and declared war on them and their troops invaded Siebenbürgen the thunder of the canons from Harbach, where the war was fought, boomed as far as to the quiet valley of Grosskopisch. Just then came out the order to evacuate the village whereupon some residents stowed their most essential belongings onto horse carriages and escaped to the West. Others remained at home and waited for the next events to happen. After a short while the front retreated across the Carpathians, all returned home again and resumed their usual work. Life was hard. The men were missing in the business and at home. Some shortcomings became apparent, and the daily requisitioning of food stuff and feed contributed to the further deterioration of the situation of the people.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1918 Austria-Hungary was forced to a truce. The war was over. But then the revolution broke out and brought the dissolution of the Danube-Monarchy. The veterans returned home as far as they had not been taken prisoner-of-war. The men had become rougher in the years of war. The revolutionaries had robbed them of their insignia and of the awards they had earned, often risking their own life, and often mistreated them. Thereupon many were embittered since there ought to arise in them deep doubts about the sense of all the events during the years of war.