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The characteristics of the operational areas on the example of the counties Bereg
and Ung from 1914 to 1916

The main theses of the dissertation

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The aims of the research

The study of the First World has gained new impetus during the centennial period. Several conferences, essays and individual works as new approaches were dealing with the prehistory, occurrences and the consequences of the Great War. Scholars already examined the development of belligerent proceedings of the international conflict in military, economic, political and socio-historical context. Besides the fact that the study of the role and tasks of keen states came to the fore in recent times, but works that are mainly focusing on micro-war history of a restricted region are rather the exception. Therefore, the military-historical findings and the approach of micro-war history of this thesis are opening new perspectives in its research field.

The examined counties, Bereg and Ung (today Ukrainian territory) were categorized as military operational areas from an early stage of the First World War until 25 July 1916. The key characteristic feature of the operational areas was that the public administration of them only served the operational interests, which were conducted in the vicinity. Accordingly, public nutrition, public health and the maintenance of public order was particularly important in these counties compared to the surrounding areas of the hinterland.

During this period, the political management and economic organization of the concerned administrative areas was subordinated to military interests and the logic of wartime economy. The organization of the military defense of the region was the main task of the headquarters personnel of Mukacheve. However, they ordered the general retreat of troops in September 1914 and the military control of the counties was taken over by the second Austro-Hungarian Army. After the successful counter-offensive of the first attack of the Imperial Russian Army, they created an individual military unit in order to effectively protect the passes of the Carpathian Mountains. Besides its defensive tasks, the Pflanzeer Baltin-military unit every so often played an active role in renewed offensive operations, as well. Further on, another change has happened in military respect, because the region was becoming the operational zone of the third and then again of the second Austro-Hungarian Army. The work of Lajos Deseő has the following title: *The Austro-Hungarian Russian war in the period of 1914-1917*. Although it was published in 1927, author concerns various details of the offensive operations of the Imperial Russian Army in 1914. His descriptions have not lost their significance in military history. Deseő also deals with the structure and special objectives of the Hoffmann, Bothmer and Attems groups, which were established for the protection of the region.

The concerned subunits were directly subordinated to the Pflanzler Baltin-military unit between October 1914 and February 1915. Another essential work, which was used in the dissertation, has the title: *The large cemetery. (The siege of Przemyśl between 1914-1915)* and it was written by László Szabó. Author pays close attention to troop movements and marches between September and October and stresses their intensity and largeness. Ferenc Julier concerns the smaller military movements that were taking place in the region and he also offers a more detailed examination of the fights around Svaliava and Khust. The study was issued by the Hungarian Review Association in 1933 and presents the proceedings of the war from 1914 to 1918; - just to mention certain examples of the specialist literature.

Austro-Hungary appointed a government commissioner in the Northeast counties area, more exactly to the territory of the VIth army Headquarters of Košice. The Government Plenipotentiary was senior Viktor Molnár and his deputy was István Szinyei-Merse. Its mission was to work more closely with the administrative bodies of the army and to find viable solutions for extraordinary situations. Commissioner Molnár was assigned next to military headquarters as official.

The partial and complete introduction of military decrees depended upon combat operations and could be quite different from region to region. In concordance with the operational policies of the army, the rights of the inhabitants in conflict areas were severely limited and related to the exterior areas of a county it was possible that there were other regulations in force. The increased internal control, the main changes in border crossing possibilities, the introduction of the drumhead trial, the taking of hostages and the mobilization of reservists, respectively military recruitment, but also the use of military services in the construction of fortifications were all related to the internal operations areas. As a next step, there is an evaluation of the economic changes of the area in the thesis. After the declaration of war, the transportation of agricultural products in counties was rapidly stopped. The recruitment of new soldiers was already started right with the arrival of the first imperial troops. Moreover, prolonged fights in the region have made necessary the re-organization of military supply areas and special bases, which were functioning within a complex war economy network. Case examples are related to the recruitment process of the army in certain subsections of the thesis. If one compares the agricultural work power force of the deeper hinterlands with that of the examined counties, it is to point out that in the latter case, there was very limited manpower to the disposal of authorities and farmers. The use of POWs in farm work seemed to be impossible, because of the proximity of the front and this alternative solution was

