

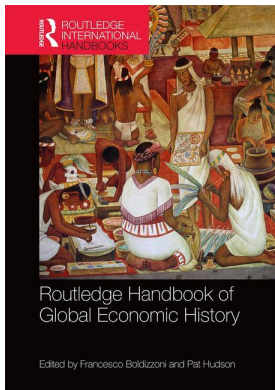
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15

CROSSROADS AND TURNS IN HUNGARIAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

György Kövér

From the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to the Treaty of Trianon (1920), thence through the German and Soviet occupations to the current post-communist climate, Hungarian economic history has remained embedded in political upheavals and economic problems peculiar to Eastern Europe. This continuity/discontinuity has determined the approaches and topics that have dominated the field and the accessibility and reception of ideas from outside.

The term ‘economic history’ first appeared in 1878 in the title of a Hungarian monograph by Béla Weisz (1848–1945).¹ As a student in Vienna, Weisz had participated in Lorenz von Stein’s lessons and he later attended those of Wilhelm Roscher in Leipzig. At the University of Pest, during his juridical studies, his master was Gyula Kautz, the founding father of the Hungarian national political economy school. Lajos Thallóczy’s (1854–1916) dissertation on the early medieval royal tax ‘*lucrum camerae*’ (published in 1879) might be considered as another starting point for Hungarian economic history.² This double genealogy, with roots in the historical school of national political economy as well as in empirical historicism, characterizes the circumstances of the birth of the discipline fairly well.

Early professionalization: the *Hungarian Economic History Review* workshop

At the end of the nineteenth century, economic history was not yet institutionalized in university teaching. However, if the publication of a specialist journal can be taken as a sign of professionalization, then Hungarian economic history might be regarded as precocious. The first issue of the *Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle* (‘Hungarian Economic History Review’) appeared in 1894, only one year after the publication of the German *Zeitschrift für Social- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (ZSWG).³ In the journal title the word ‘economic’ originally had the meaning ‘agricultural’ and, in its establishment, an agricultural lobby, OMGE, had a decisive role (Izsépy 1969). The founding and managing editor of the journal, Alajos Paikert (1866–1948), was not an economic historian, but an ambitious young jurist and agronomist. Thanks to his networking skills, he secured funding from the Ministry of Agriculture.

While Paikert found the money, the co-editor Károly Tagányi (1858–1924) shaped the journal intellectually. Tagányi belonged to the first professionally educated generation of Hungarian historians, who had been influenced by positivism (R. Várkonyi 1973: I. 165–7;

Vardy 1976: 40–1; Csíki 2003: 20–3; Bognár 2013). His knowledge of both foreign literature and archival material was impressive.⁴ His arguments, which incorporated international comparisons, convinced the agricultural ministry that a synthesis of Hungarian agricultural history could not be written without the necessary preparatory research.⁵ Among those who worked on the early economic history agenda, mention should also be made of Ignác Acsády (1845–1906) (Acsády 1895). According to his view, the main reason for the underdevelopment of economic history in Hungary was the ‘lack of interest’ in the relationship between the state and society. While in Europe the adoption of the historical method fertilized contemporary political economy as well as national policies, in Hungary policy-makers tended to rely on foreign ideas and looked at the Hungarian past with ‘sovereign indifference’.⁶ In his overtly nationalistic rhetoric, the ‘mission of economic history’ was to put in a proper light the ‘mission of the Hungarian nation, and the everlasting remarkable work it had done over a thousand years on the soil of the fatherland, what constitutes the main content of its history, the most stable right to rule’.⁷

