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# SPIRITUAL CONSTITUTION OR STRUCTURE\*

The present enterprise may appear more than bizarre given that it aims at comparing the work of Gyula Szekfű “The Spiritual Constitution of the Hungarian Wine Producer” with the “Protestant Ethic” by Max Weber published one hundred years ago. The author of the former work does not really mention the latter at all, or rather – without specification – it does once, when referring to the “Protestant Ethic” in a way that misinterprets its meaning.<sup>1</sup> Moreover the name Weber can exclusively be read as referring to the other Weber, Alfred Weber. We hope, however, that our writing contains several acceptable arguments that can justify the comparison mentioned above.

In a scholarly journal like *Acta Sociologica*, it is not necessary to introduce the “Protestant Ethic”: in connection with Szekfű’s study it suffices to say that this work of 84 pages was published following World War I, in 1922.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of the actual historical theme of the Wine Producer, the modern history of domestic wine-producing, it is not surprising that our first digression is a key concept of the “Protestant Ethic”, the “spirit of capitalism”. The “ spirit of capitalism” is actually a member of a pair of technical terms, whose inverse is “economic traditionalism” and vice-versa. Although Weber does not define “economic traditionalism” with the typical meticulousness of his, he paraphrases and explains the concept. First of all, he characterizes it with the economic attitude according to which a man with this trait does not want to maximize his income “due to his nature”, but “simply wants to live the way that he got used to, and wants to earn as much as needed for that,” (*Weber, M.: 1982. p. 62.*) or to use a biblical expression, “what he confines himself to”. A further feature of the “traditionalist” manpower is that it wishes to provide the customary wage by maximal convenience and minimal achievement. (*Weber, M.: 1982.p. 65.*) An additional consequence of this “traditional employee maxim” is that “ ...they are not able to give up the passed-down and acquired methods to more practical ways “and they are not even willing to learn and focus their attention, or just simply use their mind” (*Weber, M.: 1982. p. 66.*). Weber characterizes not only employees but entrepreneurs as well. What they are in want of is the “capitalist spirit”, meaning that they follow traditional farming. Their lifestyle is traditional – comfortable, the measure of their profit is traditional – providing a decent living, their working time is traditional, amounting to 5-6 hours per day, their course of business is also traditional

(e.g. usually there is no fierce competition, they lay out capital at interest.) Their relationship with producers is traditional (it basically means the hoarding system), they have a traditional circle of costumers (who are encountered via correspondence and not personally), the conquest of the market happens traditionally (e.g. by the hoarding of the traditional quality products, they are able to reach retailers through an intermediary chain only). A further feature is that they want to “obtain” less than to “consume”. (Weber, M.: 1982. pp. 71.-72.).

What changed by the proliferation of the “spirit of capitalism”? First of all, the “social ethic” of the capitalist culture appeared; the not-so-evident idea of “professional obligation”. “It means”, says Weber, “that the individual has to feel obligation – and does so – for the purport of his “professional” activity, whatever it is... “This sense of obligation characterizes both the employee and the capitalist. (Weber, M.:1982. p.52.). (Weber adds his well-known thought at this point, according to which the capitalist order of the period is already such an “enormous universe in which the individual is born into” and the market imposes these economic norms upon him. “The mentality of big multitudes of people” has to be imbued with this obligation, and only those “economic agents” have the chance for economic selection, which practice this manner of lifestyle and profession.) And naturally it is not the motives of unscrupulous longing for acquisition, money-grubbing and the pattern of “adventure-capitalism” which characterizes the spirit of capitalism. In order to go beyond it, the disappearance of the difference between the “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” morale was essential, meaning, writes Weber in the Economic History, that on the one hand the merchant principle had to enter the economy, hereby invalidating the old norms of mutual mercifulness characterizing the members of traditional organizations, while on the other hand the cruel money-making, which does not know any kind of norms and was applied against the outsiders of the traditional organizations on an entirely permissible basis, had also disappeared. As the longing for acquisition entered the internal economy, the “shameless gain-pursuing” slackened. The result of this process, according to Weber, is “the regulated economy that provides a moderate field for the instinct of acquisition”. (Weber, M.:1979. p. 283.).

