

ESSAYS OF LEGAL HISTORY

**PUBLICATIONS OF THE DEPARTEMENT OF HUNGARIAN
STATE AND LEGAL HISTORY**

Barna MEZEY

**Government of the Transylvanian State
in the 17th Century**

(Princely Power during the reign of Gábor Bethlen)

**Budapest
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In 1526, shortly after losing the Mohács battle of baneful memory, the Hungarian Diet with a majority of members of smaller nobility elected a new king for the nation in the person of János Szapolyai to the post of Lajos II, who lost his life in the battle against the Turks. Shortly after this the noble party, in the hope of getting assistance from Western Europe against the Osmanli empire, enthroned Ferdinand of Hapsburg. There began the fight between the two kings for the power, for the Hungarian crown. The decision of the Turkish Sultan put an end to their fighting: on hearing the news of the death of János I, the Turkish armies invaded Hungary and formed their V-shaped military springboard against the Hapsburg Empire. The son of János, the baby János Zsigmond was handled by the Sultan as a "guardian". The occupation divided other provinces of the Hungarian Kingdom of the Middle Ages into two parts. Into a Western, Hungarian part that became under Hapsburg sceptre by right of Ferdinand, and into an Eastern Hungarian state configuration, the centre of which became the Eastern governmental unit of the earlier kingdom, i.e. the Transylvanian Voivodship. By this a new phase of history of the Hungarian state began, that was certainly unusual for the contemporaries, determined by outer premisses. The life of the Hungarians, the existence of Hungary as a state was continued in two sovereign states: as the Hapsburg Hungary and as the Principality of Transylvania.

In the part of the country being under the reign of the Hapsburgs the Hungarian estates concentrated all their efforts on crossing the endeavours of the Vienna court reflecting dynastic policy for centralization; on preventing them for taking steps aimed at infringing upon the estates' privileges. According to the Hungarian sovereignty-theory of the Middle Ages, to the so called Saint Crown thesis — the crown becoming into the hand of the Hapsburgs — the depositee of Hungary's existence as a state was the Western state. In fact, the Hungarian sovereignty here dissolved in the power policy of the Hapsburgs (independent "Hungarian" foreign or military affairs could not even be mentioned), the feudal diet and the local organs of the Hungarian noble power, the counties were fighting desperately for protecting the privileges of the Estates (having somewhat "national" appearance.)

The Eastern Hungarian State, according to the concepts of the Turkish foreign policy, could be considered to a certain extent as an infeudation, it could exist as a semi-independent state configuration. The Principality

of Transylvania formed a part of that "neutral zone" that had the purpose of separating the territory of the Turkish Empire from the Christian Europe. In return for a symbolic taxation and loyalty with respect to foreign affairs it could enjoy total freedom in internal affairs and limited foreign sovereignty. The limits of this latter one were represented by the diplomatic activity and by the plans of the Porte. If the Principality of Transylvania acted in accordance with this, or not offending against it, the Osmanli power did not limit its movement. No Turkish troops were garrisoned in the territory of Transylvania, and "punishing" expeditions took place only in case of political actions crossing the intentions of the Porte.

King János I moved the Royal Court first to Kolozsvár (Cluj) from before the attacks of Ferdinand, so that afterwards it could get to its final place, to Gyulafehérvár (Alba Julia) to the capital of the Principality of Transylvania when sanctioning the country's being divided. With an outline of constitutional law of central organs of the Principality of Transylvania we intend to give a picture about the governmental form of the Transylvanian state, about the set-up of its government authorities, and about their relationship. Due to certain limits given by the available size we concentrated our examination on a shorter period: on the period of the reign of Prince Gábor Bethlen (1613–1629).

The election of Gábor Bethlen to be a Prince opened up a new period of the development of the Transylvanian state. During his reign the international status of Transylvania was strengthened, its internal relations became settled. Bethlen strove with strong hand for establishing a centralized Transylvanian state suitable for struggling against the Hapsburgs, and for building up a princely power being independent of the estates, basing on well-founded economic basis. The reign of Gábor Bethlen represented a special phase of the history of the independent Transylvania: trial to build up the absolute monarchy. Lacking the necessary conditions it could not be realized, however, the primacy of the princely power was indisputable. The economic policy of the Prince was characterized by the spontaneous, theoretically not well-founded application of mercantilism establishing the economic basis of the state power striving for absolutism, that still brought significant results among the specific condition of Eastern Europe and among the special circumstances of Transylvania.¹ The structure of the Transylvanian state of Bethlen conformed to the requirements of the centralized economic administration. Hereafter we intend to outline some characteristic features of this state apparatus.