The *Hungarian Economic History Review* regularly followed the specialist literature published in Hungary and abroad. References to the content of the brother periodical *Zeitschrift*, were common but only the articles ‘having special interest’ from a Hungarian point of view were reported (MGtSz 1898: 604.v). There were reviews also of the third volume of Inama-Sternegg’s *Deutsche Wirtschaftsgeschichte* and of work on the history of the English milling industry. When Paikert left the *Review* in 1900, it was obvious that he had to offer the full editorship to Tagányi.⁸ However Tagányi, after developing neurasthenia, had to hand over the post to someone else. Sándor Takáts (1860–1932), a trained historian and an ex-priest, was the preferred candidate, but he lived in Vienna, which seemed to be too far away. Finally the post was inherited by a young economic historian, Ferenc Kováts (1873–1956) from Pozsony (Bratislava). After studying law, he had spent a year in Breslau (Wrocław) and attended the lessons of Werner Sombart with whom he maintained frequent contact after returning home.⁹ His first book was on foreign trade in the later Middle Ages. As editor of the *Review*, Kováts tried to develop the journal at an international level and contributed to the dissemination of Hungarian economic history in German-speaking countries through the *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (VSWG) (Kováts 1903: 605–17). The relatively high honorarium paid to the *Review*’s contributors brought back the offended Sándor Takáts who offered his work again: ‘If you have not enough useful articles’, he told the new editor, ‘you have to write me – *the essence of the Viennese archives* can be found in my room.’¹⁰ Despite these efforts, the number of subscribers did not increase, the financial deficit became greater and in 1906 the *Review* was forced to cease (Kövér 2013: 201–24). As Berlász (2010: 245) notes, ‘whatever important role the . . . *Review* played in the formation of Hungarian economic and social history, it was not able to ensure the reproduction of writers for the new discipline’.

To close the story of the *Hungarian Economic History Review* and its editors: after the Treaty of Trianon, Ferenc Kováts moved from Pozsony to Szeged, and in the 1930s he became Professor of Economic History at the Budapest Polytechnic. According to Berlász, Kováts was ‘our only genuine [*katexoehen*] economic historian’ (Berlász 2010: 246). It is questionable to what degree someone could be exclusively an economic historian in Hungary, but it is a fact that no school of economic history developed around Kováts. During the last decades of the Dual Monarchy and after its dissolution, the disclosure of sources about the former Habsburg Empire gave considerable impulse to research and source publication, though the newly established Hungarian Historical Institute in Vienna concentrated its energies outside economic and social history.¹¹

The Institute for the History of Civilization and the Domanovszky school

The first Hungarian economic historians came from history seminars. Sándor Domanovszky (1877–1955) had been originally a specialist of medieval chronicles, but his interest turned towards economic history while he was teaching history at the Commercial Academy in Budapest. After 1914 he became the first non-ecclesiastical (moreover Lutheran) Professor of Cultural History in the Pázmány Péter University, and he drove a lot of students in that direction.¹² Bálint Hóman (1885–1951) started his career as a historian of money, public finance and economic policy. However, in the interwar period he turned to politics and administration, became Minister of Culture and, condemned as a war criminal, finished his life in prison (he was rehabilitated *post mortem* in 2014). When, in 1928, Hóman received a letter from Marc Bloch inviting him to join the project for a new international economic history journal, he declined and instead recommended Domanovszky.¹³ The plan for this journal never materialized, but thanks to Domanovszky several reviews of Hungarian economic historiography were published in the first issues of the *Annales*.¹⁴

Domanovszky's international position was certainly reinforced by his personal connections to Polish historians and to Hans Nabholz from Zürich but also by his close scientific ties to Alfons Dopsch and his school in Vienna.¹⁵ Dopsch's activity as a founder of the Seminar for Economic and Cultural History at the University of Vienna in 1922 served as a model for liberating economic history from the cage of the old juridical history school, and opening it to neighbouring disciplines such as social and cultural history. His methodological slogan ('Door and gates open') exerted great influence at that time, not only in Eastern Europe, and inspired interesting methodological discussions. For the reception of Dopsch's views, it was important that he was elected to an associate fellowship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1927 (two years before, he had given a lecture in Budapest on the methodological questions of social and economic history).¹⁶ Domanovszky regularly sent his students to the Viennese Collegium Hungaricum. Once there, while studying the extremely rich archival material of the Habsburg Monarchy, they diligently attended the lectures and seminars of Alfons Dopsch and his colleagues.¹⁷ Ten years later, Domanovszky's contribution to the Dopsch *Festschrift* provided an occasion for discussing one of his central theses. According to Dopsch, the expansion of the manorial economy (*Gutsherrschaft*) was not an exclusive characteristic of Eastern Europe and not only of the period following the late Middle Ages. On the basis of several empirical studies inspired by his cultural history seminar at the Pázmány University in Budapest, Domanovszky came to the conclusion that the manorial economy in Hungary 'because of different circumstances could not develop into a dominant economic type for a long time . . . and, until the nineteenth century, it was no more than a tentative endeavour'.¹⁸

