

MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL POLICY IN HUNGARY

MÉRFOLDKÖVEK A MAGYAR SZOCIÁLPOLITIKA TÖRTÉNETÉBEN

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Összefoglaló

A szerző a jelen tanulmányban a magyar szociálpolitika történetét tekinti át, azaz a céllal, hogy e témában összehasonlító elemzésekre bátorítson. A tanulmányból megismerhetjük a megalakuló magyar állam jogalkotási gyakorlatát és az egyház szociális gondoskodásra irányuló tevékenységét. Mind az állam, mind pedig az egyház szervezete épített a megelőző törzsi társadalom hagyományaira. A szerző szerint mindazt, amit ma fontos társadalmi értékeként ismerünk el, őseink hagyták örökül.

Kulcsszavak: szociálpolitika – gondozás-gondoskodás – hagyomány, mint forrás – szolidaritás

Abstract

The author presents the results of her recent study on the history of social policy in Hungary with the purpose of encouraging comparative studies. The paper addresses legal issues of the early Hungarian state as well as social care activities of the church. Both the legal system of the state and the church system were rooted in the traditions of previous tribal-clanship society. According to the author, our present-day social values are a direct legacy of our ancestors.

Keywords: social policy – care – tradition as resource – solidarity

Introduction

The purpose of the current paper is to explore important milestones in the history of social care in Hungary and identify some of the traditional resources that current social policy systems and procedures may rely on. When we look back into our past it seems that the renaissance of the nation, occurring every 150-300 years in our history, has always depended on the successful realization of a social policy that was dedicated first and foremost to the welfare of the public.

The constant elements of social policy are the subjects, objects and contents of the policy. Subjects' positions are determined by the role of the policy makers within the society (be them the state, the church, or neighborhood communities) and by the range of entitlements of the individual, the community or the whole society. The object of the policy is determined by government responsibilities, and by the social services offered. The content is defined by the laws and duties as created in a historical era, as well as by possible discrepancies between these legal prescriptions and actual practice. It is important to note that the social policy system in Hungary has never been identical with poverty policy. In a

broad sense, in any society, the history of social policy begins when the newly formed state introduces its first social laws. (Somogyi, 1943, 15)

The representation of social political notions in early Hungarian norms

Blood contract

According to the Hungarian traditions, blood contract was the most ancient form of a contract, and it was also referred to in the chronicles. Two of its five articles are considered „an instinctive effort to realize social justice” by Somogyi (1943). The first article is about the hereditary leadership role of the leading clan. In the second article all the tribe leaders agree that nobody can be excluded from the gains from their work: common work is the ground for common share. (Somogyi, 1943, 16). The third article is about participation in leadership: the seven leaders must share all the responsibility for the entire nation. Articles 4-5 are about mutual loyalty of the leaders to one another and to the chief leader, Álmos, and his descendants.

Social legislation of the Árpád Dynasty

Early legislation in the Árpád era in the 10th century can not be studied independently of its broader European context. Early medieval legal resources had a great impact on the legislation system of the contemporary states including that of Hungary. These resources included records of tribal custom law; revived Roman Law that served as a means of developing a system of legal institutions and making local custom law uniform; and finally the law of the Christian Church (canonized law) that was an independent factor within the feudal legal system, still it had a deep impact on the legal development of all the European nations. (Jánosi, 1996, 7-8)

St. Stephen, the first Hungarian king wrote a letter to his son, Prince Emeric as his spiritual legacy. The ten chapters – as the Ten Commandments – can be considered the early roots of the Hungarian Constitution. The letter defined feudal hierarchy and spiritual order and warned the young prince to preserve and strengthen Catholic faith by fighting destructive heresy, by respecting priests and by setting an example to the people. According to these warnings the king and his knights should have the virtues of humility, honesty, mercifulness, justness and patience. They should fear God and make sacrifice for their motherland.

„My beloved son, delight of my heart, hope of your posterity, I pray, I command, that at every time and in everything, strengthened by your devotion to me, you may show favor not only to relations and kin, or to the most eminent, be they leaders or rich men or neighbors or fellow-countrymen, but also to foreigners and to all who come to you. By fulfilling your duty in this way you will reach the highest state of happiness.

Be merciful to all who are suffering violence, keeping always in your heart the example of the Lord who said, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice."

Be patient with everyone, not only with the powerful, but also with the weak. Finally be strong lest prosperity lifts you up to much or adversity cast you down.

Be humble in this life that God may raise you up in the next.

Be truly moderate and do not punish or condemn anyone immoderately. Be gentle so that you may never oppose justice.

Be honorable so that you may never voluntarily bring disgrace upon anyone.

