

FAVORABILITY OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE LOCATION OF THE SECOND BORDER REGIMENT FROM NĂSĂUD (1762), BISTRIȚA-NĂSĂUD COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract: *The political-military context of the time required finding an urgent solution to stop the mass emigration over the mountains, which decreased the productive and contributing population. Thus, the massive emigration of the Romanian population had to be stopped, the contact too close between the two sides of the Carpathians had to be broken and this permanent popular osmosis was deemed necessary to be established, the borders had to be better secured and under the relation of the economic exchanges, of the smuggling, of the customs regime, of the mercantilism practiced by the regime, it was absolutely necessary to prevent the penetration of the plagues from the East, which became endemic, decimating the population; this led to the establishment of border regiments. In elaborating this study I used the qualitative method in order to interpret the historical events of the time, an important role in the research undertaken having direct observations made in the field to inventory strategically and militarily favorable geographical areas for the location of the Second Border Regiment, but also in order to evaluate the existing tourist resources, to capitalize on them by the inhabitants of the area and to have an impact on potential tourists. Following the study, I was able to see the beneficial role that the border regiment had on the belonging communes, as well as the positive impact on the community by implementing a much more advanced stage of development.*

Keywords: political context, border regiment, militarization, recruiting area

1. The need to establish border regiments in the conditions of the politico-military context of the time

Once in Transylvania, the Austrians began to organize this new province from a military point of view. Thus, the first border regiments were established at the end of the 17th century (1690) along the Tisza and Mureș rivers, which marked the border of the Habsburg Empire. The organization of the entire military border was achieved only between 1760-1780, when, during the wars with Prussia, the Habsburg Empire was threatened by an attack from Russia, which had concluded a military convention with Prussia in 1762. In the event of a Russian attack in Transylvania, the military

command of the province could only oppose two infantry regiments and one cavalry regiment that existed at that time in Transylvania [6].

In such critical circumstances for the Empire, the establishment of border regiments in Transylvania was more than necessary. The strengthening of the borders of the Empire, by setting up new regiments in southern and eastern Transylvania, enlarged that military cordon that started from the Adriatic Sea, passed through the Iron Gates, and now continues on the Carpathian ridges reaching the area of Galicia. This action with deep implications in the socio-political life of the Grand Principality of Transylvania, was initiated

by the Court of Vienna, during the third decade of Empress Maria Theresa's reign (1740-1780), and the establishment of border regiments, aimed both at strengthening the military border, improving the recruitment system, and at diminishing the power of the Hungarian nobility, as well as removing a large part of the territory and population of Transylvania from its domination [6].

2. Border regiments in Transylvania in the 18th century

2.1. Favorability of the geographical environment in the location of the Transylvanian military border

The district of the 2nd Romanian Regiment was located in the North of the great Principality of Transylvania and was composed of two parts separated from each other by provinces. The largest part of the district consisted of the districts of Năsăud, Rodna and Borgo Prund and was bordered to the North by Maramureș, the Duchy of Bukovina and a small part of the Principality of Moldova, to the South by the districts of Sächsisch Regen, Bistrița and Beclean, and to West by Dej county, and the smaller part of the circle district of Șieu Mare, which was limited only to the community of the Șieu Mare district [1]. The area was 68 square miles. The most important rivers and streams of the regiment are: the Someș river; the very fish-rich stream of Sălăuța; Rebra creek; the Ilva brook, and Bistrița river, on the Bârgăului valley. In the smallest part of the district are the Mureș river, the Șieu and Luțu rivers. Most of the District is surrounded in the West, North and East by the high mountains of the Carpathians, which are known as the spurs of Rodna, Lăpuș and Gheorgheni and which make the whole district poor and very uncultivable, the highest mountains being Tibleș, Ineu and Heniu Mare. The most fruitful are the valleys and hills on the right bank of the Someș, then on the Bârgăului valley at Borgo Rus [1]. The smallest part of the

district is located on Mureș and Șieu and it is suitable for winter crops.

