The billeting and supply of the regular army
in the first half of the 18th century through the
example of Pest county

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I.

The researches of the military historians dealing with the history of the Habsburg Monarchy and Hungary have clarified the operation of the defence system against the Ottoman Empire just as well as the details of the circumstances of the campaigns of the Habsburgs towards the western countries and against the Turks. Hungarian and Austrian researchers started to uncover these aspects at the end of the 19th century. We can mention first of all the monumental series of publications concerning the age of Eugene of Savoy (Feldzüge des Prinzen Eugen von Savoyen) or the War of Austrian Succession (Criste, Oscar: Österreichischer Erbfolge-Krieg) edited by the Vienna Military Archive. Generations of excellent Hungarian historians have examined the formation and development of the system of border fortresses.

As far as the history of the War of Independence of Rákóczi and the structure of the Kuruc army is concerned, we can rely on several volumes of scientific literature. However, important questions of the supply of the army during the period after the peace treaty of Szatmár have remained without investigation so far, although the presence of the soldiers in the villages and towns, their billeting in the houses of peasants and townspeople was an essential part of everyday life.

The importance of the question is not to be underestimated. It was the opinion of Ferenc Rákóczi himself that besides the burden caused by the heavy taxes it was the revolting behaviour of the
imperial army that resulted in the fact that a large scale of the society supported the war of independence.

Nevertheless, the cohabittance of the soldiers and the civilian population has been investigated by only a few historians, which means that we have only a stereotyped knowledge about the activities of the armed forces of the Habsburg Monarchy in Hungary. On the other hand, we must mention the names of some scholars who did pioneer work in order to fill in the missing gaps concerning the topic. Béla Timon described certain elements of the royal orders which are of prime importance in this question.

József Zachar published a treatise about the military laws and the parliamentary negotiations of the 18th century. Ernő Taubert issued a short essay about the billeting of soldiers in Somogy county.

This dissertation aims at analysing a part of the everyday life which has not been thoroughly examined so far.

II.
In order to give an adequate answer to the questions in connection with the billeting of the soldiers we need a complex research. We have to understand first of all the attitude of the contemporary people concerning the billeting and provisioning of the army just as well as their suggestions to solve the problems. These aspects were noted down by senior officials of the court and representatives of the Hungarian nobility at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. They elaborated administrative plans (Einrichtungswerk des Königreichs
Ungarn and others) which affected the life of the whole country. These series of propositions constituted the intellectual background of the laws to be framed.

The cohabitation of the army and the civilian population was regulated by laws and royal orders called regulamentum.

This dissertation presents dozens of statutes issued between 1683 and 1751 in details.

The formulation of the regulamentum was influenced by the parliamentary negotiations as much as by the above-mentioned plans. A separate chapter of the dissertation analyses the debates at the diets.

It is not possible to understand the everyday life of a certain age exclusively from the rules; their realisation must also be taken into consideration. As a result of the presence of really abundant sources it is impossible to carry out extensive collection of data, so we have restricted the scope of the dissertation to one county of Hungary, that is Pest-Pilis-Solt county.

As far as the administrative plans are concerned, we have partly relied on already published sources and elaborations and partly on copies of microfilms found in the estate archive (regnikoláris levél-tár) of the Hungarian National Archive and the Ungarischen Akten of the Vienna Staatsarchiv.

Some of the royal orders were already printed in 18th century collections of laws and also in 19th and 20th century source publications. They are also present in the estate and chancellery archives of the Hungarian National Archive.
The fonds and divisions of the National Archive also constituted the basis of the researches concerning the parliamentary negotiations but we have equally used the Gyurikovits parliamentary manuscripts in the Library of the Parliament and the documents present in the manuscript archive of the National Széchényi Library.

The data concerning the billeting and supply of the soldiers in Pest county are based on the documents of the general assembly of Pest-Pilis-Solt county preserved in Pest County Archive.

III.

The first chapter of the dissertation summarizes the military proposals of at least a dozen reform plans of the court the estates written during the eighty years between 1677 and 1758. These were partly or completely aimed at avoiding the conflicts between the army and civilian population. On the basis of these it could be pointed out that the court was mainly interested in settling this question because of consideration for the tax base and the prevention of rebellions while the nobles thought that finding an adequate solution was vital for ensuring the feudal provisions.

In the plans of both sides special emphasis was laid on the accommodation of the cavalry in barracks and the infantry in fortresses as well as the destruction of the unnecessary castles. Besides these the proposals worked out by the Systematica Commissio and a delegation of the Diet of 1722/1723 mainly deals with the questions of tax collection.
The second chapter describes the legislation rules concerning the accommodation of the army. As the laws do not give enough details about certain questions, the detailed presentation of the royal decrees was unavoidable. It could be proved that in most cases the court indicated the guarantee of the welfare of the population and the preservation of the inner peace as the cause of issuing the regulations (*regulamenta*).