Be chaste so that you may avoid all the foulness of lust like the pangs of death.

All these virtues I have noted above make up the royal crown, and without them no one is fit to rule here on earth or attain to the heavenly kingdom."

(http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/198/Saint_s_Advice_to_His_Son___St._Stephen_of_Hungary.html.)

Saint Stephen's legacy has established an inclusive national identity: while preserving the Hungarian culture the nation should also be open to foreign values and friendly to foreigners. „Make the strangers welcome in this land, let them keep their languages and customs, for weak and fragile is the realm which is based on a single language or on a single set of customs.” (“Unius linguae uniusque moris regnum imbecille et fragile est”)

The Hungarian kings were considered God's selected persons and their most important duty was to ensure the conservation and development of the state as is written in the Bible: „And hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26-27.)

Today liberty, equality of chances, solidarity, tolerance and justice are conceived as basic values in social policy. These values, also present in the ancient Hungarian culture, are rooted in the Christian religion and were transmitted by the leaders of the country to subsequent generations. Liberty was not the exclusive right of the Hungarian settlers: foreigners were also entitled to such rights. As the Old Testament says: “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Moses. II. 22, 21) Manifestations of solidarity – in other words, fraternal love – have been present throughout the Hungarian history even if it has been practised by few. Tolerance, the acceptance of the Other, is related to solidarity and is part of the Christian tradition according to which all people are created to resemble God.

Today social rights are understood as 1. general human rights (such as the right to dignity, liberty, equality of chances, prohibition of discrimination, solidarity and 2. more specific social rights that help fight the deprivation experienced by certain groups of people.

In the second book of King Stephen's Decretum both interpretations were represented: as a general human right, the right to private property was acknowledged (as the liberty of private property). Second, the prohibition of slavery was included (Chapters 5. 17., and 20.) The Act on the celebration of Sundays may be considered as the first Hungarian law on

employment: work should be done on the six days of the week, and a holiday (Holy Day) must be given to praise God. In the same work there was a chapter on the protection of widows and orphans. Also, there were several acts in penal law, and severe punishments were prescribed for the persons committing a theft, a murder, false witnessing, kidnapping or rape.

The Hungarian King St. Ladislaus in his Third Code confirmed the previous prohibition on enslaving a Christian person and the sanctions on missing holy days. King Kálmán in Chapter 77. of his First Book of Decrees introduced certain measures to protect the Hungarian nation: a prohibition on slavery and on selling Hungarian „citizens” (anyone born in Hungary) to foreign countries were included. Valuable domestic animals could not be sold to foreigners either. The Hungarian equivalent of the British Magna Charta Libertatum (Aranybulla, Gold Bulla) by King Andreas III. confirmed the liberty rights given by Saint Stephen and the law on the protection of widows. Measures were introduced to protect the Hungarian people: if foreign guests arrived in the country they could not hold just any position without the consent of the national council. Key positions in economy (such as money exchange, customs offices etc.) were to be held exclusively by Hungarians. Only Hungarians could own a land and estate property. Any land that had been sold was to be repurchased.

In the early history of the Hungarian people the above basic social rights and values were present. Naturally, it was not a well-developed social institutional system but such a system did not exist anywhere else in contemporary Europe either. As another important development of the era, some elements of societal policy, such as the protection of national wealth and the inhabitants, appeared while social and societal policy in Europe was restricted to poverty issues in the era. Mention must be made about women's role in early social policy. St. Eiréne (Piroska) daughter of St. Ladislaus married the Byzantine emperor and established a monastery with churches, hospitals and shelters for those in need. St. Elisabeth, daughter of Andreas II. (1207-1231) went to Eisenach when her husband died and, using her own fortune, established a shelter for the poor. She and her fellows provided care for the poor up to her death. St. Kinga of the Árpád Dynasty (1224-1292), daughter of King Bela IV., a Polish Queen by Hungarian birth, used her own dowry to try and protect Europe against the Mongolian attack. In addition, she established several churches and nunneries. After her husband's death she distributed all her money among the poor and provided care for the sick. Also, St. Margaret of the Árpád Dynasty (1242-1270), other daughter of Béla IV., spent all her life in a nunnery praying for the defendants' success against the Mongolian attack. She cared for those miserably ill people who nobody else would.