In 1928 Domanovszky started to supervise a series of dissertations which resulted in fifteen volumes which were published under the title *Studies in the history of Hungarian agriculture*.¹⁹ These formed the basis of his school (Vardy 1976: 164–71). In the preface to the series, Domanovszky reformulated the old positivist slogan: 'It is impossible to construct history without data' (Domanovszky 1930: 4). One of the members of the school, Imre Wellmann (1909–94), argued that its novelty did not lie only in the 'organization of work' and systematic planning, but in the practice of presenting the subject of agricultural history 'in the light of all surviving sources and taking into account national and European development in the totality of its aspects' (Wellmann 1937: 672, 674). This explains why, although Hungary remained a rural country, agricultural history became a leading field within the discipline only in the 1930s. The history of money and trade also had an important place in the activity of the Domanovszky school.

The *Geistesgeschichte*, a new direction of German historiography inspired by the holistic and anti-positivist views of Wilhelm Dilthey, had its impact on Hungary as well (Vardy 1976: 62–94; Erős 2012: 319–30, 354–67). Bálint Hóman edited a programmatic volume, which was reviewed by Domanovszky in the leading Hungarian historical periodical, *Századok*. The latter found ‘the book’s leading essays to be directed too much against the school of positivism, against the preparatory work of data mining and the liberal concept of history’ (Domanovszky 1931: 277). The economic and social history chapter of the book was written by István Dékány, who was a well-educated methodologist in social sciences, but had never written a word about social and economic history (Dékány 1931: 183–237). His main conclusion however was clear – in Hungary it was difficult to write exclusively economic history because the centre of gravity was political and military endeavour. He stated: ‘Economic history constitutes only a chapter of social history; the latter describes the entirety of productive relations, the former only their economic function’ (Dékány 1931: 207, 214).

In 1932, the challenge of the *Geistesgeschichte* was confronted in a methodological symposium organized by the Hungarian Society of Economists. Sándor Gyömrei (1892–1957), who had been trained at the University of Leipzig, was the main contender. As usual, the discussion was shadowed by ideological confrontation and Gyömrei defended the idea of liberalism and progress. He stated that Hungarian economic history writing ‘had been out of step with the results of foreign researches. Because of a lack of economic knowledge they [historians] became victims of the rather different “languages” of the sources. Our historians did not examine the substance of economic life, but its regulation.’ The tragedy of Hungarian economic history was that *Geistesgeschichte*, ‘as much as the old political history . . . had expelled the principles of economics’ (Gyömrei 1932: 663, 678–9).

Gyömrei’s position triggered a wave of harsh criticism. Béla Iványi-Grünwald jr. (1902–65), a young specialist of the history of credit, openly attacked him: ‘with all respect, to the historian of economics we must put the question: whether economics has defined its notions with such a lack of ambiguity, that excludes those possibilities of errors, which can be pointed out if a historian looks at the past through its own ideas and ideals and not through the economic concepts of the present’. Similarly, according to Iványi-Grünwald, ‘the historical segment distinguished by Gyömrei as economic history . . . believes to constitute itself exclusively in pure economic terms. But *we do not believe in this kind of limited economic history, we believe in history – and when we are speaking about economic history, it is only a temporary limitation of our material, applied to the circumstances*’ (Iványi-Grünwald 1933: 362, 364, italics mine).

