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BEREHOVE IN THE 17TH–18TH CENTURIES: CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT¹

The relevance of the history of Berehove is due to its undiscovered past. The town was the seat of the Bereg County and the centre of the region in the 17th and 18th centuries. The present study attempts to outline the political-administrative, socio-economic issues of the period that contribute to an understanding of the town's centuries-old history. In the period under study, Berehove was part of the manor of Mukachevo Castle, which left its mark on the town's condition and struggles. Among the Transylvanian princes of the time, the urban policy of the representatives of the Rákóczi dynasty is the most important to be traced. The policies of the Transylvanian princes meant both protection and, on several occasions, great challenges for the town, as Berehove became one of the centres of anti-Habsburg movements after Mukachevo. The written sources confirm the political and economic links between Mukachevo Castle as a princely centre and Berehove during the liberation struggles. The citizens of the town were represented by the princes on several occasions in peacetime, but in the event of a Polish invasion, for example, Berehove and its inhabitants paid a high price for supporting the Transylvanian prince. The Transylvanian princes built and maintained a court house in the town and were guests here on numerous occasions. The period of the siege of Mukachevo Castle (1685–1688) proved to be a difficult time for the town, when it became the scene of military clashes. During the Rákóczi War of Independence, the rebels of the area were concentrated here, as the chief justice of the town, Sámuel Kemsey, supported Ferenc Rákóczi II from the early days. Berehove was the only town where the anti-imperial flag-unfolding of the Kuruc could be carried out with great enthusiasm. This is why it became known as the so-called «Kuruc town» in the eyes of the imperial military.

The need to supply both the imperial army and, in time, the liberation army with food and soldiers put the town administration in a difficult situation. High quality wine production was a source of income for the town's farmers – landowners and ordinary citizens alike – except when faced with the lawlessness of the enemy military. After the defeated war of independence, the town was re-integrated into the Habsburg Empire, continuing to function as a county centre.

Key words: the Rákóczi princes, the Kuruc, Berehove, the war of independence, censuses.

¹ The Hungarian name of the town is Beregszász.

At the end of the 16th century, Berehove, as a town belonging to the estates of Mukachevo Castle, despite its privileges, was repeatedly obliged by the imperial authorities to maintain the army. The people of Berehove were constantly involved in the repair work after the sieges of Mukachevo Castle. In 1612, Miklós Eszterházy, lord-sheriff of Bereg County, took over the manor of Mukachevo by his marriage. Not only did he demand the wine tithe from Berehove, but also appropriated some of the patented vineyards. In response to the protests of the town's residents, he ordered the military from Mukachevo Castle to Berehove. The intimidated population fled to the surrounding forests, but in time the chief justice, István Vajda, obtained a letter of protection for the inhabitants from King Matthias II (Balogh, 1890)².

We have valuable data about the town from the census of 1613, according to which the citizens of Berehove paid 153 forints 25 denars per year as land rent. They also gave crops, tithes and ninth taxes, and 16 barrels of the wine paid as tenth tax were given to the Reformed pastors. It was their duty to cultivate the landlord's vineyards in exchange for wheat. Furthermore, the townspeople were obliged to repair and tyre old barrels. In those years, 12 judges by jury, the chief justice, the customs officer, the notary, the herdsman and other shepherds were exempt from tax. The town was obliged to measure out 32 barrels of wine annually for the benefit of the landlord. The milling right was the property of the landlord, and the income from the three-stone mill here was used to support the priest, the students, the schoolmasters and the millers, in addition to the landlord.

When the Transylvanian prince Gábor Bethlen (1580–1629) became the owner of Berehove, he assured the town of his support. He had a mansion built here, or more precisely, he converted the Dominican monastery into a princely mansion. He did much for the development of the town's crafts and trade, as well as for the education of the town's students.

Catherine of Brandenburg, wife of Prince Gábor Bethlen, granted the town of Berehove a wine trade privilege on January 15, 1630. The charter was drawn up two months after Gábor Bethlen's death, so it is possible that Bethlen himself proposed the privileges.