Social care in the early medieval history of Hungary provided by the Catholic Church

Social policy in the Middle Ages was shaped by the legislative powers of the state and by the monastic orders of the Catholic Church as the representatives of state religion. They influenced and formed three major branches of social policy: providing care for the poor, for the sick and ensuring the education of youth. European monastic orders appeared as early as in the 10th century in Hungary and their development continued up to the 17th

century. Basilites' service included regular care of the poor. The Order of Premontré fought for Christian social justice as early as in the 11th century. The order of St. Lazarus in the 17th century, working together with the Sisters of Charity, tried to combat poverty and lack of faith. The basic mission of the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God was providing care for the sick and its members were doctors and nurses. They provided care and cure for the sick, for persons with all kinds of disabilities and for the elderly. The activities of most orders, such as those of the Benedictines, the Order of Preachers, the Jesuits, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Piarists, the Salesian Order and the Servite Order, were related to the education of youth.

It is remarkable that social activities and the treatment of poverty in medieval Hungary were not studied until the 1940's. As Zoltán Somogyi piarist monk stated in his work in 1941, in comprehensive works on caring for the poor, the Hungarian traditions were mentioned only in a few lines – if any. The Hungarian professional tradition discussed the issue as a segment of medical history. There was only one work that attempted to introduce the reader into the topic of medieval forms of care of the poor in Hungary. In 1886 in Budapest young priests translated G. Ratzinger's work (*Geschichte der kirchlichen Armenpflege*; 2. Aufl. Freiburg, 1884) and they attached an annex entitled „Data on the history of the church care of the poor in Hungary” (Somogyi, 1941, 1)

Medieval institutions for the care of the poor. The *ispotály* or medieval „hospitals”

Throughout in Europe and in Hungary as well institutions were founded for the care of the poor and the sick. „Hospital” was a collective term in those days: they were institutions for persons suffering from contagious diseases (e. g., *hospitale leprosorium*) but this was the proper term for poorhouses as well (*hospitale pauperum*, *pauperum et infirmorum*, *pauperum infirmorum*). The majority of the hospitals were of the latter type: there were poorhouses in every major settlement but leprosoriums were established only in the vicinity of major cities. (Somogyi, 1941, 4.)

Clients of the institutions for the care of the poor were persons with physical or mental disabilities, old persons incapable of work and the sick who were referred to Christian mercy. These institutions were not hospitals in the modern sense. Medieval people did not go to the hospital to be cured as the hospitals did not serve that purpose. Those suffering from some contagious disease were separated from the rest of the society; therefore „hospitals” served primarily the interests of the wider public. There were no doctors working in the hospitals, not even contemporary medical assistants such as the barber-surgeons. (Somogyi, 1941, 5)

The majority of the medieval hospitals were established and funded by charitable private persons or societies. Their task was to ensure the continuity of care and effectiveness of work. Hospitals also received legacies and funds from private persons, such as money, clothes, bath, food, land, houses, forests, mills, domestic animals, utilities and certain rights. Also, donations were collected in the churches on Sundays, on market days or on weddings. City decrees were made to help the hospitals: e.g., if the bakers did not make the roll or bread as big as prescribed these were confiscated for the hospital. If someone cut an animal without permission the meat was given to the poor. They received all the goods that

were considered illegal in any respect. The hospitals were of varied size and convenience, providing shelter for 12-24 persons. Most of them were built outside the city walls. The grounds for selecting the site were probably not so much about hygiene: these poor people and the poorhouses themselves did not fit into the frameworks of city life. As an exception to this rule there was a hospital in the centre of Debrecen in the eastern part of Hungary. (Somogyi, 1941, 94-101.)

Monastic orders and the issue of poverty

Care of the poor in the strict sense of the word was a Christian development in Hungary, similarly to other European countries. In the Middle Ages the monastic orders had a leading role in transferring the message of fraternal love, especially the Benedictines who settled down in Hungary in the middle of the 12th century. In accordance with the will of the founder of the order, Benedictine centers became model farms, improved religious life and maintained schools, „hospitals” and free public inns. The passengers and the poor could find shelter, support and good advice in their institutions. The Benedictines had a leading role in the development of Hungary. They improved faith, culture, education and agriculture in the country. Similar initiatives were taken by the Cistercians and the Order of Premontr .

Knight hospitaller orders

Institutional charity work initiated by the monastic orders were continued and further developed in the medieval cities by knight and hospital orders. In the beginning, lay brothers and sisters were related to the monastic orders and they also lived a monastic way of life. They served in the hospitals and inns as managers, and distributed the alms they had collected for the poor. As a further step, independent hospital brotherhoods were established in response to the new needs evoked by city life, poverty and the diseases that followed the crusades. These new formations, knight and hospital orders, undertaking a synthesis of religious and social mission, and representing social morale and virtues, were also present in Hungary. The Order of St. John, founded in the second half of the 11th century to serve the sick were transformed into a knight order in the middle of the 12th century but continued to provide care for the sick. Also, they helped the poor and the orphans by giving them shelter, clothes and food. In Hungary, the first members of the Order of St. John came together with the Cistercians and the Order of Premontr . Unfortunately there is hardly any historical evidence on the details of their social activities. Based on available data, it can be concluded that they provided care for the sick and the poor.