One of the students of Domanovszky, Emma Lederer (1897–1977) referred to the recently founded *Economic History Review* as representing the latest international trends and suggested that one should integrate the more developed German methodological ideas with practical English [i.e. positivist] spirit. In her opinion economic history means always research of particularities, the ‘economic’ factor is only a part of the ‘total’ as well as the ‘spiritual’ history. According to her, Gyömrei had overemphasized the dangers of *Geistesgeschichte* in the Hungarian context (Lederer 1933: 31, 37).

Due to these methodological differences, the leading Hungarian historians of the 1930s produced two distinct historical syntheses: one, by Hóman and Székfü (1928–34), was written from the standpoint of *Geistesgeschichte*; the other one, written by young scholars under the direction of Domanovszky (1939–43), was in the tradition of the history of civilization and more open, though not uncritically, to positivist influences. One of the authors of the first synthesis, summarizing his views on the sources of economic history, declared that ‘in the depiction of economic and social developments [he] refrained from referring to the abundant

statistical material, because it by no means enlightens the essential questions.²⁰ The editor in chief of the rival synthesis concluded in the preface of the first volume:

Both material and mental factors will be covered, including transformations in the nature of landed property, the composition of the national population, society and economy, the genesis of several aspects of the spiritual life and finally the lifestyles of different groups . . . The place of the hero in this narration is occupied by the ways of life, the world of thought and the productive activities of the great mass of the nation.²¹

After the shock of the Treaty of Trianon, the so-called ‘ethnic history’ or *Volkstumsgeschichte* (‘népiségtörténet’ means ‘ethnic’ and ‘people’s history’ at the same time) primarily associated with Elemér Mályusz (1898–1989) was regarded as an exciting endeavour, which was originally intended to be a social history of the local (something between the German *Ortsgeschichte* and *Territorialgeschichte*). During the late 1930s, Mályusz and his school actively participated in the ‘history of civilization’ enterprise. Geographically, this ethnic history school focused on the territories of Upper Hungary (now Slovakia) and Transylvania (today part of Romania) for both historical and political reasons. The influence of Mályusz – combined with the fascination for the rural sociology of Dimitrie Gusti (1880–1955) and the Bucharest school – gave impetus to the formation of a new generation of economic and social historians in Transylvania: among them Zsigmond Jakó (1916–2008), István Imreh (1919–2003), Elek Csetri (1924–2010) and Ákos Egyed (b. 1929) (Imreh 1979; Egyed 1981).

Continuity and change under the hegemony of Soviet-style Marxism

After 1945, the channels of continuity in the institutional development of economic history were gradually closed. Ferenc Kováts retired in 1945 and his department was inherited by Jenő Berlász (b. 1911). Among other applicants we have to mention the name Oszkár Paulinyi (1899–1982) and Imre Wellmann (the first was Dopsch’s student in Vienna, the other a pupil of Domanovszky), all of whom were first-rate young economic historians of that time (Paulinyi 2005). However, Berlász could not enjoy his professorship for long because in 1948 he was dismissed from the newly established Karl Marx University of Economics. In 1948 Domanovszky was also forced to retire (his Department of History of Civilization ceased to exist). Very soon he was also removed from the Academy of Sciences.²²

The personal, institutional and ideological preconditions of Soviet-style Marxist historiography were built up during the preparations of the first five-year plan in 1949–50. A register of Hungarian historians was set up in order to understand which (loyal) cadres were available for the new tasks of the party state system.²³ In a command economy, all natural and social sciences also had their five-year plan and they were financed exclusively by the state (Kövé 2012). The key institution for the history plan was the Historical Institute of the Academy of Sciences. Soviet science constituted the theoretical background of new historical knowledge (in the form of Moscow-graduated party soldiers, delegated Soviet advisers and a periodical of the Institute which contained mostly translations of the latest Soviet debates). Most of the old specialists were removed from the Institute, and only some of them kept to form ‘working cooperatives’ that concentrated on the newly defined directions of research. Half of the twelve ‘priority areas’ for history concentrated on economic history issues, though the Lenin slogan that ‘economy is determining, but politics is the primary factor’ was never forgotten. Some of the working cooperatives consisting of both old specialists and ideologically