The next significant change of ownership took place on 6 May 1633, when György Rákóczi and his wife, Zsuzsanna Lorántffy took possession of the Mukachevo manor together with Berehove (Balogh, 1890). György Rákóczi helped the residents of war-torn Berehove on several occasions, and ordered the officers of Mukachevo Castle not to ask for food during their stay in the town (SATR-2).

During the reign of the Reformed Princess Zsuzsanna Lorántffy (1602–1662), Berehove had to deliver more than 400 barrels of wine and 100 building beams to Mukachevo Castle. With regard to the payment of taxes, the princess showed fairness on several occasions; for example, she fulfilled the request of Mrs János Szász, who asked for exemption from the tax on the grounds of poverty, and the exemption was granted (Balogh, 1890).

With the death of György Rákóczi, the princely property passed to his son, György Rákóczi II. He was the one who repeatedly took part in the war against King Ferdinand II with the aim to restore the freedom of the Evangelical creed (Balogh, 1890). At this time, the army, having plundered the property of the Catholics, reduced their influence in and around

² The lawsuit involved the fact that the citizens filed a legal appeal with Palatine György Thurzó, and had the case investigated with the help of the Lelesz convent; 69 witnesses were questioned in Berehove. As a result of the lawsuit, Palatine György Thurzó also reprimanded Eszterházy in 1613 not to harass the citizens of Berehove regarding the wine tithe.

Berehove. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Berehove was also subordinate to the holders of the Mukachevo manor under the 1649, 1699 and 1704 urbariums, and accordingly paid taxes and services in kind (Lehoczky, 1999, p. 103)³. This was increasingly difficult to achieve at a time of atrocities in the town, the most serious of which was the Polish invasion.

The events of June 17, 1657, are among the tragic days of Berehove, when the town was burned down by vengeful Poles due to the unsuccessful campaign of György Rákóczi II in Poland. Polish Marshal Jerzy Lubomirski, the general, retaliated against György Rákóczi II's campaign to seize the throne in his homeland. On 15 June, the marshal crossed the Beskids with his army, raiding and pillaging all Rákóczi estates, including Berehove. He arrived at the town on June 17, when its population fled to the Catholic Church, but here, in this holy place, everyone was massacred, and then the town was burnt to ashes (Bellyei, 1939). The fortress guard in Munkachevo could not attempt to defend Berehove. György Rákóczi II (1621–1660) died of wounds sustained in the Battle of Szászfenés⁴ in 1660, and his wife, Zsófia Báthori (1629–1680) took over the rule of the manor. With the financial help of the Catholic princess, the church of the town was partially repaired and covered. Thanks to her religious zeal, the Protestants were driven out of the church.

The princess maintained continuous contact with the leadership of the county, which was manifested in the fact that she sent envoys to Berehove on a permanent basis (SATR-5; SATR-4; SATR-8), and received delegates from there in Munkachevo Castle (SATR-3; SATR-1).

After the death of Zsófia Báthori (1680), the town of Berehove became the property of her daughter-in-law, Ilona Zrínyi (1643–1703) and later Ilona Zrínyi's husband, Imre Thököly (1657–1705), the so-called «Kuruc King». Thököly's uprising only partially affected the town. Berehove participated in the military supply of the Thökölyan troops. Thököly himself stayed in Berehove several times. In mid-March 1681, he received a Turkish envoy in Berehove, Mehmet Aga, who was also called the *Lame Bey*. Berehove was the location of Thököly's international negotiations on several occasions (Angyal, 1888, p. 232, 238, 280). The «Kuruc King» protected the town against excessive taxation, in a letter to his officers dated February 14, 1682, he ordered them to protect the poor (SATR-11), and he also severely punished rioters not only in the town, but in the whole region (SATR-7). The numerous letters preserved in the State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region are evidence of his relationship with the leadership of Bereg County, and testify to his discussions with the county delegates (SATR-6). His wife, Ilona Zrínyi, also defended the town and its inhabitants as a princess. In her orders, she also provided for the protection of a soldier and some serfs who had settled in Berehove, referring to the town's old privilege of accommodated people (SATR-9). During the uprising led by Thököly, the imperial troops often used the courtyard next to the church, surrounded by a stone fence, as a night resting place, as they feared the Kuruc attacking from Mukachevo Castle. The strongest raid against the imperial troops camped in Berehove took place on 8 June 1686, when Mihály Radics, captain of Mukachevo Castle, marched against them with an escort of 160 horsemen⁵. The German troops stationed here were violent towards the townspeople. As a result of the Kuruc attack,

³ This practice changed only during the Schönborn family's ownership (1730), following an agreement between the Royal Chamber.