The hospital order named Holy Spirit was a charity organization. They helped the poor, the sick, and the orphans in their hospitals. They also provided home care by regularly visiting and supporting the poor in the neighborhood. Members were lay brothers and sisters (the latter serving for women and children). In every house of the order there was a priest who was responsible for meeting the spiritual needs of the members.

To summarize the social achievements of the era, charity work of the Catholic Church was manifested mainly in the activities of the monastic orders. This tradition

determined Hungarian social policy until the Ottoman conquest. (Somogyi 1943, 20-48.)

Poverty and city bourgeois

Providing care for the poor and managing the institutional system of „hospitals” were controlled by the Church, both in financial and in spiritual terms. With the development of medieval cities, however, the evolving city bourgeois also became involved. A new element was introduced into the institutional system of church care provided for poor persons, which had a lasting impact on medieval hospital work. The Church did not establish a unified and comprehensive system for the care of the poor. The city bourgeois, forming small units in cities, was successful in what had been missed by the Church and had not even been endeavored by the state. The process started in Western Europe in the 12th century and was already completed by the 14th century. The Hungarian hospital system, however, was almost entirely owned and managed by the church in the 13th century and even in the first half of the 14th century. The city bourgeois did not claim the rights to control and influence the work of the institutions until the second half of the 14th century. In the background of the process there was a hidden interest: the inhabitants of the city in need (old age, sickness and inability to work) should be given a priority in the hospitals. This is in contrast with the more universal features of church care of the poor where everyone is entitled to benefit and no one is excluded from care. Often lonely but wealthy men and women incapable of work retired in these hospitals to find peace and comfort and to prepare for „good death”. Naturally they paid some contributions for the services. However, the institutional system was misused as hospitals for the poor were occupied and those in need of help suffered negative discrimination. Most of the Hungarian institutions, however, insisted on providing universal care and continued to serve the poor.

Priests' role in providing care for the poor

In medieval Hungary priests (bishops and canons) also participated in providing care for the poor. Their social activities complemented the services of the monastic and hospital orders. When these orders declined and the city bourgeois took over the hospitals their role became more and more significant. That bishops and chapters were expected to be involved in charity work was also included in religious rules. In the governing body of both hospitals of Pecs there was a canon. The parish served as the centre for local social care and also as a legal authority.

As a conclusion it can be stated that the major societal political tasks of the era were preserving the independence and integrity of the country, developing the wealth of the nation, and protecting the citizens. All the moral and religious rules served that purpose and rulers were considered as role models in performing these tasks. Providing social care was first and foremost a family commitment. Church institutions exercising Christian mercy and charity provided care for the lonely poor or sick adults or orphans.

The role of Protestantism in societal and social policy²

All we need is Mohács³ - claims Endre Ady, a famous Hungarian poet at the turn of the 20th century. The year of the Mohács Battle (1526) could have been the very last year in Hungary's history but the Hungarian nation has survived. Religion was an important resource during these years: in the Hungarian state torn into three parts, ruled mainly by foreign powers, a new form of religion, the Reformed Church, spread very rapidly. They established many schools: 134 of all the 168 Latin schools were developed and run by the Protestants. In the second half of the 16th century the Helvetian teachings prevailed and the number of the schools owned by the Reformed Church was on the increase. Following the orders of the new religion, the Bible had to be read every day. Consequently, the Bible had to be translated into one's own mother tongue and be distributed in large numbers among the public. The Hungarian printed version (named Vizsolyi Biblia) was published in 1590.

Women's role in the era, similarly to that of early medieval queens, princesses and many other women who were not mentioned by their individual names, was decisive in social policy. In contemporary Hungary, the expression „grande dame” did not mean simply that these women were the wives or daughters of famous politicians but they had to represent high moral standards and protect important spiritual values as „the shining stars of our past” to deserve the title.⁴ The family letters of contemporary women are an important historical resource. Klára Bocskai supported the elderly, the poor and the sick. She helped orphan girls and enabled them to live a decent life and get married. Also, she provided „counseling” and gave good advice to those who needed it. Klára Lónyay was one of the most educated women of the era who donated her money for the purpose of educating young people abroad. Katalin Frangepán had part of the Bible (St. Paul's Letters) printed and Fruzsina Homonnai Drugeth established a print in Vizsoly. She also supported the church and many schools. Dorottya Kanizsai hired four hundred people to bury the dead (among who only the Hungarians were about 14,000 people) in the Mohács battlefield.⁵ Zsuzsanna Lórántffy's major work was to support the famous Hungarian college in Sárospatak. Kata Bethlen in the 18th century owned and developed a valuable library collection and bequeathed it to the Nagyenyed College. She discussed issues of women's education and criticized its shortcomings. These women were living for their own people, guarding constructive national traditions and building national identity by supporting the Hungarian writers. In addition, charity work done by them established and strengthened the traditions of the Hungarian „social policy”.