There are gold ores, lead in the mines of Rodna Veche, salt, excellent construction and mill stone, finer and more viscous clay, mineral springs at Rodna and Sângeorz. The smallest part of the district gives summer and winter wheat to the entire border district, but also barley, oats, rye, rice, corn, millet, beans, lentils, potatoes, vegetables, fruits especially plums, then flax, hemp, wood for construction, carpentry and fire, also fodder and some herbs [1]. Animal production is very important, especially small mountain horses, but resistant, horned, goats, many sheep, birds and wild animals, bears, wolves, foxes, lynx, birds of prey, including the eagle. Năsăud had a square on the Someș river, it was the central headquarters, the headquarters of the colonel, of the lieutenant colonel, of the second major, of the episcopal vicar, there was a military institute for the two border regiments, a gymnasium and a communal school. Rodna had a famous market in the Rodna Valley, it was the resort of a company, it owned gold and lead mines and a source of mineral water; Sângeorz-Băi also had a source of mineral water; Borgo Prund had a market, a trivial German school, a paper mill, and was the headquarters of the second major; at Borgo Suseni on the Bistrița River, fine wool hats were made, there were salt springs and a stone quarry [1].

2.2. Brief history of the regiment, its formation and operation

The Second Border Regiment from Năsăud or the Second Infantry Regiment of the Wallachian border guards no. 17 from Năsăud (2nd Walachen Grenzinfanterieregiment), named since 1848 and Regiment II no. 17 Romanian border guards, was a military unit of the Austrian army in Transylvania in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, consisting almost entirely of Romanians from these places [2].

The regiment was established on April 12, 1762 (according to some sources on April 16, 1762), following an imperial decree issued by the Empress of Austria, Augusta Maria Theresa, which provided for the establishment of "border militias", in German *Siebenbürgische Militärgrenze*, established by the authorities imperial cordon sanitaire at the southern border of the Principality of Transylvania [2]. In Transylvania, two regiments of Romanian border guards, two regiments of Szekler border guards, a regiment of Romanian dragons and a regiment of Szekler hussars were to be set up. The II Romanian Border Guard Regiment from Năsăud was

established together with the Romanian Dragon Regiment, recruited from the same area. In the third decade of Empress Maria Theresa's reign, the Vienna Court decided to set up border regiments in Transylvania. On July 5, 1761, Cavalry General Adolf Nikolaus von Buccow was commissioned to carry out the mission, whose project was approved by the Empress on April 16, 1762. The Border Guard Regiment was organized into 12 companies, each based on recruitment in well-established villages. The recruitment area of the regiment had an area of 3,195 km² on the current territory of Bistrița-Năsăud county [2].



Figure 1: The disposition of the border regiments in Transylvania in 1817 [2]

The border guards' obligations were to defend the Transylvanian border in peacetime, including sanitary duties, in case of quarantine against infectious-contagious diseases (plague, cholera, etc.), and to participate in battles with the Austrian regular army during the war, wherever they would have been sent. The border guards were free, tax-free people in exchange for their military service. Enlistment in the border guard regiments was conditioned by the Austrians, at one point, by the mandatory transition to the Greek Catholic religion. The headquarters of the regimental commander was established in Năsăud. The Second Regiment (no. 17) Romanian border guards from Năsăud had a flag on which the Austrian imperial eagle was

represented. It bore the inscription of the motto of the regiment: "Virtus Romana Rediviva". This motto was also inscribed on the flags of the regiment's battalions, on the flag of the Nasaud National Military Institute and on all the official seals of the regiment. Each company was entrusted with guarding a well-defined area of the border. The border was guarded both at fixed points, pickets or cordons, and by patrolling in shifts and at different times, depending on the importance of the route [5]. In 1848, following the outbreak of the Transylvanian revolution, the people of the border district declared in Năsăud that they remained loyal to the Emperor of Austria and that they would fight against the Hungarian revolutionaries in Transylvania

and Hungary. A battalion of the regiment was attracted to Hungary by representatives of the Hungarian government, in an attempt to get it to join the Hungarian revolution, which failed. The other two battalions of the regiment took part in the battles in Transylvania against the Hungarian revolutionary army. Almost throughout the Wallachian Revolution in Transylvania, a platoon of the regiment participated in the defense of the fortress in Alba Iulia. In 1851 all the border guards regiments from the Austrian army were disbanded, and with them the Second Regiment (no. 17) Romanian border guards from Năsăud. The second Romanian Border Guard Regiment no. 17 from Năsăud was later transformed into Regiment no. 50 Caesarean-line Infantry and moved to Alba-Iulia [5].