equipped young recruits produced collective volumes. However, a great deal of the projected research was never finished, because after the first year of the plan a new primary task was defined: to write a synthesis of Hungarian history in five or six volumes, which was called 'the university textbook'. Its mission was to replace the old comprehensive works of Hóman and Szekfű, and Domanovszky.²⁴ The original plan underwent revisions in 1951 and 1953 (under the administration of Prime Minister Imre Nagy). The second five-year plan was suspended just before its launch in 1955 and the unforeseen interference of the 1956 uprising did the rest.

A new workshop was founded for the discipline – the Department of Economic History at the Karl Marx University of Economics, chaired by a former student of Domanovszky, Pál Zsigmond Pach (1919–2001). A new generation of Marxist economic historians was educated in both economics and history: Iván Berend (b. 1930), György Ránki (1930–88) and Miklós Szuhay (b. 1928) and they became members of different 'working cooperatives'. The main emphasis was placed on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – the period of the emergence of capitalism – partly because it had been neglected before the war, partly because the party-state ideologues believed that overcoming capitalism, and the liquidation of the interwar Horthy regime, would be more effective if they had a more elaborated image of the enemy.

Although, during the war, the first steps to produce a new industrial (and economic) history of modern Hungary had been taken (Eckhart 1941; Futo 1944), the elaboration of this topic was restarted during the 1950s from the point of view of Stalinist industrialization. A four-volume series on industrial history was published, aimed at representing this new strand of research, but the monographs were methodologically out of date in the very moment of their publication (Merei 1951; Lederer 1952; Sándor 1954; Berend and Ránki 1955).²⁵ Jenő Berlász's work on the history of the Ganz factory (written during the war yet left unpublished until after 1956) is still considered a remarkable experiment in the field of business history (Berlász 1957). Collections of articles on the agrarian history of capitalism must be mentioned as typical publications of the period produced by collective workshops (Pach and Sándor Pál 1956). Under Pach's editorship, in 1958 the Economic History Department started the book series *Gazdaságtörténeti értekezések* ('Treatises on Economic History'), which lasted until 1975 and produced seven volumes about agricultural, industrial, commercial and urban issues in the history of Hungarian capitalism, tackled from a post-Stalinist standpoint.

While the large-scale 'socialist factories' of economic history writing produced collective volumes and unfinished syntheses, in the shadow of these great enterprises some solid and comprehensive monographs were published as well. Their authors were young historians, who were better able to preserve their ideological independence and remained closer to the empirical sources (Makkai 1954; Szűcs 1955; Szabad 1957).

Reintegration into the international mainstreams (*Annales*, comparative studies, quantification)

The divorce from the Stalinist form of Marxism after 1956 was helped by a lot of factors. The Kádár regime itself proclaimed its intention to break with the 'faults of the past'. In this situation some tendencies, having been oppressed during the early 1950s, could revive. At the Kossuth Lajos University of Debrecen, István Szabó (1898–1969), who came from ethnic history (now turned into peasants' history), in spite of all the unfair attacks he received, was able to train a new generation of agrarian historians and collected their works in two comprehensive volumes in 1960 and 1965.²⁶ These projects were financed by special grants which were distributed by the Academy of Sciences outside of the official academic budget.

During the 1960s everybody had to make compromises with the official dominant Marxist ideology, but under formal loyalty there still remained some possibility of retaining the best of both the positivist and historicist traditions.