Princely Power and the Diet

The independent Transylvanian state was lead by the *Prince*. The antecedents of the princely dignity are to be looked for in the Transylvanian administrative organization of Hungary before 1526. As from the time of the kings of the Árpád dynasty it was the Transylvanian voivod who was the deputy² having full power of the Hungarian King in this part of the country — with the exception when a royal prince governed these territories. The control of military and administrative matters belonged to the competence of the voivod, however, his authority covered also jurisdiction, as well. He was appointed by the king and he was directly subordinated to him. He was to report in any matters concerning Transylvania before the Royal council, and remedy against his judgements had to be applied for at the King, as well. His assisting apparatus had already been formed in the early stage of feudalism: the sub-voivod and the protonotary — giving already the outlines of the farther chancellery-, secretary, the group of notaries and subnotaries.³

The wide-spread competence and significant power of the Transylvanian voivod had brought up the thought of becoming independent well already before the country's being divided into three parts, in the golden ages of the kingdom: a good example for this was voivod László defeated by Károly Róbert, who, keeping the Transylvanian, as well the Saxon lands in his hands, made himself called as a Prince and strove for total independence.⁴ The independence of the Transylvanian state, however, became ripe only by the second half of the 16th century.⁵ However, while in the Kingdom of Hungary the central problem of the internal affairs still remained the struggle between the royal power and the estates, in Transylvania a strong princely power could be established. Since here the Prince, being the major landowner, did not have any significant rivals. No mammoth-lands⁶ similar to those of Hungary were formed, and consequently, the aristocracy of big landowners, similar to the Hungarian one representing a counter-balance of the central power, was missing; no immunities bound the hands of the prince, the less developed feudal estates could not limit his power. There was no rival to his authority also because practically he managed to preserve undamaged the princely network of large estates covering approx. 15–20 per cent of the territory of the country⁷ all through the time, that ensured the prevailing basis of power. Basing on this, the Prince — at

least in principle — had the liberty to appoint the Transylvanian functionaries according to his wish, could handle internal affairs without any limitation, and within certain limits even foreign affairs, nobody was allowed to intervene in the utilisation of the incomes of the treasury, conferments, and promoting somebody to the dignity of Estates. However, the princely power, naturally, reached only as far as those in power could extend it. Some rulers, as e.g. István Báthory, István Bocskai, or the one from whom Bethlen, himself, also learnt a lot, Zsigmond Báthory, exercised their power keeping the foreign commitments of Transylvania and the reasonable possibilities in view. Others — opposite to this — often reduced, and exhausted the strength of the country in struggles for power and in internal fighting. It can be illustrated by Gábor Báthory, directly preceding Bethlen, who made the internal relations of Transylvania totally confused, and shook its foreign political status.

Bethlen, coming to the throne of the country, that got into anarchy, and almost into extreme peril, stabilized the position of the principality with strong, hard efforts, gradually accomplished, strengthened his power with his economic measures. Among others, by his land economy he managed to push the small group of aristocratic families (about 40–50 families) into the background; both economically and politically he made them subject to the Prince's theories by the "possession law"⁸ of the Kolozsvár Diet in 1615. This was the first step of that range of efforts due to which he made a principality having strong material basis from the earlier Transylvanian state that was much less independent than the Hapsburg Empire with respect to its economy. The results: beside its incomes amounting sometimes even to half a million a year the state had also reserves, while Vienna, at the same time, had a debt of about seven million!⁹

In strengthening his position the support of Turkey played an important role. The Divan¹⁰ had already appointed him to be a Prince in Drinápoly (Adrianople), and gave him an army for enforcing the "election". The Diet was summoned in Kolozsvár by the representative of the Sultan, by Skander pasha, and the "libera electio" took place on 23rd October, 1613 with the assistance of the Turkish troops. After this, the Turkish army left the country¹¹, and under the reign of Bethlen "no leg of horse of enemy touched the land of the country, nor her army was ruined". The limits of his power, however, were given by the facts included in the "athnamy"¹², but

being an exceptional politician, manoeuvring with extraordinary sense he managed to utilize the given possibilities at a great extent to his advantage.

Princely power of Gábor Bethlen among the given circumstances was almost unlimited. Beyond the matters falling within the authority of the Prince in the strictest sense of the word (military, internal, foreign affairs) he pulled all strings of the direction of economic life, he had the supreme judicial power and had comprehensive right in legislature, too. This princely sovereignty was really very close to the authority of the Hungarian King. The difference as compared to his princely predecessors was, that Gábor Bethlen deliberately built his state becoming independent as to the foreign affairs, following separate targets. He, too, considered Transylvania as the protector of the Hungarian matter, that of the union and independence¹³, at the same time, however, he emphasized and made people conscious of the independence of the Transylvanian princely power.

The leaders of the Transylvanian state before Bethlen had still consistently considered Transylvania as a part of the Hungarian Kingdom, they attached their ideology to the saint-crown-theory, carrying in itself by this the contradiction between acknowledging the Hapsburgs as rulers of Hungary and their own, widespread power, mostly their anti-Hapsburg policy. For example Zsigmond Báthory was bearing only the title of the Transylvanian voivod of the Hungarian King for a long time, and only from 1593, after the Prague agreement became the title "prince" commonly used.¹⁴ The Principality of Transylvania was an independent state, it was not connected with the administration of Vienna — however, its princes generally strove to get themselves approved of and, in some cases, appointed by the Hapsburgs. But the princely ideology still did not render homage to the Hapsburgs. Transylvania was considered to be the heir and deposittee of the feudal Hungarian state.¹⁵ Thus, they had to face with the ideas of politicians of the Hungarian Kingdom, who saw the severe mutilation of Hungary as a state, the grievance of the saint crown — at the same time, however, it was the independence of Transylvania, her Christian Prince that could mean a hope of joining the Hungarian countries in this period.

So the theoretical base of the power of Gábor Bethlen was the power ideology of the Protestant church, that rejected the catholic saint-crown theory. So the paramountcy of the catholic Hapsburgs¹⁶ could not already be the limit — not even in theory — to the power of the prince ruling in the Calvinistic sense.

