
ABSTRACTS

Vera Bácskai: The Incident of an Industrialist Adventurer and a Speculating Investor

Historians usually assume that the rapid collapse of factories founded in the first half of the nineteenth century was normally a result of the lack of capital, expensive credit or the recession of the early 1840s. However, the documents concerning the foundation, management and bankruptcy of the Sugar Refinery (Cukorfinomító) established in Pest in 1830 by antiques dealer Károly Lichtl and his brother-in-law, Viennese merchant Károly Ellenberger, suggest that the downfall of their short-lived enterprise was rather brought about by the founder's lack of expertise and adventurer personality. Besides the risks associated with the return on investments, the study demonstrates the dangers of imprudent bank loans and provides a glimpse into the rivalry among Pest merchants at the time. Lichtl was a genuine adventurer entrepreneur who jumped into any enterprise that promised good profit. He was quick to take bold chances as long as the consequences were to be borne by others. His creditor, Pest wholesaler Frigyes Kappel, was hoping for quick return on his investment when he loaned a significant sum to Lichtl without due care and thorough assessment. He was able to recover his capital only after a lengthy lawsuit and had to bear the unsavoury effects of defamation when his debtor sued him for usury.

János Honvári: Action Committee to Remove E. H.

Ede Horváth became a household name in December 1949 during the Stakhanovite productivity competition organised to honour Stalin's 70th birthday. The Stakhanovite turner was awarded the prestigious Kossuth Award and was first appointed as the director of the Győr Machine-Tool Factory in the autumn of 1951. Later, in the spring of 1963, he was also promoted to chief executive officer of the Hungarian Rail Carriage and Tool Factory and both factories were overseen by him until their eventual merger on 1 January 1964. While the "red baron's leadership skills and the factories" economic result was never a matter of contention, his aggressive personality, raw manners, uncouth style and idiosyncratic personnel policy have turned many against him. The fact that he occasionally used unacceptable language and tone with his subordinates did not improve his reputation. The study focuses on three failed attempts to remove, or at least discipline, him in the first half of the 1960s, which were initiated by his co-workers often risking personal repercussions. The organisers

of two of these attempts have been identified, while the third case went cold despite police efforts and remains shrouded in mystery to this day.

András Kiss: “We Always Forget that We’re Not Yet a Factory”: The Csepel Car Manufacturing Plant and Its Workers in the 1950s

The ordinary life of Szigetszentmiklós and its environs situated on Csepel Island underwent visible and profound social transformation at the end of the 1940s. At the end of 1949 a political decision has launched a new heavy goods vehicle factory out of the ruins of the Danubian Plane Manufacturing Plant. The first Five Year Plan, starting on 1 January 1950, assigned the development of Hungarian vehicle production as the main duty of the new plant. The study focuses on the effects of 1950s socialist human resource politics on the life of the car manufacturing plant. Kiss examines events and phenomena which illustrate the relations between the establishment and the industrial labourers of the Csepel plant. The implementation of socialist human resource politics was met with difficulties in the plant shortly after its foundation, and its deleterious consequences were felt almost immediately. The number of workers was never adjusted to the increasing productivity of the plant, which resulted in the deterioration of working conditions as well as the mass departure and speedy turnover of workers. This, in turn, brought about extensive governmental monitoring within the plant and various forms of worker’s opposition.

Aladár Madarász – Pál Valentiny: Business History, Entrepreneurial History and the Theory of the Firm: A. Cole, A. Chandler and R. Coase or Variations on Creating a Paradigm

Anglo-American and Hungarian economic historians follow different semantic patterns describing the same subjects. While the authors writing in English use three distinct terms to distinguish business history, entrepreneurship and the theory of the firm, the corresponding Hungarian words share a common root. This paper reviews the debates among the founding fathers of the discipline about the definition of the agenda and research methods of these topics both before and after World War II. The emergence of business history at Harvard Business School under the leadership of N. Gras mainly followed the German tradition of narrative historical economics. He denied any dominant role of formal economic theory and urged business historians to use several other disciplines, such as psychology and politics, too. A. Cole, the founder of the Research Center in Entrepreneurial History at Harvard, based the approach of

his research group on the Schumpeterian concept of creative entrepreneur as the key figure in explaining the different issues of economic change and development. Faced with the problem of how to define entrepreneurship, the center failed to formulate a theory of economic change based on entrepreneurial activity and behaviour. In the meantime the character of the creative entrepreneur has been played down within organization and firm and was replaced by the entrepreneur co-ordinator who directs production (R. Coase) and by the middle-manager (A. Chandler). Both business history using a structuralist-functional sociological approach in discussing large scale enterprises and the theory of firm based on transactions costs and economic analysis of law remain outside of the mainstream of history and economics. What they had in common was a sense of affinity for empirical data instead of pure theory. More than affinity even, it was a desire to get an insight into the “real world”.

Milán Pap: The Worker of the Company – the Company of Society: The Worker and the Community of Company in the Scientific Ideology of the 1970s

The paper discusses the different layers of the meaning of the concept of socialist worker and socialist company, as they emerged in ideological and scientific discourses in 1970s Hungary, citing ideological resolutions of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, academic papers, monographs and research records, as well as ideological discussions of the main party periodical. The concept of worker, as one of the main socio-political concepts of “existing socialism”, carried a multifaceted meaning in the ideology of the socialist Kádár regime. The worker was the general owner of the means of production, as well as the agent of this production. Ideologically speaking, the worker of the socialist system appeared as a self-governing and self-conscious participant in the life of the company, and a member of the ruling class of socialist society. The over-determination of the concept of this ideal social actor involved the multiplication of the functions of the socialist company. Thus, besides being the place of production process, the socialist company ideologically emerged as the field of workplace democracy as well as the sphere of the workers' self-determination and communal life. This image of the socialist company fits into the macro-ideological system of Soviet “developed socialism”, the last long-range ideological experiment of state socialisms.

Judit Anna Szatmári: Júlia Fischer and Co.

The article presents the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of a Hungarian fashion company established by Júlia Fischer, a talented Jewish tailor from Debrecen. She built a flourishing business with her husband and their children. From 1904 onwards, the company headquarters was at 4 Ferencziek square situated in the elegant downtown of Budapest. By the 1910s even aristocrats chose to buy their wardrobe in Budapest instead of Vienna, which helped her strengthen her financial position and build her own family villa. Júlia's heir and daughter Aranka Fehérvári followed her as the artistic director of the company after the World War I. and succeeded her as director after her death in 1921. Aranka turned the fashion firm into a joint stock company and she concluded contracts with the famous Parisian Callot Sisters and Christoph Drecoll to export clothes to the Balkans. Although the company tried to market their original creations and produce ready-to-wear clothes, these were not met by success among their Hungarian customers at the beginning of the twenties.