The historical works and source publications dealing with the 17–18th centuries regularly mention the fact that the armed forces being stationed in Hungary looted the population in the country and the accommodated soldiers demanded much more food and money than it was assessed. Up to now however, the exact amount of the payment provided for the infantry and the cavalry has not been known, which often changed in the years between 1683 and 1751. It is important to mention the soldiers did not get the amount determined by decree in full because a part of it was reserved for making the uniforms. Because of this the allowance of the troops being stationed in Hungary did not always cover the costs of living. So in the periods between 1683 and 1698 as well as between 1711 and 1723 the population gave bread and meat supply to the soldiers while between 1699 and 1711 as well as between 1723 and 1751 the accommodated soldiers got only bread. For the same reason the decrees issued between 1715 and 1720 provided greater allowance for garrisons of the Hungarian castles, which the population had to pay up till 1729.
The decrees also decided about the form of the accommodation, according to it the monarch made the decision about the number of the troops in the country. The position of the armed forces inside the country belonged to the authority of the Hungarian estates. This problem belonged to the diets dealing with tax assessment (concursum) and to the governing council. The general assembly of the county decided about the position of the units sent to the counties while the position of the soldiers in the towns and villages was decided by the local judge.

The civilian population was allowed to deduct the price of the food provided for the soldiers accommodated in their houses from their tax but not according to the market price but on a compulsory price. Its result was a significant decrease in the income of the villagers during the first Turkish war of Charles III. However, its amount was different in different years and districts. After 1723 this price could even be higher than the market price.

Transportation for the army was a severe burden on the population and their livestock. Its detailed regulations were an important part of the decrees. In the first half of the 18th century the transporting villagers did not get payment for the transports. After 1751 they got only minimal compensation.

Because of the lack of discipline and being underpaid the soldiers often broke the regulations. Passing of judgement always remained the competence of the armed forces but the decrees gave greater role for the civilian authorities in clearing up the circumstances of certain offences.
The villagers were often overdue in paying the taxes at the turn of the 17th-18th centuries because of the offences and the transportation duties. In these cases the military authorities used force to recover the residue. But the executions were initiated by the heads of the counties and this fact decreased the burden.

Having compared the regulations used on the Hungarian and Austrian-Czech areas, it became obvious that a part of the rules was the same in the two parts of the Habsburg Monarchy as e.g. in the case of the expectations concerning the accommodation of the soldiers. In another aspect the Hungarian population had a greater burden than its western neighbours. In the first half of the 18th century barracks were built in many places in the Czech and Austrian areas for the soldiers and the people got payment for the transports for the army during the whole examined period and its value was almost the double of its value in Hungary even after 1751. The royal decrees refer the fact that their issue was preceded by talks in the diet. During these negotiations the nobility was able to change a few points of the regulations quickly as for example in the case of the abolishment of the meat supply for the soldiers in 1698 or the increase of the number of buildings exempt from the military accommodation. The laws made in the diets successfully restricted or stopped the hunting right of the officers and the soldiers. In other cases the monarch did not make concessions for the population or if he did it took long decades. Among these we have to mention the abolishment of the free work which could be demanded by the castles. This duty was ordered by the diets during the Turkish
occupation but it became out of date after driving out the Turks. The nobility initiated the abolishment of this service as early as in 1715 but it was approved by Charles III. only in the diet of 1729.

The nobility also raised the abolishment of the free transportation duty in the diet of 1715 but it was sanctioned by the monarch only in the diet of 1751. The Hungarian estates achieved the change of certain points of the regulations (regulamenta) after hard work of long decades between 1698 and 1751. In few cases they had immediate success. It seems that the court accepted the modification of those regulations which did not greatly affect the budget or their amount was negligible.

Having information about the rules and the circumstances they were made it was unavoidable to examine their execution in a certain area that is in Pest-Pilis-Solt county.

1st map: The border of Hungarian commissarial districts after 1723
2nd map: Pest-Pilis-Solt county in the 1730’s.
The great area and the central situation of this legislation authority make it possible to examine the problems in connection with the army. The execution of the decrees regulating the maintenance of the army was mainly in the hands of the magistrate, the vice-lieutenant, the tax collector and the county commissioner who had to take care of the accommodation of the army in winter, carrying out the necessary transportation tasks and ordering people to do the necessary free work during the whole year.

The maintenance of the army was a very hard burden for the people living in the country. To prevent the conflicts the county made a contract with the staff of the officers in quite a few cases which provided a better supply for the armed forces than the royal decrees. The peace achieved by the contracts and the extra supply would have been necessary because the armed forces were staying at the population in peacetime and not in barracks in the first half of the 18th century apart from a few towns.