Neither the meeting of unions of Transylvanian nations could curtail the power of prince Bethlen, who was so highly respected as no other princes of Transylvania. The function of the *Feudal Diet*¹⁷ under the reign of Gábor Bethlen was forced back mainly to the approval of decisions conforming to the wish of the prince, resp. to the decisions of the prince himself. The prince did not permit intervention in questions upon the merit. So the Estates could not exercise influence especially over the matters of foreign affairs (war, peace, international agreements), into which the prince did not allow an insight even for his closest men. Although taxes were adopted by the meeting (and it regularly effected so), but they did not play any role in deciding the mode of using the received amount, and the circulation of the incomes of the Treasury. The conditions of election in theory — seemingly — properly terminated Bethlen's sphere of activity, the prince even took the oath to observe them,¹⁸ so the political weapon of the Estates, in theory, existed only, it was a dull weapon. On the one hand it proved to be weaker than the princely power being on the top of its strength, and on the other hand, due to the composition of the meeting things could not even have come to a crisis.

Formally, the Diet and the Prince exercised legal power jointly. The Prince, however, could always form his "majority" in the Diet. Those taking part in the Diet were the adherents of the Estates (the delegates of the Hungarian counties, the Székely residences and counties, the Saxon residences, counties and provinces, and those of the Partium), as well as those invited on the basis of their property, and of their rank arising from this, and finally, the regalists, those having a "royal" letter of invitation, who were all chosen from among the devoted supporters of the prince. Beyond those who were invited due to their posts, ranks the prince had the opportunity to invite all those presence of whom were deemed necessary for enforcing his own wish, he could invite some royal functionaries, judges of the County Court, his familiars. Their number was not limited by the law, so a "majority" could be reached on the Diet. The importance of the regalists was increased by the fact, that the Transylvanian Diet belonged to the category of less developed Diet of Estates, to the single chamber type,¹⁹ so all members invited had discussions and voted in one place, in one chamber. Beyond the regalists the position of Bethlen was strengthened also by those functionaries of the centre and the county who had been appointed by him, and who also took part in the Diets.

He stopped the earlier practice according to which the Feudal Diet had been convoked twice a year (this sometimes could mean even five times a year, e. g. in 1614, 1615 or in 1616) and made the Estates accept the rule of convoking of the diet only once a year.²⁰ It was quite enough for voting taxes and for acknowledging the decisions of the prince presented to the Estates.

The prince had the right to convoke the Feudal Diet, to determine the place and time of the Diet, and the number and person of the regalists, to appoint the chairman of the Diet, to present his own proposals, to approve of each decisions made in the course of the discussions, then to sanction the articles approved of by the Estates. Despite of this, however, the Diet was allowed to vote for taxes, to enact the agreements concluded by Bethlen, the Estates could also present proposals, furthermore, they had the right, in the course of partial meetings of the nations held during the time of the Diet, to negotiate postulates and they could ask for redressing same.

From the point of view of Bethlen the role of the Diet was really to give legal form of the prince's proposals.

The remark of a contemporary written on the back of one of the Diet's papers — wording of a statute — casts light upon the importance and sham-power of the Transylvanian Feudal Diet: "Article, but nobody observes it, so it is in vain".²¹ It is quite typical of the policy of Bethlen during which the prestige of the feudal legislation declined, and simultaneously, of course, legislation of the prince became more and more important, decrees, instructions and orders of Bethlen got more important role than the Articles.

For the decline of the power of the Diet with respect to legislation the activity exercised in the field of litigation meant some compensation for the Diet. The Prince usually did not interfere, at least not straight out, in more important matters disputed by the Estates — nota-cases, false coining, incest, witchcraft, adultery, bigamy, sometimes financial cases, etc. — this, however, did not mean that he did not effect pressure on the judgement of the Diet in some important matters of political affairs.²²

Governmental Organs and Governmental Activity

The prince shared, to a certain extent, his tasks with respect to central administration with various organs and main functionaries. In its rank, but

not with respect to its importance, the *Status Consilium* (state princely council) took the first place among the governmental organs. According to the provisions of law the Prince was bound to take the opinion of the Consilium into consideration, he was not allowed to take measures in any questions of internal and foreign affairs without the consent of the Consilium, he did not have the right to give significant grants, and even he was not allowed to appoint major functionaries²³. Basing on all these, it is clear that with respect to its aim the Consilium would have been such an organ on the Estates through which the "three nations" wanted to get influence on the princely power, and so to direct the execution of power. Its task, furthermore, according to the conception of the Estates, was the control of the Prince such as in his legislative and executive activity. Under the reign of Gábor Bethlen, however, the reality was quite different. The Prince did not deem the assistance of the Consilium necessary in important matters, he simply neglected to convoke the meeting and to ask for their opinion. The Consilium's being of minor importance was illustrated by the example of those petitions, in which the Consilium applied to the Prince for listening to them and for considering their standpoint.²⁴

Bethlen strengthened his position against the *Status Consilium* in other ways, too. According to the laws the counsellors, altogether 12 persons from "the three nations", were elected by the Diet basing on the nomination of the Prince.²⁵ Into the Consilium, however, mainly aristocrats, having dignities of the Court and royal familiars of the Prince, managed to get in (governor, chancellor, marshal, steward of the royal household, captain-general of the royal armies, major-domo, chief judge-advocate, some bailiffs). And the prince reserved for himself the right to appoint the main functionaries of the central power, so his wish could be absolutely enforced. Beyond this, he considered the 12-person membership indicated by the law to be only a guiding number: in fact the Consilium had so many members as the ruling person appointed.²⁶ Especially, Bethlen could not be enforced to call together all his counsellors against his wish.