Social achievements in the 19th century

² For further details please consult: Molnár, 2008 b.

³ Mohács is the site of the huge battle where the Hungarian Army was defeated by the Ottoman conquerors. It resulted one and a half centuries of conquest for the Hungarian people, bringing about poverty and the destruction of previous social and cultural systems. Although the defeat could not have been avoided for the Ottoman Army was enormous, as compared to the military force of Hungary, most Hungarians attribute it to own problems such as disagreement among the military leaders.

⁴ Also see: Takács, 1982

⁵ For more details, please see: Révész, 1993

The issue of poverty in Transylvania

As a direct precedence, poverty issues were first treated in Europe by the police: in England, in France, in Austria and in Hungary as well. This approach protected citizens' peace and lives, public order, public morals and property. The first measures to serve „people's protection” were introduced in this era. The authorities were obliged to register all the beggars and decide whether the given person would deserve public support or not. If the beggar was sick s/he had to be treated; if s/he was able to work s/he had to be employed. New institutions were needed and the first institutions of „closed care” were established, such as the city „hospital” as the forerunner of workhouse and the lazareum as a previous form of today's hospitals. Operational rules were determined on the amount of work to be done, on due payment and selling of the products; also on the rights and duties of the „service users”.

In traditional Transylvanian communities solidarity was more than a written command and this convention had its impact on the treatment of beggars. The parliament discussed the issue of begging in 1790/91 and in 1810. In 1816 a decree stated the following: „public order demands that every person capable of work should earn his living by his own diligent work. Only those should have a share in others' earnings, who – by their natural status or by accident – are incapable of doing so.” In order to eliminate begging, workhouses were established in major cities. The selection principle of social policy of the era demanded to differentiate between the poor worthy of donations and those who pretended, only wanting to escape hard work. The latter group was excluded from care and they were referred to their original place of residence. Worthy persons were registered and supported but begging at people's private houses was prohibited for all the beggars. Registration included the following: age, place of birth, reasons for begging, and any other possible way to provide for oneself including any supportive relationships or relatives. Beggars were examined by medical doctors and those who had some curable diseases were referred to hospitals. The results of medical examination were decisive in determining if someone was eligible for work or not. Those who needed support were classified as for the necessary intensity of help (full, three-quarter and half and a quarter levels). Those who did not work but were eligible for military service were recruited immediately. Persons not eligible for military service but capable of work were sent to workhouses or to prisons. Incomes for the worthy poor were collected in the beggars' banks. These incomes came from the following resources:

- a.) In the churches believers were asked to donate some money for the poor at least four times a year. Money was strictly controlled and a receipt was given on transfer.
- b. In every town that had a theatre a minimum of four performances a year had to be held for the benefit of the poor.
- c. Citizens who realized the advantages of the institutional form of providing care for the poor over begging were asked for certain donations in money or in kind. The donations were registered.
- d. Charity foundations could also help the above institutions.
- e. Fines had to be spent for the benefit of the poor. In the cities where hospitals had been established half of the total amount of fines had to be transferred to these institutions.
- f. In every city a representative of the beggars, together with the „beggars' father” (a city

council representative) went to private houses asking for donations. Money was collected into a sealed alms purse. Cereals and clothes could also be given.

g) Settlements had to spend a certain amount of their total income for helping the poor. If any of the settlements did not have enough money for that purpose it was their duty to find an additional resource.

An accountant was employed to register, collect and control the donations and keep the books. Every week the chief police constable or the „beggars' father” distributed the donations and they listened to beggars' complaints. If someone was too weak or sick to be present the beggars' father took the due share to the missing person and an official visit was made to listen to his/her complaints. The accountant and the chief police constable had to come to an agreement on poor people's issues. If the beggar had a well-established complaint against the caregiver the caregiver was fined and the beggar was sent to another house. If the beggar was at fault he was punished. The accountant had to visit the beggars frequently and look after their health, morals and chastity. If they should they get ill the costs of the cure had to be paid for, using the money from the beggars' bank. When a beggar died a decent burial was given. The accountant had to write a report every three months and make a summary report at the end of the year. However, these measures were not put into practice in full. There were not enough hospitals and workhouses either.