As far as the employees are concerned, we have already seen it in connection with economic traditionalism, that they are lacking in the essential motive for the workings of capitalism, namely that they would like to earn “money and more money” by increasing their production.

Such workers are characterized by an increased sense of responsibility and they consider the work as to be “an absolute end in itself”, a profession. (Weber, M.: 1982. p. 65.).<sup>3</sup> We can pick somewhat more up about the capitalist-minded entrepreneur, since Weber compares it to the traditional one. To highlight some features: the capitalist entrepreneur transforms the peasants of the hoarding system into workers by subjecting both the work process and the workers themselves to greater subordination and supervision. He brought trade under his supervision, meaning he established direct contact with the retailers selling the goods and he recruited his costumers personally. His most important innovation in this respect was that “...he adjusted the quality of

goods to the exclusive demand of costumers, and he was good at producing to their taste.” (Weber, M.: 1982. pp.72.- 73.). He introduced the principle of “small benefit, large turnover”. He did not pursue his economic activity by bringing new money into it, and he reinvested the profit into the business. His primary aim was to “obtain” and not to “consume”. And his lifestyle was short of convivial pastime, since his lifestyle was ascetic and reflected that “man is for the sake of business and not vice versa” (Weber, M.: 1982. p.75.). As a consequence of this view, a fierce competition started and the “long-standing convivial attitude gave way to strict sobriety” (Weber, M.:1982. p. 73.)<sup>4</sup> Apart from the expression “spirit of capitalism”, the term “rational economic ethos” appears “, in the “Economic History”, although with a similar meaning. (Weber, M.:1979. p.281) Naturally, the rational economic ethos is also a key category, since, according to Weber, it is indispensable for the establishment of capitalism. As the permanent traditional enterprise, the bookkeeping which is connected with the accounts of capital, rational method, rational law and state, the evolution of rational spirit and the rationalization of lifestyle were likewise essential. (Weber, M.:1979. p. 281). Weber introduced these factors required for the establishment of capitalism not as isolated or sole elements but in structural connection with each other. With the help of these functionally connected factors, the Western capitalism described by Weber can be dissociated in an ideal-typical manner from other economic structures. (cf. in: Kupa: 2002. pp 113-114.)

Coming at last to the “Wine Producer”, in that the next conceptual construction – based also on an inverse pair of terms – unfolds. Economic traditionalism can be compared with the category of “economic indifferentism”, while its counterpart - the expression that mostly reflects the spirit of capitalism – is “expedient treatment”.

Szekfű describes “*economic indifferentism*” in the following manner: the Hungarian wine producer “...does not want to profiteer by the produce that he grows at the expense of his work, he is short of the sense of the tradesman that does not aim at private consumption, who simply does not want to gain money from his wine”.

“Production itself... does not interest him”, continues Szekfű, “he is unwilling to work more and better neither for gaining more profit nor for satisfying his own consumption by a crop of higher quality” (Szekfű:1922.(2002) p. 65.). But this image can be supplemented by such features characterizing our domestic wine producers as the rigorous affection for confirmed production habits and bringing their own calmness into the foreground.<sup>5</sup> This production that results in low quality level, the “production a lot” as well as the approaches going arm in arm with it, according to which we intended to palm off the foreign market with our consumption habit, moreover they occasionally swindle the foreign purchaser. This mentality is almost the opposite of the “*wirtschaftlich*”, and it is far from all “commercial talent”. Behind all these traits – according to Szekfű – lurks “one of the fundamental features of Hungarian mentality”, the “lack of mobilization” which manifests not only in the fields of economy but in that of the culture as well (Szekfű:1922. (2002) pp 65.-66.).