3. Wooden bridges and their role in facilitating communication

Built out of the need for communication of the locals in the area, but also for the facilitation of trade, the covered bridges in the country of Năsăud have a special history and significance. They were built in the 16th century, mostly from oak. Unfortunately, many of them are just a

memory today, the only ones that are still functional being those from Coșbuc and Ilva Mare [13].

The first covered wooden bridge was built 350 years ago in Năsăud and connected Bistrița over Someșul Mare. Then followed those from Ilva Mare, Ilva Mică, Beclean, Mocod, Salva, Nepos, Nimigea and Coșbuc, all in the area of the Romanian border regiment.

The bridge from Coșbuc, which crosses the river Sălăuța, was built in 1776, then rebuilt in 1937, after being severely affected by the rising waters of 1909. It is built of oak wood and it was built by Italian border guards. . It is known as the "Bridge of Love" and it is unique in Transylvania, being preserved in its natural state. This bridge had 14 "brothers" in Bistrița-Năsăud County, but only one has passed the test of time: the wooden, pedestrian, Tyrolean bridge in Ilva Mare. Built of oak logs in 1829, the "Court Bridge" from Ilva Mare is the first covered wooden bridge built on the Ilva Valley [13].

The ingenuity of this construction consists in the fact that the whole structure, including the connecting elements, is made of wood.



Figure 2: "The Bridge of Love", Coșbuc [13]



Figure 3: "The Court Bridge", Ilva Mare [13]

4. Tourist and cultural favors in the border guards' land



Figure 4: The Năsăud border museum [11]

A visit to the Border Guard Land can under no circumstances exclude the Năsăud Border Guard Museum, as well as the George Coșbuc Memorial House, a museum located 15 km from Năsăud, the “Nest of Dreams” Museum in Maieru, a tribute to the author Liviu Rebreanu, Livul Rebreanu’s Memorial House of Comparative Art from Sângeorz-Băi, “Dosul Gârciului” artistic village, Stâna din Putredu, Sângeorz-Băi spa resort, Ineu peak, the second highest peak in Rodna Mountains, Lala Lake, the largest glacial lake in Rodna Mountains, Cheilor Waterfall-Cormaia Valley, Rodna Mountains National Park [10].

Traditions and customs are also sacredly preserved and passed on with great care to future generations. The "Feast of Ancestors" Festival in the Border Land remains a remarkable event, Transhumance in Nasaud and Rodna, with a historical significance, social, heritage, but also bearing an emotional and identity meaning, defining the mentality of a human group modeled in conditions of personal freedom, territorial autonomy and economic security since the middle of the eighteenth century; border status has instilled in individuals self-awareness, group pride and confidence in individual and collective cultural prosperity on a background of organizational stability [15]. In addition to all this, it is worth mentioning the following aspect, the Sausages from the Border Land and the kneaded cheese made in Sângeorz-Băi are in the procedure of national attestation at the Ministry of Agriculture, as being traditional landmarks [13].

5. Conclusions

The border regiments were the first Romanian military units constituted and organized according to the most modern standards of the time. In this sense, the establishment of the Second Romanian Border Regiment, based in Năsăud, determined major changes for the 44 border communes in the area, which had a major impact on the development of the local community. The establishment of the second Romanian Border Regiment, located in Năsăud, determined major changes for the 44 border communes in the area.

The military regime that lasted almost 90 years was, in some respects, a real boon for Năsăud County, as foreign officers from countries with a higher degree of civilization came to the area and began to build roads, schools, and, obviously, wooden bridges, because the mountain waters are fast and would have withstood only bridges with large openings and a small number of legs. Being covered, therefore more protected from the weather, the wooden bridges had a higher reliability. These bridges could become a growing tourist attraction, if more were invested in rehabilitation works, so as not to demolish such symbolic constructions, true historical monuments. Therefore, the Border Guard Land, located in a generous geographical environment, has known over time to preserve its traditional specificity, the customs and culture of the ancestors being preserved and transmitted with sanctity to the descendants. In the future, this land could become an ideal destination for organizing thematic camps for students or in carrying out specialized practices for students.

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