In Pest county we can see attempts from the 1720s to accommodate the officers in houses built for this purpose. The building process started and by 1766 at least 103 accomplished houses and 7 houses under construction were able to accommodate the soldiers.

In peaceful years often greater units were staying in Pest county or in the nearby region and their supply had to be provided completely or partly by the local population. Transportation for the armed forces was almost as great a burden as accommodation.

The soldiers often arbitrarily took the transportation carriages and they did not take care of the draught animals. In those cases when
they had to pay for the transportation the army offered unfairly low prices. During the two Turkish wars there must have been hundreds of thousands of draught animals which perished because ill treatment and epidemics. But the figures of 1717 show that the casualties were far exaggerated on purpose before the national public.

From the Turkish period tax payers were obliged to take part in the maintenance of the border castles. In Pest county this obligation did not disappear after the big wave of castle destruction because the castle of Buda remained intact and one of the biggest garrisons of the country was stationed there.

The duty called *gratuitus labor* could be bought off but in this case the army demanded much more than the laws of the 17th century determined. In the 1720s sometimes it happened that prisoners were ordered to do the job and there were similar examples in the next decades as well so it was not a source of conflict between the county and the commander of the castle.

The presence of the army in Pest county was also accompanied with the continuous military offences. Its cause probably was the fact that the troops returning from the battlefield were exhausted and starving when they took their winter quarters. The soldiers often arbitrarily changed their quarters and sometimes did not give a receipt about the consumed food. The attitude of several officials contributed to this because they received the complaints phlegmatically. That’s why the villages tried to back out of the different obligations and possibly load the unpleasant duties on their neighbours.
To make up for the several abuses at the expense of the civilian population and the army the offended parties could turn to a legal remedy forum. But in most cases fair passing of judgement was prevented by the fact that neither the civilians nor the soldiers bore witness against their comrades.

The material burdens of the maintenance of the army decreased between 1699 and 1751. For one tax payer its proportion could be as much as 60% at the end of the period compared with the situation at the beginning of the century. But the army calculated the price of food even in 1751 on the prices of the beginning of the century which meant a significant loss for the people living in the country. But even if we take these facts into consideration we can point out that the burdens of the population decreased which is demonstrated by the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Draught animal (cattle or horse/taxpayer)</th>
<th>Wine production /taxpayer (barrel (in Hungarian akó))</th>
<th>War tax (Ft)/taxpayer</th>
<th>Total amount of tax (Ft) /taxpayer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1699</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>9.42</td>
<td>9.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1703</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>7.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1715</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>21.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1728</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1744</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tax amount and tax base per taxpayer between 1699 and 1744*
The change of the tax and property for one tax payer between 1699 and 1744
The above-mentioned problems were certainly emphasized in the national diets by the delegates of the county whose main duty was – in accordance with the practice of the period – to reach the remedy of the offences and the decrease of the tax of the county but in this respect they were not able to achieve significant successes.

IV.

Publications


Schrämek, László Péter: The connection between the Assembly of Pest county and the imperial army during the first years of Charles III’s first Turkish war. In: Essays about the past of Pest county. Edited by Csilla Halász, Judit Tóth (From the past of Pest county 11., editor of series: Pál Héjjas), Budapest, 2006. 9-49.

Schramek, László Péter: *The demographical conditions of settlements in the territory of the parish of Veresegyház in 1731*. In: Essays about the past of Pest county II. Edited by Csilla Halász, Judit Tóth (From the past of Pest county 13., Editor of series: Pál Héjjas), Budapest, 2007. 9-44.


Schramek, László Péter: *Amendments to the tax-system of the Hungarian counties in the first half of the 18th century*. In: Levéltári Közlemények LXXX. (2009) 1. 31-64

Schramek, László Péter: *Amendments to the determination of tax base in the Hungarian counties in the 17th-18th centuries*. In: Essays about the part of Pest county III. Edited by Csilla Halász, Judit Tóth (From the past of Pest county 14., Editor of series: Pál Héjjas), Budapest, 2009. 9-48.

**Publications of sources and translations**


Edited volumes


Conferences:

10th of November 2006. PPKE BTK Doctoral Conference of Historical Science: Grievances of the estates, imperial soldiers in Pest county after the Repression of the War of Independence of Rákóczi.

30th of November 2006. Pest County Archive Scientific Conference: Grievances of the serfs on the Agenda of the general assembly of Pest county.


26th of November 2009. Pest County Archive Scientific Conference:
Apropos of an Anniversary. Appointment of Imre Balassa and Ferenc Wesselényi to Lord Lieutenant of Pest county.