⁴ Szászfenés (Hungarian) – Florești (Romanian) – Floreshti (English) – today, a settlement in Romania.

⁵ Besides the riders, they were accompanied by Gáspár Sándor, Bálint Nemessányi, Dániel Absolon, Sámuel Jeney and András Daróczy.

the imperial troops were forced into the church tower and fired at the Kuruc from there. The siege lasted for nearly three hours, and in the end 225 prisoners were disarmed, while the Radics troop lost 10 hajduks and 1 horseman, and 19 were wounded. With the prisoners and the wounded, they retreated to Mukachevo Castle. Princess Ilona Zrínyi solemnly received the victorious troops, took the four captured flags, and then the prisoners swore an oath of allegiance to the Kuruc (Thaly, 1868; Balogh, 1890, p. 253–254). As a result of this attack, the chapel of St. Michael next to the church was completely burnt down, and the church building was also badly damaged (Rónai, 1907, p. 19). Later, stones from this chapel were used to rebuild the church.

During October 1686, the soldiers of Mukachevo Castle came down to Berehove several times to collect the wine to be delivered (Angyal, 1888, p. 452–453). The scouts of the castle kept a constant watch on the town and its surroundings, and knew when the German military movement was, and how many people were coming to stay in the town.

A radical change occurred for the townspeople, especially the Catholics, after the fall of the castle in 1688, when Ilona Zrínyi, described by the French king, as «the bravest woman in Europe», handed the castle over to the imperial military. At that time, the town got into the hands of Cardinal Lipót Kollonich as the guardian of the Rákóczi orphans, Ferenc and Júlia, and Ferenc Klobusitzki as financial director. However, it had a beneficial effect on the mood of the population when Lipót Kollonich allowed the Protestants to build a house of prayer on the Franciscan property, thus easing the tension between the believers practising the two religions. At the same time, however, many church properties were returned to the ownership of the Catholic Church, but the parish was only restored after the Rákóczi War of Independence, in 1715 (Rónai, 1907, p. 20)⁶.

The diary of Sándor Károlyi, lord-sheriff of Satu Mare County (Walther, 1874; Köpeczi & Várkonyi, 1973, p. 73–128), as well as the diary of Pál Tarpay (Thomasivskyj, 1912) and the memoirs of the Great Prince himself (Szalai, 1979), allow us to trace the role of Berehove and the county in the nation's liberation struggle. The first and most important event regarding the role of the town was the Kuruc flag-unfolding on May 22, 1703. Led by the leaders Tamás Esze (Esze, 1966), György Bige (Esze, 1954, p. 302)⁷, Mihály Pap⁸, and János Majos⁹, the people, inspired by the Rákóczi flags, first began their recruiting campaign in Tarpa (Hungary). Here, 300 infantrymen and 40 cavalrymen were won for the fight for freedom, and 62 more joined them in Variyevo (Esze, 1954; Lehoczky, 1903). In the dignified text of Rákóczi's proclamation, the moderate promises and stern prohibitions of the proclamation were transformed by the speaker into great exhortations and threats. The 500 or so horsemen and infantry who had gathered in Variyevo spent the night on the outskirts of the village (Esze, 1952, p. 5–6; Hegedüs, 1993). They knew that the next day, Saturday, 22 May 1703, there would be a national fair in Berehove, and that they could mass the soldiers who wanted to join them. The next morning, this group arrived at the fairground in Berehove. They tried to win the people over with both eloquence and threats. The county officials noticed the danger and sent messengers to the garrison commanders in Mukachevo Castle and Satu Mare Castle to inform them of the situation in the town (Csatáry, 1997).