gradually abolished even in certain parts of the internal military operational areas. The prices of products were not maximized, consequently the inflation rate increased rapidly. The situation was aggravated by the general wave of refugees that occurred because of the general withdrawal of the Austro-Hungarian troops of certain areas. The frontier police of Mukacheve was gradually forced to give up the control of its initial border lands as the majority of his armed forces were involved in the battles of the region. Even though the evacuation of the population could not have happened arbitrarily, but large disorder was dominating along the roads. From September to November of 1914, besides the refugees of Galicia and Bukovina, also the population of the counties Bereg and Ung was forced to flee. At the beginning their alimentation and accommodation was happening locally. Because of the cards issued by the border police, the travel of those without any goods and chattels has become completely free. If family escape occurred in the case of the offensive operations of enemy forces, then daily fees and travel expenses had to be paid from the official treasury of the frontier police station. This was regulated in the Decree of 10424./1914. eln., and of course the free of charge travel status must have been always justified with all possible evidences and reasonable arguments. The regular transportation of the fleeing population to the interior of the country was only possible after a longer organizational period. The initial burdens of the state and the military were further increased because of the claims related to war reparations, which were frequently accompanied by abuses and authoritarianism. The Hungarian government imposed the maximum amount of a claim for damages at 20,000 crowns per head, but those military services, which were not precisely covered by the articles of law from 1912: LXIII had not been classified here. Such examples are: direct damages of military services; utilities captured by the enemy; any other kind of help of the enemy; or damage that was happening by chance, accidentally; and deliberately committed injuries by certain persons. Legitimate claims could be only submitted for the use of residential property, art objects in private property and resources for travel.

It is to point out that beside the key role of the armed forces, even the local conditions of the churches were pivotal in wartimes. Author of the thesis focuses on the role of the Greek Catholic Church in the operational area. Army officers sought to gain the support of members of the clergy and church staff. Besides such proceedings as treason or espionage suspicion, there were only a few cases of arbitrary or snap judgments. The clergy was charged with imperative tasks as the collection of means, promotion of war credits, or the setting up of military child farms. Their work was guided by direct regulations and instructions.

Issues arising during the research assigned the further directions of the thesis. First of all, the author was looking for an answer to the central question: Since the civilian administration was repeatedly forced to give up from time to time their offices, was the military administration implemented in the examined counties? If this was not the case, then how it managed to continue the military operations in wartime conditions? Furthermore, it emerged the investigation of the active participation of the population in the war, possibly even within the structure of peacetime regiments, which were stationed there, maybe at the front or “serving” as civil persons in the changing war situations from county to county. Beyond this, author of this thesis is looking for answers to following supportive questions: how the compliance of military regulations was influencing the daily life of the population; what kind of commitments were imperative for them in practice; and what was their relation to the newly implemented administration and political system? Moreover, the highly conflicted micro-regional background implied to explore the role of paramilitary organizations in the warfare, because their responsibilities were getting more numerous compared to the units in the hinterland, besides the implementation of their individual and collective rights was full of twists and turns in the meantime. Finally, there is an evaluation of the role that churches played in a region, which was declared in operational territory of the army. Guiding questions to this section are: Which kind of major shifts were occurring in the life of various religious institutions and regions right after the implementation of the new administrative system? How could they adapt themselves to the newly established conditions, either on economic or political levels? Was there any ecclesiastic resistance against the new system or one could summarize the changeover period as straight collaboration with the newly established authorities? The argumentation of the author is based on the research of original historical sources by focusing on the military, administrative and economic measures of the period of 1914 and 1916 in the counties of Bereg and Ung. This micro region is presented in a way that the interactions of these two counties are coming to the fore in the mentioned period.