Researchers focused on the history of the peasantry within capitalism, which had been omitted from the mainstream of the old historiography. The issue was topical in a period when the new government attempted to liquidate the peasantry through collectivization. Subfield periodicals were founded (*Agricultural History Review* [1957–], *Studies in Historical Statistics*, *Review of the History of Technology*, *Contributions to Factory History*) and, in 1963, a research group was set up within the Agricultural Museum, which contributed not only to the publication of a *Yearbook* but also to an international bibliography (*Bibliographia historiae rerum rusticarum internationalis*). In the 1970s, a new wave of research on the history of crafts and guilds had been launched in the form of local and international conferences, the *Internationales Handwerksgeschichtliches Symposium* organized by István Éri (1929–2009). The papers were published in a series of more than twenty volumes (Szulovszky 2002).

Participation in international forums required special abilities, not only in a linguistic sense. In Eastern Europe, the system of party–state financed science demanded ideological reliability as well. It was true, after 1960, for those who wished to attend international history congresses and those of the Economic History Association, as well as the conferences on the history of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy organized between 1955 and 1964 by the historical committees of the so-called ‘friendly successor states’ (Kövé 2009). But through these channels new intellectual challenges – first of all those which seemed to be compatible with Marxism – started to penetrate the Iron Curtain. The situation had paradoxical aspects: the ‘take-off’ of Rostow, for example, was compatible with Marxist historical theory when combined with the concept of ‘industrial revolution’, but the subtitle of his book, *A Non-Communist Manifesto*, made it inappropriate for ‘mental’ customs clearance. Moreover, it was not so easy to defend the innovations of international economic history against old-fashioned dogmatism. The head of the ‘Scientific Socialism Department’ at the Budapest Eötvös Loránd University, Aladár Mód (1908–73), an old representative of national communism, and his colleague, György Tolnai (1914–92), an old social democrat, took the ideological front in several discussions. These debates about optimism/pessimism, objectivity/subjectivity, peasant industry/industrialization, were disguised as scholarly disputes.

Some introduced quantitative arguments in the discussion, as indicated in a rather emphatic review article on ‘The Triumph of Quantitative Economic History in Budapest’ (Gross 1972) which referred to the study of László Katus (1927–2015), still a standard reference in the international literature, but never translated into Hungarian in its original form (Katus 1970). While, on the whole, the role played by quantitative economic history has been modest, the volume, nonetheless, can be interpreted as a sign of responsiveness to new trends in comparative historical studies.²⁷ The terminological setting of that time was rather flexible. Discussion of the notion ‘Eastern’ or ‘East–Central’ Europe, for example, always had a political meaning. After 1968 ‘East–Central Europe’ fitted better with international discourse and the new identity-seeking process of the Habsburg successor states (Péter 1999). The polyglot Emil Niederhauser (1923–2010), speaking almost all East European languages, argued above all for the peculiarities of East European development (Niederhauser 1958). It was a long and winding way for Pach from the study of the industrial activity of the Orczy family estate in the late eighteenth century (Pach 1943), through the search for peculiarities in the Hungarian ‘previous accumulation’ (Pach 1952), to the history of the *Abbiegung* (‘deviation/diversion’) of Hungarian (and East European) development from that of Western Europe in the period of ‘late feudalism’. Later, he tried to determine the contours of the

East–Central European region in the context of early modern international trade (Pach 1960; Pach 1994; Nagy 2012). During the 1970s, medievalists joined the discussion extending the framework to the whole of Europe from early medieval times (Makkai 1970; Szűcs 1985).

From the 1960s, some younger Hungarian economic historians were offered opportunities not only to take part in international congresses, but also as visiting fellows abroad.²⁸ After Fernand Braudel's visit to Budapest in 1962, about three to five researchers from the Academy's Institute of History per year obtained fellowships at the Ecole. In the 1960s the active reception of the *Annales* paradigm started (Katus 2007: 162–3) and those years saw the development of long-run price history studies (Zimányi 1973). New chances were opened for world history research. After writing a monograph on the sixteenth-century price revolution, Tibor Wittman (1923–72) succeeded in forming a school at the University of Szeged that tried to set early modern East–Central European and Latin American history in a global context. Owing to his untimely death, Wittman's impressive oeuvre could not be completed (Wittman 1957, 1970–71). However, the studies of Makkai, Pach, Wittman, Zimányi and others managed to get into the international scientific debate about core–periphery relations (Wallerstein 1980)