The counterpart of “*economic indifferentism*” is “expedient treatment”. Szekfű adopted the term from a viticulturist of the Reform Age, Ferenc Schams. The

quotation of Schams mentions in connection with the explanation of the concept in the Wine Producer only the following: "...let us fend for the expedient treatment during fermentation and in the cellars, and we won't be in need for customers" (*Szekfű:1922. (2002). p. 47.*). Szekfű's interpretation, however, is remarkable. Expedient treatment would have been needed "in accordance with the requests and angles of the foreign market..." although it only exists in case of own consumption, which reflects much more rudimentary angles and claims. (*Szekfű: 1922. (2002.). p. 47.*) Then he continues: "...in the work of Schams there is a permanent endeavor to raise the standards, satisfy the Hungarian producer and make these rudimentary methods appropriate for the foreign needs. He offers detailed advice concerning all phases of production from planting to the transportation abroad..." (*Szekfű:1922. (2002). p.48.*) and he naturally criticizes the practice of selling watered wine in foreign markets. In an earlier work of Schams the carelessness in the field of – with a term used today – "technological discipline" is interpreted by Szekfű as the lack of *rational* treatment. On the base of these references we believe that although "expedient treatment", even if it is a more limited expression than, say, the "spirit of capitalism" or the "rational ethos of economy", its semantic content fits the latter.

The question arises: didn't Szekfű fit the categories of "economic indifferentism" and "rational treatment" into the structural relation-system of such historical factors as Weber did?<sup>6</sup> The answer is negative, although Szekfű was aware of the possibility of this approach, moreover he referred to such a perspective, but he did not choose this alternative. Because according to him the existence of "economic indifferentism", and the lack of "rational treatment" characterizes not only the Hungarian wine producer. "It can be found in all those groups of people, who are short of capitalistic talent, who are neither able nor willing to win...But it can be found ... generally speaking among people who live in a bound medieval-feudal society where the aim of economic production is only to satisfy the basic needs of the population." (*Szekfű: 1922. (2002). p. 65.*) But he refuses the opportunity of this approach at once. Since in the first part of the thoroughly examined 19th century, according to him, the bound social and economic system was already cracking, and the intense reform movement, the longing for the abandonment of the ancient and the obsolete stand in diametrical opposition to the the sense of satisfaction with himself that characterizes the Hungarian producer of inferior wines at that time rather than in the earlier centuries." (*Szekfű: 1922. (2002) p. 65.*)

We believe that two short remarks belong here: 1. Is it possible that the confirmed social and economic system was not cracking in every respect at that time?! 2. Referring to the "Protestant Ethic": it is not sufficient for the existence of "spirit of capitalism" to evolve in isolated individuals only but it must be established as an attitude of groups of people. (*Szekfű: 1922. (2002). P. 53.*)

At this point Szekfű definitively glues his strain of thoughts to the explaining forces of "spiritual constitution" and "spiritual factors". But let us see how he arrives at the category of spiritual factors! Though the approach favored by Weber is absent, examining the historical factors essential for the existence of capitalism, it does not mean

that merely spiritual factors play role in his conception. He adopts the mathematical formula concerning the agricultural production from the German economist of 19th century, Johan Heinrich von Thünen. According to Thünen's formula the crop equals the sum of the cultivation of land, its quality and humus, and the cultural factors.<sup>7</sup> All these developments prompt Szekfű to regard the cultural factors of the Thünen-formula as – mathematically speaking – an unknown X, i.e. their "quantity and sense change according to people, race, ages and individuals..." (*Szekfű:1922. (2002.). p.19.*). Since the formula is supposed to be transformed with an unknown X instead of the C of "cultural factors", thus the X can be identified case by case only. Szekfű comes to the conclusion from this state of affairs that the question of the identification of agricultural production cannot be solved by the materialist natural-technical concepts of economy" ... but it passes over to the field of *intellectual history and the historical research on the effects of psychological factors....*" (*Szekfű: 1922 (2000) p. 20.*)

Though as we have already mentioned, Szekfű decided to examine psychological factors but he also took the racial factors mentioned by Alfred Weber into account. Race therefore is "... primarily a *historical configuration*, says Szekfű, a configuration evolved and changeable in time..." (*Szekfű:1922. (2002). p. 21.*), but racial change can only occur during a lengthier impact.