As a result of the above, the *Status Consilium* could not become a governmental organ of the country, a permanently operating office. It had only minimal influence on the administration of Transylvania — especially during the reign of Bethlen. Cases that might have become in front of him were also reported by the real leader of administration, by the chancellor. Among such circumstances the rank of a councillor did not represent real

power — it remained merely a title, a distinction. However, Bethlen was not against the counsellors, he wished only to avoid the influence of the Diet, the feudal organ of the three nations aimed at limiting his activity. As he wrote it himself: it was necessary for the prince “to strive to keep perfect counsellors with clean records in his court”.²⁷

He was careful when selecting his *functionaries*, and as first of all he worked not with organs, but with functionaries, he took special care to selecting his collaborators. His letters and actions proved that he strove to put the right — and mainly honest — men into the offices;²⁸ and he had the more talented young men taught in the universities of Heidelberg and Marburg, or in the college of Gyulafehérvár established by him, he wanted to ensure the requested new generation. He did not consider the status of origin or belonging to any religion: one of his chancellors was a catholic, while the other one was a Sabbatarian.²⁹ He demanded accurate work and observing the laws and “good, old habits, rules”. He governed his state with strong hand, carefully selected and severely controlled his officials.

Gábor Bethlen, already as a Prince, appointed a *regent* beside himself in the person of his younger brother, István Bethlen. The “gubernator” — as the “number one, privy councillor” of the prince — in the absence of Bethlen, for example during military expeditions, held the internal administration of Transylvania in his hand. He published decrees, moreover he even held Diets, and he enforced the articles accepted there, however, the prince being away directed the activity of the regent in writing with instructions.³⁰

During the existence of the Principality of Transylvania the head of administration was, in fact, the *chancellor*. Being in the prince's confidence, the function of first councillor deserved recognition with reason. Since at the head of the organ emerging from the earlier voivod chancellery, and then becoming differentiated, mostly the significant personalities, politicians, ideologists of Transylvania were functioning, such as Mihály Csáky, Ferenc Forgách, Farkas Kovasóczy, István Jósika, or namely Simon Péchy, the first chancellor of Bethlen. Occasionally it meant also the fact that under the reign of soft-handed princes, or when the ruling prince concentrated on government deals to a smaller extent, it was the chancellors who actually governed the public affairs.

As from 1556 the organization of the chancellery fell into two. The so called *major chancellery* (Cancellaria Maior); the whole governmental ac-

tivity, with the exception of jurisdiction, fell within the competence of this well-organized centralized governmental body, acting with a significant apparatus. It was headed by the Lord Chancellor (starting from the above mentioned differentiating the Chancellor was called so), and he directed the activity of the vice-chancellor, secretary-general, secretaries, vice-secretaries, notaries and clerks. Bethlen, however, did not leave this organ, managed by his trusted man, without control: it happened several times, that he himself remarked the harmful consequences of certain wrong, rash publications of the chancellery, and held the persons of chancellery concerned responsible.³¹ It resulted from the importance of the role of the chancellor and thus from his person that the prince reserved for himself the right of appointing and exemption, resp. of unconditional dismissal.

The *minor chancellery* (Cancellaria Minor), the upper court of the prince, executed the paper-work being in connection with the litigation of the Princely Court of Appeal. Its headquarters were those of the prince. Its work was directed by two protonotaries of the Court of Appeal, those charged with dealing in the matters of Transylvania and of Hungary, and clerks and scribes were working beside them.

The Gyulafehérvár Chapter that got to the hands of the Prince with secularization of the church lands was designated for reserving state documents, deeds, provisions of the prince's authorities already in 1557 and so it became a national (state) archives.³² The same Diet selected and charged "four outstanding men" with handling the state documents.³³ Princely publications, written orders, laws and provisions, instructions, oath patterns, royal books, documents of the treasury organs, accounts, statements and receipts were placed in the archives of the chapter. The widespread organizational activity of Bethlen is indicated by the excessively increased volume of documents under his reign, the major part of which were the correspondence of the prince.³⁴ In the government Gábor Bethlen gave great importance to the use of written records, consequently, also to the operation of the chancellery and the archives. In his testament he ordered that written documents concerning especially foreign affairs "should be written into a book by the chancellor of the country, and they should be kept in such a secure place lest it was lost". He strictly ordered that the legates, orators had to submit statements about the valuable presents taken to the Turks, the instructions got from the Prince and the legation reports

sent to the chancellery, and same can be looked at by anybody from among the Estates "from the registers held by the clerks".³⁵

Beside the more significant functionaries and officials working in the administration around the prince even more *royal dignities* were acting, such as the major-domo, the captain-general, the main judge-advocate, etc. From among them, due to his role, the steward of the royal household excelled, who was the head of the princely court having been widened during the reign of Bethlen and becoming known all over Europe, he controlled the life of the court, took the oath of those being in the service of the prince, and controlled them. His main task was to take the necessary steps for due reception and accommodation of foreign legates.³⁶