Although in the original manuscript the authors had still used the term 'Eastern Europe', in the final version of their *Economic Development* from 1969 (the US translation appeared in 1974) Berend and Ránki pointed to 'East–Central Europe' as the basic unit of historical comparison. A further volume on the comparative economic history of European peripheries in the nineteenth century, which they produced in the context of intense international scientific cooperation, constituted the next important step on this road (Berend and Ránki 1982). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were several attempts at establishing closer contacts with West European historians through international workshops. The key figures of these (soon aborted) initiatives were I. Kostrowiczka, Z. Landau, J. Tomaszewsky, V. Prucha, J. Faltus and L. Barr. The process of reintegration of Hungarian historiography into the international mainstream made further progress in 1982 when the World Economic History Congress was held in Budapest. It represented a veritable meeting of generations, schools and cultures. The president of the IEHA Committee (Pál Zsigmond Pach), as always, represented the host country, but the main organizer was György Ránki. An 'A' theme was dedicated to the problem of large estates and smallholdings (particularly relevant looking from and at Eastern Europe), convened by László Makkai (1914–89), a member of the older generation in the Institute of History, a historian of technology and the most eminent follower of the *Annales* in Hungary. In the session 'From the Family Firm to Professional Management', which was also very timely from the point of view of Hungarian economic reform, the Hungarian speaker was Péter Hanák (1921–97), one of the young communist historians in the 1950s, author (with his wife) of the first modern business history study and a revisionist participant in the debates of the following decade on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (Hanák and Hanák 1964; Hanák 1982).

The 1980s at the Economic History Department of the University of Economics were years of thematic more than methodological innovation. This workshop produced, for example, the first critical work on the economic history of state socialism prior to the economic reform. The approach was positivistic, based on archival material and somewhat close to institutionalism (Berend 1983; Pető and Szakács 1985). New themes, such as the history of banking, started to emerge (Kövér 1991). The influence of international approaches cannot be identified in every direction in economic history. This is especially true for the Hungarian reception of cliometrics. It was Gyula Benda (1943–2005) who first introduced the Hungarian readership to the new economic history in 1975, but the first reaction of

György Ránki was rather negative (Ránki 1977: 93; cf. Ranki 1988). Some years later, John Komlos's book on the Austro-Hungarian customs union was translated into Hungarian but its publication should be contextualized in the new political climate (Komlos 1990) and, even then, the approach was generally received without enthusiasm. The first cliometrics university course was held by Scott M. Eddie at Eötvös Loránd University. The edited lectures were published in Hungarian and, since then, everybody who wants to get acquainted with those methods is able to do so (Eddie 1996). However, cliometrics has remained a non-indigenous international plant, which has not taken root on Hungarian soil, though many Hungarian students now get their PhDs from foreign universities and work in environments where cliometrics is stronger.

In the wake of political change

During the more recent decades of political change, political history came back to prominence. In the transition process, the government commissioned political histories and was also their main consumer. Economic history has declined from a combination of international and domestic factors such as the counter-reaction to the former hegemony of Marxist historical determinism, the temporary priority given to political history and the self-proclaimed autonomy of social history. As a consequence of Ránki's death (1988), and Berend's 1990 emigration to Los Angeles, at the UCLA, the position of the discipline became substantially weaker.²⁹ In recent years, the representatives of social science history have gathered under the flag of social history and in 1988 a new association with this logo (István Hajnal Circle – Social History Association) was established. Change has taken place in the institutional structure as well: during the transformation of the former Karl Marx (today Corvinus) University of Economics, the Economic History Department was dissolved and now only two economic historians work there, although this department has intensively participated in many international banking and business history research projects, organized by and around Alice Teichova, in cooperation with Austrian, Czech, Slovak, British, Norwegian, Swedish and of course Hungarian economic historians (Pogány 1999).