At this point he still mumbles on such concepts "slipped" into his explanatory line of thoughts as "people" and "nation" but the "deduction" of the use of spiritual constitution has already been finalized.

When Szekfű finally begins historical investigation, he places it into the following conceptual frame. According to the Weberian version of the Thünen-formula, Szekfű separates the "external", "objective" and the "internal", "subjective" factors of domestic wine production. Among the "external" factors he mentions the natural and the socio-political, which is in fact the history of Hungarian wine export and of the connected environment's "economic policy", with special attention to the customs policy of the Habsburgs, starting from the 17th century. (*Szekfű: 1922. (2002.). pp.33.-43.*). The "internal" factor is the "spiritual constitution" of the Hungarian wine producer. Naturally, he examines the latter in more detail. In this part of his study he cites several sources – naturally Széchenyi<sup>8</sup> among others but Wesselényi<sup>9</sup> and Bertalan Szemere<sup>10</sup> are also present as the critics of the backwardness of Hungarian wine production. We do not have enough space for the detailed introduction of this topic but we should mention that this part is the most valuable and most lasting of Szekfű's work. He selected his sources superbly, they reflect not the "capitalist spirit" of Franklin but just its opposite, that of "economic traditionalism"! Reading these lines of the "Wine Producer", the statements of the "protestant ethic", reflecting the traditional economic mentality seem to become alive in front of our eyes.

To tell the truth, there are hardly economic standpoints in the "Protestant Ethic" that could not be illustrated by the particular instances of the "Wine Producer" and vice versa. (We note that Szekfű wrote such a splendid work in this respect that the statements he referred to could be supported even today by examples of domestic wine production.)

As far as Szekfű's *theoretical foundation* is concerned; it cannot be praised to an equally great extent. It is not only that he was not able to prove the history-making significance of "spiritual constitution" but also that some of his conceptually important statements may also be objected. We are not able to examine these objections in detail here; therefore we mention only a few of these. Above of all, there is the rigid dichotomy of "internal" and "external" factors, which resulted in Szekfű's separating the "spiritual factors" from the other, "objective" elements of the formula with a division like "The Great Wall of China". Therefore Szekfű magnified the history-making role of "spiritual factors" to such extent that the question arises whether he was guilty of following the cult of the "Great Cause", just like reductionism, which he himself criticized.<sup>11</sup> Following this track: is Szekfű's solution acceptable, which regards the so called "objective elements" concerning the quality of the soil and production capacity regarding the formula belonging to two different historical era mainly unchanged?! But even the adaptability of the Thünen-formula remains problematic. The formula stabilizes a static situation, while Szekfű wishes to grab some of the e.g. socio-political elements in a historical context. Because of this, he can only make some of the elements of his formula dynamic by using Vierkandt's theory on real culture-change.<sup>12</sup> Following this, Szekfű immediately starts to "actionize"! Although, as we have seen, he could have chosen an approach seeming more perspective form the point of view of the historiographer, when for example he used the rigid, Feudal socio-economic system of the Middle Ages as an example. In this case Szekfű could have interpreted the question of domestic wine production entirely in a historical context. This approach really would not have been hurt by the category of "spiritual constitution". i.e. what Szekfű regarded as a mental factor difficult to mobilize and its "operationalized components" ("economic indifference", "lack of mobilization"), it could have been captured in a more plausible way from the perspective of historical structure, of course without unintentionally internalizing the affected materialist notion of history. Since "spiritual constitution" can be captured from the point of view of history just as much as "the spirit of capitalism" or "economical traditionalism". Such an approach, e.g. one similar to Weber's, would have allowed him to grasp the different historical factors in a structural system of relations, and he could have avoided the rigid dichotomy of the "external" and "internal" sides.