Sources and scientific standards applied in the thesis

The fundamental structure of this research relays on archival documents. The examined sources about the region are mostly from the Ukrainian Regional State Archive of Transcarpathia. The main unit, namely number 10 includes the documents of the supremus comes of Bereg county, while the sources of the same executive position of Ung county are comprised in the archival unit number 4. Additionally, the records of the sub-prefect deputy lord-lieutenant of the county of Ung are achieved in the main section with

number 7. Some intricate facets of this research are hidden in the Czechoslovak and Socialist period: the main problem occurred because of the unstructured archival material as certain dossiers are not arranged thematically, but in chronological sequences. (For example, there was a situation as decrees and requests of the high officers of the headquarters or station commandants were to find in the sources of economic character.) The instructions related to the HQs and higher military units, the precise combat activities of the regiments are well documented and categorized in the Military History Archive in the main section II. Here can be found the records of the VIth Army Corp of Košice, the affairs of the brigade and division judges, as well as the notes of dominant military formations that controlled the region. Related to the study collections, it is to mention that the mostly utilized ones in this dissertation are those, which were written by people who were directly involved in fights that were happening in the Carpathian Mountains. Author of the dissertation thinks that those writers, who were taking part on the war as soldiers or officers, have had a better experimental view on the circumstances of then compared to later co-authors, who were not in the field. However, this is not a scientific statement on an exclusive basis of later issued scientific works; - it is only the personal meaning of the author. Additional historical accounts as gendarmerie reports, official county provisions, and data about war migration or refugees were consulted in the Hungarian National Archive and in the Ministry of the Interior of Hungary. The latest institution offered various military-historical, political and economic resources within the category of presidential and reserved material.

After the research in the Military History Archive of Bratislava (Vojenský historický archív), it can be affirmed that documents about the military district of Košice with regard to the counties of Bereg and Ung are only concerning records before the Great War. This data is only related to the construction of the castle of Mukacheve and the military bases of the area. Thus, such records could not have been included in the dissertation.

There were no documents about the military bases of Uzhgorod and Mukacheve in the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv-Kriegsarchiv of Vienna, but some significant data could be found in the category of Etappenkommando. Furthermore, it was possible to utilize information from the category of Manuscript Collection (Manuskriptensammlung). Here are remarkable memoirs about the Russian battlefield. Beside the study of primary sources, other applied methods in the thesis were comparison of a range of records and source criticism.

The results of the dissertation

Counties as Bereg and Ung were considered military operational territories during the examined period. Thus, notions as state of war, wartime economy, trauma and emergency situation were coining the daily routine of the population. Almost everything was changing in this conflicted times and the consulted historical records are clearly showing the large variety of significant experiences. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there are still unprocessed legacies of the Great War; - most notably on regional levels. The thesis offers a close overlook of war events and its extra burdens by mostly addressing unprocessed data on the micro regional levels. Although the decrees number 32000/1915 M.I. and 18000/1916 M.I. of the Ministry of Interior were clearly stating hat that examined counties have to be considered as external and internal military operational territories, according to the files, they only figure as external operational areas in both cases. Furthermore, there is no classification of the year 1914, but author is convinced that certain sub districts of Bereg and Ung can be considered as internal military operational areas. This statement is based on several military regulations and procedures which were reviewed during the research. Moreover, author thinks that military administration was automatically introduced in order to fill the operational gaps in the concerned sub districts as entire structures of the civilian administration were evacuated on several occasions and with certain exceptions, there was no civil administrative continuity to any further extent. Therefore, the population that remained in the area was basically under the control of military officials. Changes occurring in the public sector between 1914 and 1918 related to the classification and control of military operational areas are in the anthologies of Gazette Decrees issued by the Ministry of Defense, in the Collection of Regulations of Hungary and in the Hungarian Law Gazette. Recruiting that happened on an arbitrary basis are also proven in ecclesiastical reports. The cantonment of incoming military units of Mukacheve during the war was carried out by military HQs by circumventing the city administration. The owners were not becoming an official acknowledgment about this, therefore their struggles for compensations by the army bases was completely in vain. They were redirected to the Ministry of Defense. The situation was even worse in Uzhgorod, because here no military unit has had to pay transit fees. Additionally, the military authorities were repeatedly taking hostages in the military operation territories. According to the interests of national security, local priests were in many cases imprisoned domestically in settlements, which were mostly very close to the battlefields, if local leading officials found their behavior dangerous. The taking of hostages and the immediate detention of suspicious persons was essentially the practice in internal military operational areas. Theoretically the army officials

