

Relations and Communication of the Representatives of the Town Administrations in Košice, Bardejov and Prešov in the 15th Century

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The paper deals with issues pertaining to the relations and communication between the representatives of the town administrations in Košice, Bardejov and Prešov in the 15th century. The reflection of these relations may be found in correspondence preserved in the archives of these towns. These documents have made the author to note that mutual cooperation was developed among the towns, especially in the field of the town diplomacy by sending common town delegates to the Royal court and high dignitaries of the Kingdom and to the common consultations of the towns. Military affairs and espionage were another area of cooperation between the towns. If the towns were not directly threatened, in many areas (economy, trade) they acted like rivals. One example is the cause between Bardejov and Prešov because of bleaching linen, lasting for the whole 15th century.

Key words: Town administration. Relations and communication. The 15th century. Košice. Bardejov. Prešov.

Researching various forms of communication in medieval town has nowadays become one of the favourite topics to explore by the Slovak medieval research.¹ Undoubtedly the interest about this topic results from the amount and quality of written sources deposited in the archives of medieval towns in Slovakia. In spite of the mentioned interest it is necessary to say, that research about the communication and relations between medieval towns has not been done sufficiently yet, neither in the case of particular town, nor in the case of medieval towns in general. The town archives in Košice,² Bardejov³ and Prešov⁴ contain many proofs of the intensive communication between these towns in particular or between the towns on the one side and the King, representatives of the royal court, nobility or prelates on the other side. These documents provide an opportunity to explore various aspects of the town policy, economy, and diplomacy, cultural, and social life. The cooperation between these towns was pointed out especially in older historical works to prove the existence of the town union called Pentapolitana, according to the town unions in Western and Northern Europe.⁵ We do not contest this opinion, but we assume that individual relations between towns need to be considered comprehensively, not just from the view of cooperation, which was in many cases the result of necessity, but also from the view of relative trials, which reflected rivalry and opposition of the towns, especially in the business and economic areas.

We have chosen Košice, Bardejov, and Prešov and their correspondence in the 15th century as examples for researching out topic. We would like to point out the examples of cooperation

1 Various forms of communication in medieval town were investigated In: *Stredoveké mesto ako miesto stretnutí a komunikácie*. Bratislava 2010.

2 Archív mesta Košice (AMK, Municipal archives of Košice), Magistrát mesta Košice (MMK, Magistrate of Košice).

3 Štátny archív v Prešove, pobočka Bardejov (ŠA PO, pob. Bard., State archives in Prešov, Bardejov Branch), Magistrát mesta Bardejov (MMB, Magistrate of Bardejov).

4 Štátny archív v Prešove (ŠA PO, State archives in Prešov), Magistrát mesta Prešov (MMP, Magistrate of Prešov).

5 HALAGA, R. O. Spoločenstvá miest na Slovensku. In *Vývoj správy miest na Slovensku*. Martin 1984, 51-68.

and the examples of rivalry between these towns, as well. In both cases relations between these towns were developed through the representatives of the town administration.

Mutual cooperation of the towns involved the area of town diplomacy, policy, economy, culture and social life. However we may observe the cooperation also in promoting political and economic interests of the towns, in cases of defending town privileges and in times of war cloud. In the 15th century free royal towns appeared as an important societal factor with an emphasis on their collective town identity, which was characterized by the acquired privileges. View over town diplomacy in this period indicates practise of sending common envoys to royal court, which performed tasks related to the communication with the King and royal dignitaries, attended councils and a diet or stayed in the royal court to promote demands of the towns or just to acquire important information. We may usually find the town mayor (iudex), the town notary or members of the town council acting as envoys. In some cases there were people acting as professional envoys for many years or decades, for a period they were also members of the town administration.⁶ The correspondence of these towns from the 15th century reveals many examples of sending common envoys. King Matthias Corvinus in a letter from 1462 appealed to the town council in Bardejov to send two or four envoys for a consultation to Košice with Ladislaus Palóczy, who performed the function of comes curialis.⁷ A letter by Peter Mager and George Hermastetter, the envoys from Bardejov from the end of the 15th century refers to certain town envoys who went to the royal court.⁸ They wrote to the town council of Bardejov and taunted the members of the council with sending envoys who were too young and were not able to represent the town accordingly.⁹ A letter of George Mager, town mayor in Bardejov in 1479 informs about an coercion of the towns when delivering charges.¹⁰ He writes to the town councils of Košice, Levoča, Bardejov and Prešov and invites them to pay the tax to the Royal treasury.¹¹

Before sending envoys, the towns held common consultations. In 1454 George Stenczel, the town mayor in Bardejov wrote to the town council of Bardejov from Košice and informed the members of the council about the consultation of the towns and new information about political situation.¹² Communication between the town councils took place both in writing and orally.¹³ Some information was sent out to the representatives of the towns in letters; the most important one was sent just to the town mayor. In 1469 John Tackler, the town mayor in Košice, wrote to the town mayor in Bardejov about his meeting with Viceregent and information about gathering the Polish army at the border of the Kingdom.¹⁴ Similarly, Stephen Cromer, who was another town mayor from Košice, informed in his letter addressed to the

6 As an example may be mentioned Juraj Stenczel, who served as a member of the town council in Bardejov in the 15th century for many years and at the same time as an envoy of the town. ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, e.g. sign. 618, 684, 689.

7 ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 1399.

8 ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 3563/m.

9 *„...von Casscha werden zyhen ken hoffe her Augustin Cramer (...) von dem Eperyes der her Richter (...) von der lewtshaw zwen herren dy eldestin (...) ewr Ersamkeyth wirth besteheem mit zwen Jungen wuweysen dy von ewrer Ersamkeyth nicht mit antworth synt wuderweyst worden was sy antworten sullen...“*. ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 3563/m.