To sum up the comparison of the referred line of thought of the "Protestant Ethic" and the "Wine Producer", we can make the following statements:

1./ while Weber examines the problems of economical traditionalism in the light of social-economic-cultural-political structural connections, Szekfű returns from the possibility of examining the structural connections to the concept of the "Hungarian spiritual constitution". Therefore the category of "economic indifference", which would have allowed the examination of the pre-capitalist economic mentality on the basis of "economic traditionalism", and as such, could have functioned as a structural element of pre-capitalism, became a concept rather with an emphasis on national character in Szekfű's interpretation.

2./ As it follows from the 1st point, while the longing for acquisition operating within the conceptual circle of economic traditionalism appears as an economic motif used in the general sense, "economic indifference" as a spiritual factor is defined as a Hungarian mental feature.

3./ While Weber introduced both pre-capitalism and capitalism with such structural factors, which are bound by a structural relationship, Szekfű employs the Thünen-formula in such a way that he raises an almost-impenetrable wall between "external" (objective) and "internal" (subjective) elements.

4./ The previous findings result in another important difference. The integral, "structural" relationship of the structural factors also means that significant change can only happen if the elements of the structure are modified significantly, while the rigid separation of spiritual factors should also emphasize that the considerable alteration of spiritual factors may result in the change of the structure.

One question is relevant here: how could it happen to such a qualified historian as Szekfű that he published an unfinished, theoretically easily debatable work. Ignoring the analysis of occasional production-psychological features, we do not believe that Szekfű could have been driven by the aim of hitting the progress-centred historical approach hard, as he "succeeded" in finding a category, i.e. that of spiritual constitution, which resists "quick-footed change". ( *Szekfű: 1922. (2002). p.96.* ). Neither do we think that Szekfű would have voted for a national-characterological approach in a then not so receptive Hungarian mentality historical atmosphere. The most probable approach is that Szekfű, after Ranke, followed a history-political discourse<sup>13</sup> in the Wine Producer, by the rigid demarcation of the "external" (objective) and "internal" (subjective) sides. This way, following several modifications of the Thünen-formula, the "internal" spiritual side could materialize as a completely independent factor, which could be mobilized and changed, despite all of its inertia, easier than e.g. the socio-political element of the external side, meaning of course the tendencies of the international market of the time. But we celebrated the centenary of the Protestant Ethic last year and not that of the Wine Producer! And from this point of view it is almost irrelevant why the emerging similarities or overlapping parallels are stated. This question could only be answered by a thorough research concentrating on philological issues as well. For us, here and now the conclusion is more important that Weber construed a conceptual network in the Protestant Ethic, through which the economic and socio-historical examples of another region, Hungary, can also be explained in a plausible way.

## Notes

- \* A work of a 20th century hungarian historian in the light of weber's sociology
- <sup>1</sup> Szekfű mentions the "recent researches of German economic history which explain, for example, the material phenomena of capitalism by facts of religious history" (by the spirit of Puritanism) . (Szekfű: 1922(2002) p. 11.)
  - <sup>2</sup> By that time Szekfű had already written two hotly debated works such as "The Banished Rákóczi" (A száműzött Rákóczy) as well as "The Three Generations" but he had already published "The Biography of the

*Hungarian State* (A Magyar állam életrajza) as well. The "Wine Producer" had not been taken amongst the "canonized" texts, but that is to say it had actually fallen into oblivion. The circumstance that more or less rescued this work from annihilation was due to the – more or less successful – adoption of a paradigm of the theory of science, according to which this work of Szekfű's is considered a characteristic historiographical instance of the approach to the history of ideas.

<sup>3</sup> Weber, in his foundations of economic sociology, also dealt with the traditional variety of "management" on a conceptual level, setting it against rational management. (As we know, "primary economic disposition" constitutes one of the important conceptual frames of Weber's category of "management" (cf.: Weber, M.: 1987. p. 81.). The "economic disposition" mentioned above, according to Weber, "can be traditional or instrumental rational". (Weber, M.: 1987. p. 86.).