also needed the consent of civilian authorities, but as repeatedly mentioned in the above, they were forced to flee. This situation also involved the fact that their administrative obligations in military respect were ceasing to exist. According to the replacement report of 271/1915 (restituted) of the Royal Hungarian frontier police of Mukacheve, officials of this district have interned 47 persons during the year of 1914. These persons were considered subjects of enemy states. It is also fact that the military management of the region was not only happening within the local Army Corps or HQs bases, but these proceedings were simultaneously directed by various officials of several military bodies, who were and felt themselves concerned in the issue. These were as follows: the 2nd, the 3rd Austro-Hungarian army, as well as the Baltin-Pflanzer army unit. The military protection of the concerned area was not included in the deployment outlines, therefore the logistic (accommodation and food) of those troops, which were often forced to stay in other areas as where they initially operated was not organized at all. This is also confirmed by the fact that in prewar times there was only one military supply basis in the region with the center of Mukacheve. Until the end of the war there were mobile railway-food stores, mainly in Mukacheve, Uzhgorod, Schwallbach, Chop and Batiovo. The abuses have been already documented in September 1914. The military supply basses have been created in February 1915. Officials tried to organize them into a more coherent interactive network in the aftermath. These observations are relaying on the records of the Pflanzer-Baltin army unit and the military supply basses of the 2nd Austro-Hungarian army. The situation was complicated by the fact that there was no official boundary between the two military corps, thus the military supply basses of the intermediate areas are still unknown, even by knowing that practically the Militärkommando of Mukacheve was directing the county of Bereg. However, there is no crucial data in this respect. Additionally, author of the thesis also examined those significant regulations that were mostly influencing the every day of the people. Daily life during the war was mostly coined by the articles of law 1912: LXIII. These were gradually implemented in the military operational areas. The law has had 32 paragraphs, but only 8 of them were strictly implemented and these were: restrictions concerning the issuance of passports; press censorship; traffic restrictions; the obligation for registration; the submission of weapons; limitations related to associations; the introduction of the summary court; and restrictions concerning public gathering. The introduction of martial proceedings was organized by the Department of Justice, which could determine the time and place of it, but this was only possible with the approval of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense. Martial proceedings were carried out in the frame of the rules of the accelerated prosecution.

Decisions were made publicly only in certain cases so, if the military discipline was touched, the public security was in danger or there were main offenses related to the armed forces.

According to the paragraphs (XXXIII. Article 14./1912) of the Military Criminal Procedure of the Royal Department of Defense, those individuals, who have committed crimes in military context, they became directly subject to the criminal justice of the national defense. The investigated region does not belong under the jurisdiction of the home defense, but these were subject to the military criminal procedure of the army, because due to the combat operations, the criminal justice of home defense could not have been implemented. Beside the cases mentioned above, other penal categories were: high treason; treason of the royalty; desertion; revolt; insurrection; disorderly conduct; murder; robbery; public aggression; vandalism, especially directed against telegraphs and the railways.

The mentioned measures also appeared on the pages of local newspapers, but detailed information on exceptional measures for government commissioners were summarized in a booklet entitled *Information on exceptional measures in the event of war*. This was issued by the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Defense. These were limited editions and were handed out to the government commissioners, who were appointed next to the military headquarters.