⁶ The St. Michael's Chapel was rebuilt in 1743, before the church, by Count Schönborn-Buchheim, heir of the Rákóczi estates, as the church's patron.

⁷ György Bige was a member of the delegation of the Tiszahát rebels sent to Rákóczi.

⁸ About the role of Mihály Pap as a regiment captain see: Esze, 1955, p. 421–422.

⁹ János Majos – Ugocha County nobleman. He defended Rákóczi in the Battle of Mukachevo (1703), later became a regiment captain.

The fact that Samuel Kemsey, chief justice of Berehove, was already a Kuruc sympathizer at the time of the flag-unfolding helped the cause of the war of independence. At that time, an imperial garrison consisting of 50 Austrian and Hungarian soldiers was stationed in Berehove, which did not offer any resistance. The county nobility and leading officials, led by the lord-sheriff Count István Csáky, had fled long ago towards the safe Satu Mare Castle.

In the market square of Berehove (today Ferenc Rákóczi II Square), it was rumoured that Rákóczi was coming to the town. Albert Esze and Albert Kis also proclaimed the Berezhany¹⁰ manifesto in Berehove, unfolding the remaining flags. The flags proclaimed the name and rank of Rákóczi and the motto «Cum Deo pro Patria et Libertate» (With God for the Fatherland and Freedom). In the marketplace of Berehove, the rebels had already begun to organise themselves in a military way. Their leaders took an oath, and then military ranks were approved among themselves. Tamás Esze, Albert Kis¹¹, and István Móricz (Móricz, 1973) were elected captains of infantry, Mihály Pap (Esze, 1954, p. 302–303; Esze, 1955, p. 421–422), János Majos and Márton Nagy were elected captains of cavalry. The sworn troops toured the whole region. They proclaimed the manifesto, and recruited troops for the liberation war (Esze, 1952, p. 6).

In his letter to István Koháry (NSzL-1) dated May 25, 1703, Sándor Károlyi, lord-sheriff of Satu Mare County, wrote that the town had entertained the Kuruc, who had not committed any violent offences in the town, but had taken food, drink, weapons and even the horses. Rákóczi forbade the disturbance of noble mansions and churches, and the abuse of the nobility and churchmen. From there, they marched on to meet Rákóczi at the Veretske Pass, where they were finally able to meet the Prince. According to the lines in Károlyi's diary, Bereg and Ugocha were completely overrun by the rebels, but they were also waiting for them in Satu Mare.

During the War of Independence, Rákóczi took care of the Kuruc injured in the battle and their widows. On September 25, 1706, Márton Nagy (Esze, 1955, p. 346–347) appealed to the prince, who joined the insurgents on the day of the flag-unfolding in Berehove. By this time he had lost his sight in the fighting and asked the prince to dismiss him. Rákóczi personally instructed him to have himself examined by the chief officer in charge, as this was the only way to dismiss him. On 22 December 1705, the widow of Tibor István Kismarjai, a former cavalry soldier from Berehove, asked Rákóczi for help (SATR-10).

The people of Berehove first appealed to the Prince in May 1705 to settle the debts of the town. The prince made his response conditional on the capitulation of Mukachevo Castle (SATR-12). The town's representatives turned to Rákóczi with confidence in the hope of solving their problems (SATR-13, SATR-14).

During the war of independence, Rákóczi stayed in Berehove several times. Returning from Transylvania, on December 21, 1705, he ordered the individual uprising from the Bethlen-Rákóczi mansion. On January 29, 1709, he stayed in Nove Selo. On April 16, 1709, he spent the night in Berehove. On April 17, the prince dealt with the issues of the war of independence (Lehoczy, 1881, p. 106).

¹⁰ Berezhany today is in Ternopil region, Ukraine.

¹¹ Albert Kis, serf of Bereg county, leader of the uprising in Hegyalja. Rákóczi promoted him to regiment captain, but in 1704 he had him executed for his disorderly conduct. For his activities, see: Kovács, 1988. P. 29–35; Esze, 1952. P. 150.