The development of the Transylvanian state had not yet reached that level in which the central power would enforce its influence on administration systematically by all means through a separate official organization. As it could be seen above, even if certain state organs had been established, administration upon the merits was gathered in the hand of certain persons. The same was characteristic of the financial and economical management, too, where Bethlen shared his ruling role with the *Supreme Treasurer* (Supremus Thesaurarius). Provisions about the operation of the Treasury remained only from his age: the instruction³⁷ for the supreme treasurer made in 1620 according to which his authority covered the whole treasury administration, incomes were received by the treasury of the prince through him. His importance was greatly increased by the early mercantilist economic policy of Bethlen. The prince was also aware of it: "All functionaries are dependent on him and pay respect to him" — wrote about the supreme treasurer; sometimes this function was considered to be the second most important one of Transylvania after the governor.³⁸

The administrative leader of the *Treasury* was the *Chief Cashier* (Generalis Perceptor) who was appointed by the Supreme Treasurer with the approval of Gábor Bethlen. And since the Supreme Treasurer was appointed by Bethlen himself, the organ of financial administration also was totally under the direct influence of the prince. The minor officials and the exactors controlling their work and surveying the accounts also belonged to this organization. The officials of the Treasury collected the rent in case of leasing of the fiscal lands, handled the mines, arranged coining, and the exchange of precious ores, managed the chambers, realized the proceeds of the salt-mines. The network of "offices for thirties duties" was operating

subordinated to the Treasury, it was also the task of the fiscal administration to control the tithe-collector. The prince personally followed the activity of the latter ones with attention.³⁹ The Treasury directed also the tax-collectors, moreover, the postal service, as well.

In 1614 Gábor Bethlen tried to carry through taxation of the "three nations": he proposed to establish the "Aerarium Publicum" (Public Cash) that would have been maintained not from the taxes of the serfs, but from those of the aristocrats, noble men, of the towns, and from those of "our Saxon and Transylvanian excellencies", etc. The solution happened to be a compromise: the Diet voted only for occasional tax, so really the permanent operation of the national cash was hindered.⁴⁰

As it is well known, after the conclusion of peace at Nikolsburg seven Hungarian counties (Szabolcs, Szatmár, Ugocsa, Bereg, Zemplén, Borsod, Abaúj) and the free royal town, Kassa (Košice) became under the personal government of Bethlen. This territory did not merge into the state-organization of Transylvania⁴¹, so the prince himself kept in his hand and governed the *Szepes Chamber* (Camera Scepusiensis) having its headquarters in Kassa. This authority was one of the best operating economic organizations already of the royal Hungary, too⁴², and under the reign of Bethlen the prince forced the chamber to execute his orders punctually and conscientiously with numerous instruction — and even with threat, if needed.⁴³

The guiding principle of the economic policy of Gábor Bethlen as we have already mentioned, was a certain kind of spontaneous mercantilism. His tasks arising from his foreign affairs and the state organization required strong economical basis: so did he get to using certain elements of mercantilism in practice. His aim was to increase the incomes of the prince as far as possible for the sake of strengthening the central power according to the initial trend of mercantilism, to the monetary system. That is why he did his utmost for developing the Transylvanian industry supported by the state, and for increasing trade. His whole conception with respect to economic policy and management was aimed at increasing the incomes. Already his first measures were made in connection with increasing the incomes: granted lands supervised and taken back with retroactive effect as from 1588 enriched the incomes of the Treasury.⁴⁴ He was lead by the same when pledging church lands. By regulating taxation (he ordered to make tax registration, gave out a new norm about gathering tenth duties⁴⁵) he could increase to a significant extent the incomes received and the vo-

lume of the amount of taxes. He was helped by the Diet, as well, when in the election conditions it obliged him to take back the thirties, mines, shafts that had been leased earlier. He took special care to the regalies. He made a provision of law about the thirties part duty; developing mining caused significant, quick increase of the mining incomes; by establishing princely monopolies the prince obtained special incomes.

With respect to the industry one of the aims of Bethlen was to break the monopoly of the Saxons. He wished to achieve the elimination of the Saxon monopoly in the commodity production. He gave shelter for the anabaptist Moravian refugees, encouraged their craftsmen with privileges to practice their trade. Later he called Slovak, Polish, Hungarian, German, and Austrian craftsmen into Transylvania, for promoting the development of the commodity production. For increasing competition he made even botchers work. He tried to join the just developing weak commodity production with the accumulated large quantities of money, however, this attempt did not bring full success. Money, in fact, had not found, yet, the way leading to industry, no manufactures were established. Although he even made artificial (state) demand, as well: he supported the production with orders, as a supplement to the small demands of the rather undeveloped middle-classes in this respect. Those guilds got such assistance, that really produced, manufactured, whilst those guilds that retained their products or the production were punished, while others were even closed.⁴⁶ He had also double interest in developing mining. On the one hand, he wanted to ensure the necessary raw materials needed for industrial productions (copper, iron, etc.), on the other hand, the most significant base of his financial manoeuvres was the mining of precious ores. Almost 200 German miners were resettled from the mining towns of lower Hungary for the sake of promoting exploitation of the mines.⁴⁷