<sup>4</sup> We note here that the category "rational capital account" that is called the most general prerequisite of modern capitalism by Weber, and prevails as a norm, can characterize also the currently discussed traditional economy.

Weber writes the following: "Since a traditional enterprise can also be one, which is operated by private entrepreneurs, the way that they reinvest capital (money or goods of money value) by procurement of means and purchasing products with the purpose of getting profit, and hence operates as a "capital enterprise"... Although it is true that a "capitalistic" form of an enterprise and the mentality in whose spirit it works are generally "equivalent" of each other, but there is no "conditional" mutual stipulation between them. (cf.: Weber, M.: 1982: pp. 68.-69.). In his foundation of economic sociology, he likewise defines the concept "capital account". Confined to the substantial elements of the definition, Weber thinks it no different from the accession of the acquisition opportunity and the supervision of the results. (cf.: Weber, M.: 1987. p. 107.) That is to say it is such an economic activity that characterizes the traditional enterprise with the object of achieving profit. In this case there is incongruence between the form of capitalism, traditional enterprises, and the spirit of capitalism.

<sup>5</sup> Beyond his own point of view, he is indifferent to economic production; and therefore he does not think it worthy to renounce his calmness and ideas." (Szekfű: 1922. (2002). p. 96.)

<sup>6</sup> We add at this point that Szekfű's "spiritual factor" can naturally not be substituted only by the cited Weberian concepts, but for instance by means of the category of "economic motif" used by Károly Polányi (among others). (cf.: ie.: Polányi K.: 1976. pp. 49.-79.) I have mentioned the topic of "economic motif" in one of my earlier works, with reference to the comparison of Max Weber and Károly Polányi's approach. (cf. Kupa: 1988. ).

By the way, the "economic motif" was also a category used in Weber's economic sociological collection of concepts, and it occurs in the "Protestant Ethic" as well. (cf. e.g. Weber, M.: 1982. p. 84.).

<sup>7</sup> The other Weber, Alfred Weber tried to apply this formula to the field of industrial production, with a supposedly not so great success. (Szekfű: 1922. (2002). p. 18.)

<sup>8</sup> Count István Széchenyi (1791-1860), Hungarian Aristocrat was the son of Count Ferenc Széchenyi, who founded the Hungarian National museum. He appeared at the parliament of 1825-1827 and donated the annual income of his estates for the founding of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He expounded his program in the works *Credit* (Hitel) published in 1830, and *State* (Stádium) (1833). In the latter he advocated the modernization of the country, which, according to him, was hindered by the institutions originating from the Middle Ages, (e.g. socage, bound noble estate, the privileges of the nobility) which were still in force at that time. He thought the realization of his ideas possible not through revolution but through reforms. He tried to advance the (economic) modernization of the country by several political activities. For example, he had the first bridge built (called the Chain Bridge) between Buda and Pest, he started to make it possible for ships to cross the Iron Gate and he established the first ship factory and winter harbour. In 1841, the first harsh argument erupted between him and the other important figure of the Reform Era, Lajos Kossuth, who had more radical views in several political questions. Despite his disagreement with revolution, he took part in the first government of 1848 led by Count Lajos Batthyány, where he became the Minister of Public Labour. His early optimism decreased parallel to the growth of Kossuth's influence and he worried more and more about the fate of his country. He had a nervous breakdown and did not wait for the army of Jellasics crossing the River Drava (on September 11, 1848) but following the advice of his doctor; he was taken to the mental institution of Döbling, which he never left afterwards. The revenge following the Revolution and the Civil War of 1848-49 and the activities of the odious neo-absolutist system put such pressure on the ill Széchenyi that he committed suicide in the mental institution of Döbling in 1860. He was mourned by the entire Hungarian nation.