The military and civil authorities have had to cope with several complex tasks during the combat operations. For example, they were confronted not only with the problems of refugees of Galicia and Bukovina, but it was expected to offer viable solutions to internal migration. Consequently, the ongoing transportation of army units and replacements just increased the burdens of the counties to a maximum. Only the gendarmerie was capable to maintain the public order, but this was frequently happening by the firm implementation of disciplinary procedures. The local gendarmerie was keeping watch and ward at the railway station in order to show constant presence and maintain public safety. All this was happening in a very strict manner and within the conditions of wartime. Denunciations (espionage, sabotage etc.) were rapidly increasing in the context of war and it was quite complicated to investigate. Although a lot of investigative failures have occurred in the meantime, but interestingly the public confidence in the gendarmerie as institution did not decrease at all. The results generated by the requisitions or abusive civil proceedings are insignificant. In most of the cases, the authorities simply suspended or closed the legal actions. The jury courts became subject to the jurisdiction of the military tribunal.

Concerning the relations of the ecclesiastical institutions and military administrative bodies by the implementation of official procedures in the region, it can be observed that there was a very close administrative cooperation. According to the regulations of the Ministry of Interior, the language of communication between HQs of the higher command of the military, the Hungarian Royal Army and popular uprisings was German. This was strictly implemented especially by the discussion of tactical and operational matters. Simultaneously, they were struggling to achieve a high level of successful communication: “In each case, it should be used that language, which is the most reliable to ensure fast and sure understanding ... Concerning all other non-tactical and operational kind of writing in office in order to maintain contact, these are subject to the valid peace indications as main guidelines.”¹ Therefore, a large part of the regulations submitted to the churches were written in the Hungarian language and only the 2nd Austro-Hungarian army was communicating in German.

The most important result of the research is the in-depth exploration of the counties of Bereg and Ung, respectively the presentation of their roles in the first three years of the Great War, based upon rich and unpublished archival records.

Publications related to the topic of the dissertation

- *Galician and Bukovinian refugees in the military operational areas of northeastern counties in 1914-1915. Movement and transformation (Historical changes and the context of migration and social mobility). The István Hajnal Circle, Social History Association, conference of 2016 in Gödöllő. Conference book. (It will be published soon.)*
- *The losses of the northeastern counties during World War I. according to records of the gendarmerie, the royal and home defense infantry regiments between 1914-1915. Prvá Svetová Vojna v Karpatoch (The First World War in the Carpathian Mountains) Eperjes (Prešov), 14-15 April 2016. Conference book. (It will be published soon.)*
- *Economic changes in the military operational areas of the northeastern counties in 1914-1915 Society and Home Defense (It will be published soon.)*
- *The Hungarian northeastern counties in the light of the gendarmerie reports, 1914-1915. In: Backgrounds, institutions and transitions. Redacted by Csilla Fedinec. Border situations VIII. Budapest. 2015. Pp. 56-76.*

¹ Hungarian National Archives, OL. K 148. 1914/24 f. 454. knot. 2.

- *The Greek Catholic Church and the army chaplains of the northeastern counties during the First World War.* In: The “Great War” and its remembrance. Ed. Levente Püski- Róbert Kerepeszki. *Speculum Historiae Debreceniense* 22. Debrecen, 2015. Pp. 173-182.

- *The 11th home defense insurgent infantry regiment of Mukacheve during the defense of Przemyśl, in times of the "violent" attack (5 to 8 October 1914).* In: *Society and Home Defense* 17:(3-4). Budapest, 2014. Pp. 62-72.

- *The relationship of the churches with the military and administrative bodies during the First World War in the northeastern counties.* In: *Community and identity in the Carpathian Basin.* Ed. Csilla Fedinec, Szilvia Szoták. *Border situations VII.* Budapest, 2014. Pp. 55-75.

- *The Ruthenian soliders of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy during the First World War (Statistical analysis)* In: *Changing world- changing communities in the Carpathian Basin.* Ed. Csilla Fedinec, Szilvia Szoták. *Border situations VI.* Budapest, 2013. Pp. 40-60.

- *Contributions to the XX. century history of Transcarpathia (1914-1915).* *Acta Academiae Beregsasiensis* 10:(2). Berehove, 2011. Pp. 155-163.