The need of extending the market being of vital importance for the industrial production required the development of trade. He protected the traders from the feudal tyranny, while he encouraged the Estates to effect trade; he enabled them to effect trade in the towns, too. He broke down the trading monopoly of the Saxons; Jewish and Greek traders were allowed to move freely in Transylvania. he tried to keep the matter of trade firmly in his hands, he gave detailed instructions to his functionaries and commissioners.⁴⁸ By the end of his reign he established a widespread monopoly-system, Bethlen — with a slight overstatement the primary trader

of Transylvania — ensured the success of the princely trading by restrictions concerning the export of honey, wax, mercury, leather, cattle, horse, iron, copper, etc. He applied purchasing and selling pressure, as well. In 1627 for the sake of making the trade turnover between the royal part of the country and the seven counties under the reign of the prince more simple, he brought to conclusion the agreement (the so called Tokay agreement)⁴⁹ concerning decreasing the thirties part duties. He established gathering and purchasing committees for buying up the monopolistic goods (e.g. wax).⁵⁰

The question of prices was also a problem connected with trade. His currency reforms stimulated the trade, however, when due to material burdens of the military expeditions he, temporarily, took to deterioration of currency, when the "Bethlen garas" (or five) of little value appeared, the prices started to go up, and speculation began to boom. Under strict penalty he prohibited with provisions of law for the traders to take gold, thaler, or silver coins out from the country.⁵¹ The situation changed, when in 1625 he ordered to give out a good currency, and enabled that, provided in the royal Hungary and in Poland a coin of similar value would be made, than "all trading estates should have free movement to and from, should ask for their life and profit, they should sell the cattle at its price as proved by God; similarly butchers, traders, and the whole village should freely sell, buy, trade... in all the three empires, alike..."⁵²

After having released a coin with permanent value made in Kassa and Nagybánya he already strictly required to observe limitations, and for controlling same he appointed "main and general inspectors" from all the three nations.⁵⁴

Limitations, however, were drawn up by limitation committees on the basis of the reports of national commissars and foreign market commissioners.⁵⁵ Basing on the instructions of Bethlen prices were stated to be different with respect to the individual parts of the country, so for example, with reference to cheaper circumstances of living limitation with higher price level were made by the prince for the Transylvanian and Saxon residences. With making such difference, in fact, he took steps towards the possible equalizing of the standard of living, and of the differences existing between certain parts of the country.⁵⁶

So far we outlined the structure of the central governmental organs of Transylvania, the main characteristic features of their operation, the re-

sults and deficiencies of their activity. We mentioned that — strengthening the central power — the prince put the economy and state of Transylvania into the service of his far-seeing plans, ensuring the conditions of centralized operation of the state. "He was his own minister", held strongly almost all threads of administration, economical policy in his hands.

The life-work of Bethlen, the trial of the "national absolutism", however, in lack of suitable adherents could not be accomplished, basing on his results achieved, however, he became an acknowledged factor of Europe at that time, and the figure of the great Prince well earned the recognition of the great Prince well earned the recognition of the contemporaries and the succeeding generations.

Notes

1. In this respect: Vera *Mráz*: Economic Policy of Gábor Bethlen (Bethlen Gábor gazdaságpolitikája), Századok, 1953/4, pp. 512–564, as well as Ágnes R. *Várkonyi*: Bethlen, Zrínyi, Rákóczi – Századok, 1972/3, pp. 609–642.
2. The first Gyulafehérvár “comes” appeared in 1096, and the first one having the title of the Transylvanian voivod in 1265: see László *Makkai*: *Historiae de Transsylvaniae*, Bp. 1946, pp. 318–359.
3. Concerning development of the princely power in Transylvania see: János *Király*: Hungarian Constitutional and Legal History (Magyar alkotmány- és jogtörténet), Bp. 1908, Andor *Csizmadia* – Kálmán *Kovács* – László *Asztalos*: Hungarian State and Legal History (Magyar alkotmány- és jogtörténet), Bp. 1978, (also see note N^o 5.). For characterization of the princely power: Vencel *Bíró*: Authority of the Transylvanian Prince (Az erdélyi fejedelem jogköre), Kolozsvár, 1912., the same person: Development of the Princely Power in Transylvania 1542–1690 (Az erdélyi fejedelmi hatalom fejlődése), Kolozsvár, 1917; Katica *Szilárd*: Authority of the Transylvanian Prince 1556–1571 (Az erdélyi fejedelem jogköre), Bp. 1910; concerning the time of Gábor Bethlen: Erzsébet *Hercegh*: Inner History of the Reign of Gábor Bethlen (Bethlen Gábor uralkodásának belső története), Bp. 1915, and Ernő *Makkai*: State Building Policy of Gábor Bethlen (Bethlen Gábor országalkotó politikája), Bp. 1929; Ferenc *Huszár*: Development of the Princely Power in Transylvania 1542–1690 (Az erdélyi fejedelmi hatalom fejlődése), Bp. 1921.
4. Ákos *Timon*: Hungarian Constitutional and Legal History (Magyar alkotmány- és jogtörténet), Bp. 1910, p. 710.
5. In this respect Gábor *Barta*: The Beginnings of the Principality of Transylvania (Az erdélyi fejedelemség születése), Bp. 1979; István *Sinkovics*: The Country's Dividing into Three Parts (1526–1790), (The History of Hungary 1526–1790 (Magyarország története), red. Éva H. Balázs – László *Makkai*), Bp. 1962, p. 16 and 120–123; Zsolt *Trócsányi*: Government of the Princely Transylvania 1540–1690 (A fejedelmi kor erdélyi kormányzata) (History of the Organization and the Operation of the Central Governmental Organs of Hungary and Transylvania 1526–1867 [A magyarországi és erdélyi központi kormányzatszervek szerkezetének és működésének története]) Bp. 1959, p. 84; Endre *Varga*:

- Judicial Organization of Transylvania, 1. The Days of the Principality of Transylvania (Erdély bírósági szervezete, 1. Az erdélyi fejedelemség kora) (History of the Hungarian Judicial Organization and Rules of Procedure [A magyar bírósági szervezet és perjog története], red. Endre Varga), Bp. 1951, p. 85. as well as *Timon*, p. 706.
6. László Makkai: History of Transylvania (Erdély története), Bp. 1944, p. 431.
 7. *Barta*, p. 261.
 8. 1615 (Kolozsvár): 9th articulus; EOE VII. p. 281. In the sense of the article the matter of fiscal lands having been granted since 1588: unfounded and undeserved grants reverted to the Treasury and increased the economical power of Gábor Bethlen.
 9. Details concerning the incomes: Tibor Wittman: Independence and Feudal Fights of the Transylvanian Princes and the Hungarian Ruling Class 1607–1664 (Az erdélyi fejedelmek és a magyarországi uralkodó osztály függetlenségi és rendi küzdelmei). (History of Hungary 1526–1790.), p. 173.
 10. Sándor Szilágyi: Gábor Bethlen and the Porte (Bethlen Gábor és a Porta); Történelmi Tár, 1882., p. 54.
 11. See: János Keserői *Dajka*: Clan, character and deeds of Gábor Bethlen (Bethlen Gábor nemzetsége, jelleme és tettei) (published by László Makkai: The Prince [A fejedelem]), Bp. 1941, p. 5.
 12. Athnomy of Gábor Bethlen (Bethlen Gábor athnaméja): Imre Mikó: Transylvanian historical data (Erdélyi történelmi adatok) 2. Kolozsvár, 1856. p. 336–342.
 13. Gábor Bethlen to Tamás Nádasdy 2nd November, 1619 (published: Sándor Szilágyi: Unpublished political letters of Gábor Bethlen [Bethlen Gábor kiadatlan politikai levelei] — hereinafter Bethlen's pol. let.) Bp. 1879, p. 151.
 14. "Nos Sigismundus Batory de Somlyo, Waiuoda Transsylvaniae et Siculorum Comes..." (1592 year Gyulafehérvár Diet, EOE. III. 409.) but in the decisions of the 1593 year Gyulafehérvár Diet already princeps" is mentioned.
 15. Cp. Bethlen's pol. let. XXXVII. p. 23., XLII. p. 29., furthermore EOE VI. p. 374 and 548.
 16. See Gyula Szekfü: Gábor Bethlen, Bp. 1929, p. 154–155; László Makkai: The Prince, XVI. p.; Péter Szenci Csena: Calvinism (Helvét kivalás), Debrecen, 1616; furthermore György Szepesi Korocz: Basilikon doron, Oppenheim, p. 1612.

17. Conc. the Transylvanian Diets see: Zsolt *Trócsányi*: Diets of the Principality of Transylvania (Az erdélyi fejedelemség országgyűlései) (Additional material to the history of the Transylvanian Estates [Adalék az erdélyi rendiség történetéhez]) Bp. 1976; Sándor *Szilágyi*: Establishment of the Transylvanian constitution at the beginning of "separatio" (Az erdélyi alkotmány megalakulása a separatio kezdetén), Századok, 1876, p. 36. as well as certain introductory studies of the Relics of the Transylvanian Diets (Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek).
18. 1613 (Kolozsvár): 3. articulus (conditions of Gábor Bethlen) EOE. VI. 358; Formula juramenti novi electi principis Gabrielis Bethlen, EOE. VI. p. 368.
19. Conc. types of the feudal diets: Otto *Hintze*: Staat und Verfassung, Leipzig, 1942; and conc. the Transylvanian ones *Trócsányi*: Diets During the Time of the Principality of Transylvania, p. 7–15.
20. 1622 (Beszterce): 16. articulus; EOE. VIII. p. 115. Tabular account about the number of the yearly diets: *Trócsányi*: Diets During the Time of the Principality of Transylvania, p. 16–17.
21. EOE VII. p. 289.
22. *Trócsányi*: Diets During the Time of the Principality of Transylvania, p. 162–174., as well as László *Nagy*: Transylvanian "Trials for Witchery" in the Service of the Political Power (Erdélyi „boszorkányperek" a hatalom szolgálatában.), Századok, 1978/6.
23. Cp. the Conditions; 1613 (Kolozsvár): Articles 3., 4., 5., 8., 9. etc. EOE. VI. p. 359.
24. Datum given by Wittman without indicating the source: Gábor Bethlen, p. 34.
25. See the decisions of the Diet 1548 (Kolozsvár). EOE I. 243.
26. Cp. Margit *Kardoss*: Court of Gábor Bethlen 1613–1629 (Bethlen Gábor udvara), Bp. 1918, p. 29 and *Varga*: Judicial Organization of Transylvania (Erdély bírósági szervezete), p. 85.
27. Testament of Gábor Bethlen (Bethlen Gábor végrendelete) (1629); (Hungarian Philosophers, 17th Century [Magyar gondolkodók, 17. század], ed. Márton *Tamóc*) B. 1979, p. 110.
28. Gábor Bethlen to Ferenc Rhédey, 10th February 1614. Bethlen's pol. let. XV. p. 12.
29. János T. *Redmeczi*: Good Deeds of His Highness, Gábor Bethlen, Extended Five Times Towards the Church of God (Az felséges Bethlen Gábornak ötrendbeli Isten Anyaszentegyházával cselekedett jótéményeiről), Kassa, 1622, 36–38.