<sup>9</sup> Earl Miklós Wesselényi (1797-1850) came from an aristocratic family of Transylvania. He became a friend of Count István Széchenyi's and toured with him, on the latter's expense, Western Europe and visited England as well. Wesselényi summarized his ideas on reform in a volume as well (*Ill Judgements*, 1833) where he criticized noble selfishness perhaps even more than Széchenyi. For the faults of the political system, however, he blamed primarily the Court in Vienna (Kosáry: 1990: p. 273.). Another important difference between him and Széchenyi's views is Wesselényi's standpoint was that he defended the constitution of the class system and severely criticized the government that broke it. Therefore it is not surprising that Wesselényi had become the leader of the opposition by the parliament of 1832-36. The two Hungarian noble-

men followed different paths. The Court of Vienna – following the success of the opposition – pursued the leaders of the opposition and started a show trial against them. This attack naturally involved Wesselényi as well. In the beginning of 1835 the Parliament of Transylvania was dissolved and a suit was started on trumped-up charges. (In 1837, for example, Lajos Kossuth, the advocate of Wesselényi and later the governor of Hungary was prosecuted.) Following the long suit he was found guilty, despite the fact that he saved many lives with "self-sacrificing heroism" during the Flood of 1838 in Budapest. Although the Court allowed the ill Wesselényi to cure himself in a Czech holiday resort, he was released as a blind man and never returned to the political battlefield. Though he participated in the last parliament of the class system during the Revolution of 1848 for a few days, where he advocated the union of Hungary and Transylvania. (Trócsányi: 1965: pp. 525-526.) He took part in the activities of the Parliament of Transylvania, where he spoke also for the union. From July 1848, he participated in the "hollow sounding chamber" of the Upper House (Trócsányi: 1965: p. 544.) and tried to fulfill his tasks with care. In his last speech at the end of September 1848, he warned Hungary against the (likely) negative consequences of the war against the Court in Vienna. (Trócsányi: 1965: p. 548.). Following this, he retired, became ill with pneumonia in the April of 1850 and died in his hotel suit in Budapest.

<sup>10</sup> Bertalan Szemere (1812-1869) came from a smallholder family of the lower nobility. He worked with László Pálóczy parliamentary delegate during the Parliament of 1832-1836. He went on a foreign study tour in 1836 and published his experience in two volumes. Later he became a county official, then the member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1840. He advocated the banning of the death sentence and the freedom of the press. He was elected parliamentary delegate in 1843. He became the Minister of the Interior of the Batthyány Government in 1848. He agreed with the armed battle against the Court in Vienna, therefore he agreed to participate in the National Defence Committee, (OHB) which served as the actual government. As a Republican, he approved of the dethronement of the Habsburgs in April 14, 1849, which was initialized in Debrecen. Subsequently, after Kossuth became the head of state, Szemere became Hungary's prime minister. As such, together with other members of the government, he did not accept the demands of the Left concerning the annihilation of the counter-revolution. He dismissed the police and recalled the ministers of the government.

After the fall of the Revolution, he escaped abroad but hid the so called "Sacred Crown" before. He was sentenced to death in 1851, in his absence. He lived in Turkey, Paris and London during his emigration and as we have seen, he was troubled by financial difficulties. (He met Marx among others). He was reached by the "destiny of emigrants". During his stay in Paris he turned so fiercely against some of the leaders of the Hungarian Revolution, especially Lajos Kossuth, that some of the emigrants regarded him a traitor. The signs of nervous breakdown were visible in the 1850s, and he became totally deranged in 1865. He could only return home after the Amnesty, insane, and died in 1869. (Tóth: 1978: pp. 311-312.)