10 ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 2072.

11 Ibidem.

12 ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 733.

13 DVOŘÁKOVÁ, D. Vyslanci, poslovia, vyzvedači, špehovia – o spôsoboch šírenia informácií v stredoveku. In *Stredoveké mesto ako miesto stretnutí a komunikácie*. Bratislava 2010, 125.

14 ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 1775.

town council in Bardejov in 1460 that the member of the town council in Košice was sent to Ladislaus Palóczy, to discuss about reaching peace with the rest of the warriors called bratříci.

Although the area of warfare and spying does not represent the main topic in researching the relations between the medieval towns, we cannot deny its importance especially in times of war cloud. Town books of accounts inform about expenses for town employees, among them also spies. A letter of the town council in Bardejov from 1483 was addressed to the town council in Košice, in which members of the council informed those in Košice about their spy, who infiltrated the group of robbers, spent some time with them and told them the names of robbers. It is proof of a developed cooperation between the towns in this area.¹⁵ A letter from the town council in Bardejov addressed to the town council in Košice in 1492 is yet another example. Here, the town council in Bardejov informs about the death of the Polish king about which they found out from „their person“ coming from the Polish kingdom.¹⁶

In the periods in which towns did not have a common enemy, their relations changed from cooperation to rivalry, especially in economic and business area. In written sources from the 15th century we may find many examples of keen competition and arguments between the towns lasting for many years and decades. One of these arguments lasted almost the whole 15th century and involved the practice of bleaching linen in Bardejov and Prešov. The exclusive right of bleaching was granted to Košice and Bardejov by the privilege of the King Sigismund of Luxemburg in 1420.¹⁷ This privilege was also confirmed to Bardejov later.¹⁸ In spite of this privilege Prešov worked for the opportunity to bleach, too. It led to a long lasting strife between these two towns. The case was heard in several courts, from the court of Tavarnicus (Magister tavarnicorum regalium) and Viceregent to the Šariš County Court, in favour of Bardejov. Charters from the first half of the 15th century attest to a period in the trial in the Šariš County Court. David, a lawyer of Bardejov protested in court against bleaching linen in Prešov.¹⁹ On behalf of the town mayor, town council and the community of burghers in Bardejov, he asked for the prohibition of this activity in Prešov and for the supervision by chosen men to its adherence.²⁰ Other charters in which David is mentioned again proved intensive continuance of the case in 1446.²¹ During the case the towns took appeal to the court of Tavarnicus, as shown in the charter of Tavarnicus John Perényi from 1446.²² The trial continued in later years. The charter from 1447 mentioned the lawyers on both sides – Ambrosius with Prešov and Paul with Bardejov.²³ In January 1448 attorney Paul represented Bardejov in front of the representatives of the Šariš County during the proceedings in Prešov.²⁴ Because the verdict of the court was well-disposed to Bardejov, the town representatives of

15 AMK, MMK, Missiles, 141.

16 AMK, MMK, Missiles, 163.

17 *Dejiny Bardejova*. Eds. Kokuľa, A. – Lukáč, A. – Taják, L. Košice 1975, 73.

18 Ibidem.

19 ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 455.

20 „*Quod David procurator (...) de Barthfha ad nostram veniens presentiam in personis Judicis Juratorum et totius communitatis de Barthfa (...) dicta per modo protestationis et prohibitionis (...) quod prout ipsi percepisset et ad eorum dervenisset notitiam, quod civitas Eperies Tella de albare intententur et vellent...*“ ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 455.

21 The charter of Benedik, vicecomes of Šariš County, dated in the 6th of April 1446 and in the 28th of April 1446. IVÁNYI, B. *Eperjes szabad királyi város levéltára. Archivum liberae regiaeque civitatis Eperjes. 1245 – 1526. Szeged 1931, 134-135; ŠA PO, MMP, 303; 305.*

22 IVÁNYI, B. *Eperjes szabad királyi város...*, 138; ŠA PO, MMP, 309.

23 IVÁNYI, B. *Eperjes szabad királyi város...*, 144; ŠA PO, MMP, 315.

24 ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 505.

Prešov took to violence. Mikuláš, the mayor of Prešov captured the attorney Paul and took all charters and privileges related to the case from him,²⁵ so he committed serious crime of detainee of charters, which was punished by the steep fine.²⁶ The letter of the town councils of Sabinov and Veľký Šariš addressed to Tavarnicus informed about this incident.²⁷ He appointed partial reconciliation in this case and established peace till the charters will be proposed repeatedly and the cause will be resolved.²⁸ Finally, the result in this case was favourable for Bardejov, although the case was in progress during the whole 15th century.

Our contribution presented some examples of cooperation and rivalry between the chosen towns in the 15th century, which were carried out by the representatives of the town administration. It is evident, that the towns helped and cooperated in the area of advocacy of their collective rights and privileges or in times of war cloud. But in the economic area and business they behaved as rivals, especially when they defended their particular rights and privileges. This attitude led to many arguments, lawsuits, and violence.

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25 „...tunc Nicolaus Judex dicte Civitatis Eperies de medio Comitibus et Judicium Nobilium necnon ceterorum Nobilium ipsum paulum extrahendo minus iuste et indebite captivasset (...) Insuper omnia litteralia instrumenta ipsius Civitatis Bartpha ab eodem abstulissent...". ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 505.

26 LUBY, Š. *Dejiny súkromného práva na Slovensku*. Bratislava 2002, 238.

27 ŠA PO, pob. Bard., MMB, 505.

28 IVÁNYI, B. *Eperjes szabad királyi város levéltára, Archivum liberae regiaeque civitatis Eperjes*. 1245 – 1526. Szeged 1931, 149; ŠA PO, MMP, 326.