These documents also show the difficult economic situation of the town and the country as a whole. The burdens of warfare became unbearable, far exceeding the country's capacity to cope, and this was reflected in the battlefield, with the consequences we know so well today.

After the Rákóczi War of Independence, the town of Berehove also came under the supervision of the Chamber of Szepes, which partly resulted in the town being obliged to pay disproportionately large amounts of taxes (SATR-15).

In conclusion, the 17th and 18th centuries were a period of significant change and upheaval for Berehove. The town endured the rule of various powerful figures, including the Eszterházy family, Gábor Bethlen, and the Rákóczi family. While these changes often brought hardship, such as heavy taxes, military occupation, and destruction, they also offered periods of relative peace and prosperity. Notably, Gábor Bethlen's support fostered the development of crafts and trade, and Ferenc Rákóczi II protected the town from excessive taxation.

The most dramatic event of this period was undoubtedly the Kuruc Uprising led by Ferenc Rákóczi II. Berehove played a pivotal role in the uprising, witnessing the unfolding of the Kuruc flag and the recruitment of soldiers. Through the documents cited, we gain a deeper understanding of the town's struggles and its contribution to the fight for freedom.

Despite the challenges, the people of Berehove demonstrated resilience and a strong sense of community. They petitioned for their rights, appealed for help during times of hardship, and actively participated in the war of independence. The historical documents explored here provide a valuable glimpse into the complex and fascinating story of Berehove during this dynamic period.

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БЕРЕГОВЕ В XVII–XVIII СТОЛІТТЯХ: ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПОЛІТИКО-АДМІНІСТРАТИВНОГО ТА СОЦІАЛЬНО-ЕКОНОМІЧНОГО РОЗВИТКУ

Висвітлено питання, пов'язані з історією м. Берегове. Зазначено, що в XVII–XVIII ст. містечко було центром Березького комітату. Зроблено спробу окреслити політико-адміністративні та соціально-економічні проблеми періоду, які сприяють кращому розумінню багатовікової історії міста. Встановлено, що в досліджуваний період Берегове перебувало під юрисдикцією Мукачівського замку, що позначилося на стані і боротьбі міста. Зауважено, що серед трансильванських князів цього періоду найважливішою була міська політика представників династії Ракоці, що означала як захист, так і серйозні випробування для міста, оскільки після Мукачеве Берегове стало одним із центрів антигабсбурзьких рухів. Підтвердження політичних та економічних зв'язків між Мукачівським замком як княжим центром і м. Берегове в період визвольних змагань віднайдено в писемних джерелах. Зауважено, що в мирний час мешканців міста неодноразово боронили князі, а, наприклад, у час польського вторгнення вони заплатили високу ціну за прихильність до трансильванського князя.

Наголошено, що трансильванські князі побудували й утримували будинок суду в місті та неодноразово були тут гостями. Звернено увагу на один із найважчих періодів для міста – облогу Мукачівського замку (1685–1688), коли він став ареною військових зіткнень. Встановлено, що під час війни за незалежність під проводом Ф. Ракоці повстанці області зосередилися саме тут, оскільки головний суддя міста С. Кемшеї підтримував Ракоці з перших днів, а Берегове було єдиним містом, де можна було з великим ентузіазмом провести розгортання куруцького антиімперського прапора, відтак в очах імперських військових воно стало відоме як «містечко Куруц».

Вказано, що необхідність забезпечити імперську армію, а згодом і визвольну армію солдатами та продуктами поставила міську адміністрацію у скрутне становище. З'ясовано, що виробництво високоякісного вина було джерелом доходу для фермерів міста – як землевласників, так і простих громадян – за винятком випадків, коли вони стикалися з беззаконням ворожої армії. Виснувано, що після поразки у війні за незалежність місто знову було інтегроване до імперії Габсбургів, продовжуючи функціонувати як окружний центр.

Ключові слова: князі Ракоці, куруц, м. Берегове, визвольна війна, переписи населення.