The order also set the guidelines on the education of the beggars' children. These children, together with the children helping blind beggars, were sent to farmers or to craftsmen who taught them how to work. The children had to serve their masters until they reached the age of 15 or 18, depending on the agreement made between the master and the accountant. Orphans were given to custody and lived with foster parents who provided free care for girls for 10 years and for boys for 12 years. Then they had to serve their „parents” for the same period of time. Should they leave their masters, the authorities would send them back immediately. This was nothing but a modern form of slavery often depicted in contemporary novels.

Several parts of the 1816 Resolution were written about village beggars. Church donations were also a resource for these people but money was rare: often they received in-kind support instead. The village judge and the notary were responsible together for collecting, registering and distributing the donations. The resolution also included cases of emergency: money could be collected for reconstructing or building churches, for persons who suffered some damage from fire or flood and for workman's mates who were wandering in the country to learn their crafts.

Social policy in the Transylvanian villages⁶

Whereas in Hungary and in some parts of Transylvania it was the state that undertook the task to fight social problems, in the Székely seats (self-governances) less state intervention was necessary. The village communities helped their members and care was based not on resolutions but on strong community traditions of solidarity.

6 For more details please see István Imreh's study. In: Imreh, I.: Erdélyi eleink emlékezete (1550-1850) Társadalom- és gazdaságtörténeti tanulmányok. (Remembering our Transylvanian ancestors. Studies in the History of Society and Economy. Bp.-Kolozsvár, Teleki László Alapítvány-Polis, 1999.

In Transylvania, where people were starving even in the 18th century, and plagues were frequent after the repeated fights, this system of mutual help was a must. Smaller units of the society established their own preventive systems, such as the land community. The village community – several villages together – formed a seat and this seat owned all the land that does not belong to any person as a private property. When the relative density of population was low, part of the land was left uncultivated to improve its quality. This system is also known as nomadic land community. Everyone had the right for as much land as he was able to cultivate. The parcels that were exploited were left unutilized or were used as a meadow. The subsequent system was the distributed land community where the village inhabitants shared the parcels deciding by lots. The contemporary Transylvanian farmers had a safe system of common seat meadows and enjoyed the right to forest use. They were even allowed to sell the products coming from the common property on the market so that they could develop their own farms or pay their taxes.

Many men were killed in the fights and a lot of the soldiers became disabled. There were a lot of widows and orphans. Those who stayed at home had the responsibility to look after the family and the property of the relatives who were fighting. They were expected to take „better care of the property of those on military service than of their own properties”. Village people worked together to collect the wood for the winter for those in need; and gave the poor the cereals they needed at harvest time. In a historical resource from 1800 an ancient custom was mentioned: when the village land was distributed for the use of the family and for fulfilling military and tax obligations, it was done by shooting arrows. However, the elderly could not shoot their arrows so well any more and could not get enough land, so the village community agreed to give a land property to the aged person. This was a parcel of mercy which was not a donation but an acknowledged right to protect the elderly from poverty.

In cases of *vis maior* such as catastrophes or accidents the village community had its own system of social security. Fire was a common cause; many paragraphs were about prevention and fire extinction. Village people could recognize that anyone working for one's fellows would serve one's own interests in the long run as one day s/he might experience a similar situation and would be given help likewise the person who received his/her help before. Those who had suffered harm from a fire received help from the neighboring villages as well. There were communities where the wood for the new house was transferred to the building site and the community built the new house together. Houses were built free, and cereals burnt in the fire were also replaced free. If the cattle perished the owner's land was ploughed for free. Village laws also regulated cases of theft and robbery. The system of *bopsa* was another means of harm reduction. When a cow or pig broke its leg and had to be cut the meat was purchased by the village people to help the person in trouble.

Forms of mutual help included cases of common work and working for the public: some of these activities were to protect the safety of the environment (mending the bridge, cleaning the meadow etc.) This was the original version of today's work for public utility – but in those days the majority of people sincerely believed that public interests have priority over the interests of the individual. Another way of helping one another is *kaláka*. This is an ancient custom, still alive today, when farmers, during the most exhausting periods of work, are helped by the group of relatives, friends and neighbors. This is an act

of solidarity, a type of social help and is also a colorful feast. The family gives food and drink in return as every act of giving must be returned. Reciprocity is very significant and the sharing of food and drink has its deep social, religious and moral meaning.

Another informal village institution was *cimborálás* („friending”) when those in need of manpower, cattle or any kind of capital collaborated in order to accomplish hard jobs such as sawing the wood in a common sawing mill or ploughing the land. *Radina* was a form of mutual help among women. Sick women or women after delivery were given food and drink by friends and acquaintances. The idea was to free the person from a number of household duties such as cooking for the family. The same gifts were given at christening ceremonies when as much food was collected as for a wedding ceremony. Many of the above customs were present in Hungarian families but a number of them have already vanished.