<sup>11</sup> In the beginning of his study, Szekfű analyzes theoretical questions, where he focuses on the epistemological problem examined by Max Weber as well. His line of thought is characterized by a strong critical attitude, as Szekfű states the following critical observations concerning the historical approaches that are connected to ideological currents he characterized as rationalist, liberal, positivist and materialist. One of these refers to a "quite unjustified form" of the already mentioned historical approaches, the almost cultic respect for the "Great Cause". Basically Szekfű describes a vulgarized causal approach, whose essence is that "the analyzed force, be it called as it may, is nothing else than an awkwardly huge Cause, a giant causality, which its followers regard as capable of determining the direction of the endless mass of personal acts, regardless of other motives, which are usually used for explaining terrestrial actions..." (According to the socialist historical approach, The Great Cause is the Economy, while in case of liberalism it is the Reason, the Freedom and the Democracy, as well as the "general, secret and equal Civil Rule." The belief in the omnipotence of the Great Cause gives way to another critical finding, i.e. that "the general historical approach" is destructive according to Szekfű, "... with the possession of the Great Cause it attacks all other causes, it annihilates all other causalities and regards them as ineffective and worthless..." (As it is well known, Max Weber himself criticized the (causal) approach mentioned above. "Rules are the more interesting and important for exact sciences, says Weber about the rule-oriented historical approaches of the 19th century, the more general is their force. For understanding historical phenomena with their particular prerequisites, the most general rules are usually the less worthy, as they have the least content" Because the more comprehensive the validity of a genus-concept, the more extensive it is; the father it leads us from the completeness of reality. Since in order to incorporate the common elements of most phenomena; it needs to be more abstract, so poorer in content. (C.f. Weber, M.: 1970. p. 39.) Szekfű's present critique seems overgeneralized from more than one perspective. On the one hand, to blame the ritual cult of "the Great Cause" only on the (Hungarian) followers of the ideologies mentioned earlier would be a mistake. To be more exact, a crucial difference does not seem to be present in this respect between Comte, thought to be "innocent" by Szekfű, and his Hungarian followers, (c.f.: Szekfű: 1922. (2002) .p. 14) because the reductionist approach is usually connected to Comte. (From the point of view of Szekfű's critique on the cited historical approaches we could have the impression that the Wine Producer could be regarded as a sequence to the Three Generations. (For detail, see Kupa: 2002. p. 105.). Nevertheless, Szekfű could be right in criticizing the cult of the "Great Cause." The discussions "conceived in pain" could be elaborated on, whose authors were not relieved until

2. and by the fact that the "determining" role of an economic-materialist cause, or had emphasized the exclusive role, usually regarded as everlasting, of a universally valid organizing idea or "substance" in connection with the different historical connections.
- <sup>12</sup> On the one hand Vierkandt distinguishes acculturation (external culture change i.e.: proliferation of spirit, tobacco etc.) and on the other hand "endogenous (real) culture change"  
Szekfű sums up the conditions of the latter as follows:  
"1. the entire spiritual and moral constitution of the nation concerned needs to be prepared for the change,  
2. and in the case of the same people the required nature of change has to emerge consciously.  
The initiative of the certain individuals, because the mass itself is short of the tendency of change, this can be provided most expediently, according to the experience, by great personalities.  
Finally 4: Outward, external opportunity is also needed, such as the French Revolution and the reforms of Napoleon in case of the entire Europe..." (Szekfű:1922.(2002). p. 26.)
- <sup>13</sup> Szekfű's booklet entitled "History-political studies", containing seven essays, was published in 1924. To explain the title of the "volume", Szekfű wishes to introduce the history-political essay as a typical genre of the German historiography. He mentions the name of Ranke in this respect, who, according to him, tried to teach us political thinking, the understanding of the connection of the present state and the historical past. According to Szekfű, the history-political essay "... is the realization of the historical connections of the current problems, the historical research adapted to the present situation." (Szekfű: 1924. 9. p.) Of course, according to this approach, the interest of the historian has to be aroused not only by the relations of the past but by those of the present as well. "The opposite of this would have been ab ovo compromised him", emphasizes Szekfű, "and would have caused doubts against the sensibility and realism of his judgements. (Szekfű: 1924. 9. p.)  
The history-political essay does great service for its author just in this respect: "...satisfying his, say, ... justified interest for current politics, keeping him for the examination of the past and preventing him from degrading his self destined for an inner life by descend to the political stage." (Szekfű: 1924. 9. p.). This way history-political essays work as valves used for "blowing off the steam". (I have written about Szekfű's history-political approach more in detailed, c.f. Kupa: 2002. 99.-102. p.).

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