30. Articles of the 1620 and 1621 years (Gyulafehérvár) Diets, EOE VII. 547 and 559., as well as Gábor Bethlen to István Bethlen, 29. September, 1620. EOE VII. p. 552.
31. Sándor Szilágyi: Correspondence of Gábor Bethlen (Bethlen Gábor levelezése), 1887 (hereinafter Bethlen's corr.) p. 23. Gábor Bethlen to palatine, György Thurzó; About the Chancellery: Trócsányi: Government of the Principality of Transylvania p. 84.
32. Zsolt Trócsányi: Archives of Transylvanian Governmental Authorities (Az erdélyi kormányhatósági levéltárak), Bp. 1973. p. 6.
33. 1557 (Torda) articulus.
34. Cp. Országos Levéltár (National Archives), Erdélyi Országos Kormányhatósági Levéltárak F. 12. Lymbus.
35. Testament of Gábor Bethlen, p. 112–113.
36. Cp. Antal Gindely–Ignác Acsády: Gábor Bethlen and his Court, Bp. 1879, furthermore Kardoss, p. 34–35.; Szekfü: Gábor Bethlen, p. 171, Instruction of Gábor Bethlen given to the steward of the household of Gáspár Csuthi, pub.: Ferenc Toldy: Új Magyar Múzeum, 1852/52, p. 638–686.
37. Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle V. (1898), p. 41–43.
38. Bethlen's let., p. 123
39. Történelmi Tár, 1908, p. 229 (about the lease of pledged land); about the mines: 1613 Cluj: Article 8., EOE VI. p. 360; about selling salt: 1614 (Meggyes) Article 35, EOE VI. 422.; about the thirties part duty: Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle (1894), p. 300 and EOE VIII. p. 226; about tithe-collectors 1625 (Gyulafehérvár): a. 1. 10., EOE VIII. p. 270.
40. 1614 (Meggyes): Article 5., EOE VI. p. 414 and Mráz, p. 563 Nikolsburg peace treaty was published by: István Sinkovics: Hungarian Historical Chrestomathy (Magyar Történelmi Szöveggyűjtemény) II/1. 1526–1790; Bp. 1968, p. 447 – Certifying letter of the Transylvanian diet dd. 7th July, 1624. EOE VIII. 239.
42. Szekfü: Gábor Bethlen, p. 175.
43. Cp. instructions of Gábor Bethlen given to the Szepes Chamber: 27th November, 1919., 2nd January, 1921., 10th February 1621., 6th December 1621 ... etc. Bethlen's pol. let. p. 156., 227., 246., 360. etc.
44. Cp. 1615. (Kolozsvár): article 9. EOE VII. 281.
45. Cp. Történelmi Tár, 1885. p. 450–451.
46. Károly Szabó–Lajos Szádeczky: Székely Archives of Diplomas (Székely Oklevéltár), VI. 1603–1698. Bp. 1897, p. 78.: Order of Gábor Bethlen given to the captain-general of Udvarszék, Ferenc Balassy

- (1628). *Mráz*: Economic Policy of Gábor Bethlen, p. 562; *Wittman*: Independence and Feudal Fighting of the Transylvanian Princes and the Hungarian Ruling Class, p. 172.
47. Sándor *Szilágyi*: Bethlen and the Mining Towns (Bethlen és a bányavárosok), *Történelmi Tár*, 1893, p. 411.
 48. 1616 (Gyulafehérvár) articulus 4. EOE VII. p. 323; 18th June 1623: Charter Given by Gábor Bethlen for the Jews EOE VIII. p. 143; Cp. Instruction given to Mihály Dániel concerning holding those, violating the monopoly, responsible. *Történelmi Tár*, 1886. p. 626.
 49. The agreement concerned cattle, wine and other less significant products. 18th May, 1627. EOE VIII. p. 422.
 50. L. *Makkai*: The prince, p. XV.; Written order of Gábor Bethlen in the matter of import monopoly of honey and wax, 23rd July, 1627. EOE VIII. p. 509, etc.
 51. Cp. 1622 (Kolozsvár), 21st art. EOE VIII. 102nd art., 22nd art., the same 1623 (Gyulafehérvár): 5th and 6th articles, EOE VIII. p. 127.
 52. Order of Gábor Bethlen, 12th December, 1625. EOE VIII. p. 310, and further to this: 1625 (Gyulafehérvár): article 4. EOE VIII. 268., furthermore Bethlen's pol. let. 431 (13th April, 1627).
 53. Lajos *Huszár*: Coins of Gábor Bethlen (Bethlen Gábor pénzei). (Kolozsvár) 1945, p. 54.
 54. 1627 (Gyulafehérvár): articulus 1. EOE VIII. p. 367.
 55. They were present on the Vienna, Lemberg, Kraków and Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) markets. Cp. EOE VIII. p. 299.
 56. Gábor Bethlen issued limitations in 1625 and 1626, and then in Spring and Autumn of 1627. Cp. E. *Makkai*: State Building Policy of Gábor Bethlen, p. 90.

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