The 1817 social action to fight starvation in Transylvania is a memorable event when the poor shared their food with those who had none at all.

Social Institutions in the Reform Age

The era of the Hungarian Reform Age (1820-1848) brought about major changes in social policy and societal policy. The progressive social layers among the nobility worked for a better homeland – in the name of the trinity of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Transylvania had a leading role in establishing social institutions in the Reform Age. The first people's kitchen was founded in Kolozsvár before the Reform Age by György Bánffy governor and his wife Jozefa Palm at their own expense. It worked until 1822, the death of the governor. In 1817 in Kolozsvár tin badges were distributed among the beggars to identify those worthy of support so that the citizens would know who would deserve their donations. In 1823 Rozália Csáky founded the Women's Association for Public Benefit in Kolozsvár in order to establish a workhouse for 40 persons (1826). 12 of these persons were old women incapable of work who could get shelter, clothes, food and all the other necessities free. The other 28 poor persons, who were admitted to the workhouse regardless of their gender, age, or religion, worked from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., each according to their talents and abilities. They received wages for their work but costs of food and heating had to be covered from their wages. Their work activities included wool and linen processing, weaving and knitting etc. Their products were sold in the shops of the association and in national fairs. After paying the wages, the resulting profit served as the capital of the workhouse that was also supplemented by donations, so the interests of the institutional capital were enough to cover regular maintenance costs. However, street begging continued in Kolozsvár. In 1831 a cholera endemic started. A new institution was badly needed – although the plans were ready they were not realized. By 1840 the activities of the association were restricted to providing care and employment for the poor. A lawyer was also hired to give legal advice for the clients. As additional social institutions, an orphanage and a kindergarten were established. The association also built a public park for recreation purposes to serve everyone including the poor. The city hospital of Marosvásárhely was mentioned as early as 1807 and the hospital with its 12 beds was maintained by donations. By 1853, due to regular developments, there were 80 hospital beds.

Outside Transylvania a Women's Charity Association was formed in Kassa in 1838. In the poorhouse run by the association textile materials were made. Revenues were given to the bank of the poorhouse, which ensured regular support for the disabled and for the elderly incapable of work. The city of Kassa prohibited begging and giving shelter to foreign beggars in 1845. Collecting donations for the poor was a well-organized activity. A committee decided on admission to the poorhouse. A workhouse was established in Pozsony that was rent and run by a private entrepreneur from 1844 on, similarly to other workhouses in Pest County in Hungary. The owners wanted to establish an institution for offenders where those who had been convicted for minor crimes could be admitted, such as prostitutes, beggars, and those not willing to work. Rules also permitted the admission of children under the age of 10. Men were separated from women and unemployed women (servants) from prostitutes and thieves.

The first kindergarten in Hungary named Angels' Garden was established by Teréz Brunszvik. It was a genuine pioneer's act as there were hardly any kindergartens in Europe at that time. In the Habsburg Empire Angels' Garden was the very first institution for small children. It provided secular education for children between 2 and 7 years of age: they learnt how to read, count, and sing. In addition, they were taught about the natural environment, religion and basics of foreign languages. Teréz Brunszvik also founded technical schools for the girls graduating from the kindergarten where they could learn crafts. Teréz Brunszvik founded 80 kindergartens until her death. She was a most consequent supporter of women's education and of equal rights. Her niece, Blanka Teleki founded a boarding school for girls and protected the Hungarian refugees after the defeat of the 1848 war of independence. Ágoston Schöpf-Mérei founded the first hospital for poor children in Pest (Budapest).

In Pécs in the Southern Transdanubian region of Hungary the first institutions providing social care were established at the end of the 19th century. Until 1857 orphans shared a small city hospital with the sick. As a major improvement in 1858, a separate orphanage for 70 children was built on public donations. When the children reached the age of 12, boys were employed by craftsmen as apprentices, and girls became housemaids. In 1880 a poor- and workhouse was planned to be built to help the poor and prevent begging that was a major problem in the city. In 1883 it was decided that only a poorhouse would be built and by 1888 the construction was finished. The oldest orphanage in Hungary, however, was a church institution that was opened in 1825 in Pécs. Children could stay there until they received their general certificate of education. The Baranya County Orphanage was established in 1883.

A few years later social care was provided not only for orphans but for illegitimate and abandoned children as well. The First Budapest Shelter for Children was founded in the 1870's by the Capital Council, adapting the similar practice of other countries. The shelter was built and run on private donations and its aim was to help the children who needed care. The workers in the shelter focused on suburban neighborhoods where the social needs of the poor were most acute. Following private and community initiations the state was also engaged in the tasks of child protection. In 1898 a law was enacted to provide state care for the abandoned children and several homes were established in the major cities of the country – as Pilkhoffer (2004) wrote about it in her book about the social institutions at the turn of the 20th century in Pécs.

Societal policy in the 19th century⁷

The above social institutions and the reforms of the era were direct precedents of the 1848 War of Independence in Hungary. A vision of a well-developed country, similar to those of the western world was outlined in contemporary articles and the idea was raised as the most important subject of the debates in the Hungarian Parliament. Progressive politicians shared the opinion that the underdeveloped status of the country and the poverty of the people is a vicious crime that had to be confessed and changed until it was too late. An emblematic figure of this transformation was István Széchenyi, also known as the Greatest Hungarian, who started his career as an idle young man of Vienna, not even speaking Hungarian. István Széchenyi established the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, wrote a number of important books on economy, and built a bridge to connect the two parts of the capital, Buda and Pest. There were similar persons in Transylvania as well: Imre Mikó and Miklós Wesselényi. Their habit was not to take from their own people but to give them.

Lajos Kossuth, the leader of the 1848 War of Independence had an important role in broadening social policy into societal policy. However, in the political declarations, debates and reports of the 1830's the reform plans were somewhat chaotic and controversial. Kossuth never wrote anything that was against his views; still he was somewhat reserved as for the issues that could generate major differences in opinions in the reformers' group. His skills in diplomacy made him an extraordinary politician of the era. He favored transforming feudal structures into a capitalist system. He was afraid that postponing the necessary steps would demand more and more sacrifice of the people. In 1841 he argued for abolishing the tax exemption of noblemen. According to him it was not fair that in Hungary the wealthiest persons were not expected to pay taxes – just like the beggars elsewhere. He provided evidence on the unsuitability of the existing taxation system: taxes were not fair on the one hand and were not enough to cover the costs of modernization processes in public administration. He supported Széchenyi's proposal on introducing a „parcel fee” to ensure the necessary capital and loan for investments. However, the bill was not supported by the upper house.

Discussing reforms in self-governance, he formulated his basic notion in societal policy: citizen rights should not depend on any person's whimsical decisions. He considered census necessary when expanding political rights; but he claimed that birth, status, religion (including the Jewish religion) and personal circumstances should not make a difference. His societal policy, aimed at capitalist transformation, and ensuring equal rights, evidently served national interests. His idea to assimilate and include national communities in the unity of the nation seemed a good strategy to prevent the assimilation of Hungary to the Austrians. (The Habsburg Dynasty had a strategy of using the national minorities as a means to promote the above assimilation.) Kossuth worked for expanding political rights to support the self-governments of the cities. He believed that these bodies should represent the interests of the citizens and not those of the leaders or of the government: „Preconditions for political eligibility should be determined. The citizen sharing the burdens of the state should enjoy the rights of the state and the rights should not be restricted to the rich as in countries like France, where only 180,000 people of the 32 million inhabitants have the vote; still they are

⁷ Küzdelem a reformokért (Fighting for reforms) <http://www.neumann-haz.hu>

proud of the „sovereignty of the people”. Kossuth explicated on his program of national rebirth. Constitutional liberty can not be built on the slavery of the people and be a privilege of few; everyone, the whole Hungarian nation should share liberty (let us remember the same idea of the blood contract almost a thousand years before). If the Hungarians vote for monarchy it should be a real constitutional monarchy. Constitution should be in Hungarian and not in Latin or in any other languages. Laws expressing the will of the nation should rule and prevail instead of the patronizing, casual or ambivalent decisions of the ruler. „We do not want to offend the right to property. What we do want is that the people should share the Constitution and as we are all creatures of one God, subjects of one ruler and descendants of one nation we should share all the rights and all the burdens together. Aristocrats as a social group will not strive for that purpose: it is against their very nature.”

To summarize Kossuth's ideas, constitutional monarchy should be based on representation by the people, settlements and cities should have autonomy, the county system should be reformed and the government should be made responsible to the Parliament. During the short interval of Hungary's independence in 1848, several laws were enacted that were based on similar ideas: establishing independent and responsible ministry (Act III of 1848), people's representation in the system of elections (Act V of 1848), equal and fair share of burdens (Act VIII of 1848), freedom of thought, education and religion. The freedom of the press was also ensured (on the condition that lies could not be published.) (Acts XVIII, XIX, and XX of 1848). National communities within Hungary could use their own national symbols (flags etc.) (Act XXI of 1848).

It can be concluded that the achievements of the 1848 laws had their origins in earlier centuries and the Hungarian social policy has always served the renaissance of the nation, relying on the basic values of liberty, equality and fraternity.

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