On the other hand, the creation of an Economic and Social History Department at the Faculty of Arts at Eötvös Loránd University (1991), with its own PhD programme (1993), was a promising development. The main profile of this department was originally urban history and, through the assistance of its founder, Vera Bácskai, intensive connections have been developed with the Urban History Group of Leicester University where many students have had an opportunity to study for one or two semesters in the framework of exchange programmes. But Hungarian students are showing little interest in economic history. Moreover, the current administration at the department does not seem to be inclined to support the further consolidation of this field. It is easy to interpret these difficulties as a manifestation of an international tendency, but it does not make us happy that this is the only area where our institutions are in step with world trends.

We can report some good news, though. My own research group at Eötvös Loránd has received funding from the Academy of Sciences to carry out research on nineteenth- and twentieth-century economic crises and, in the economics curriculum of the Social Science Faculty, economic history has gained a fairly important place. Two professors of economic history from the younger generation have been appointed at the universities of Szeged and Pécs. New textbooks have been published and reoriented research in directions such as comparative economic history, long-run agrarian change, and banking and industrial history (Tomka 2001, 2004 and 2013; Kaposi 2001 and 2007; Kover and Pogany 2002; Vári 2008;

Germuska 2010). In recent decades, entrepreneurial and business history has also developed in promising ways (Bácskai 1989; Halmos 2008; Klement 2012) and, for some time, regular joint workshops were held with the Business History Group of the University of Reading in the UK. New periodicals have been established, including the first Hungarian social history journal (*Korall*, 2000–), the *Yearbook of Historical Demography* (2000–) and *URBS*, the *Hungarian Urban History Yearbook* (2006–).

Retrospect and prospects

Looking back at twentieth-century Hungarian economic history, its early embeddedness in the national narrative is evident, as was the case with other European historiographies (Niederhauser 1989; Berger et al. 1999). The subsequent shifts in political history, from the Treaty of Trianon on, further encouraged the instrumentalization of this connection. Experiments to overcome historiographical nationalism took two directions: one in the 1920s and 1930s with the ethnic history of Mályusz and Szabó, which nevertheless never got rid of it completely or evolved into fully-fledged social history. The ‘microhistory’ of recent years has probably been more successful in this respect (Tóth 1989; Benda 2008). The other direction was that of comparative history which, after the antecedents of the Domanovszky school in the 1930s, produced internationally appreciated results in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the choice of the supranational scale (Central Europe, Eastern Europe, or the East/West axis) was always dictated by the political context.

As we have seen, the leading sector of the Hungarian economy, agriculture, and the institutional problems of the system of large estates were still in the foreground of research in the 1930s, and the golden age of modern peasant history only came during the shock of the 1960s. Neither can it be considered accidental that the great boom of industrial history took place in the 1940s and 1950s. A peculiar coexistence of modernization and dependency theories was characteristic of the mid-twentieth century. This was supported by the fact that the hegemonic Soviet-style Marxism could supply ideological arguments for both concepts.

Apart from Ferenc Kováts and Tibor Tóth, Hungarian historians have never shown an exclusive interest in ‘pure’ economic history but rather have combined it with other fields. For Tagányi, these were legal, social and cultural history; for Domanovszky, the history of medieval chronicles, of civilization and administration; for Hóman, the history of state formation and politics; for Eckhart, juridical history; for Berlász, the history of books and libraries; for Katus, ecclesiastical history; for Ránki, military and diplomatic history and so on. The causes of this phenomenon may be structural: in a small country, the division of labour is underdeveloped and there is no room for narrow specialization. Moreover, economic history has possibly been regarded as too narrow by the most versatile and influential personalities. On the other hand, these factors have had a positive impact in encouraging interdisciplinary ideas within the field (Kubinyi et al. 2008).

As far as economic history is concerned, it is hard to avoid the continuity/discontinuity question. The first professional generation of practitioners in the late nineteenth century was inspired by positivism. The new generation, tempted by *Geistesgeschichte* and cultural history, was mostly swept away after 1945, but some younger scholars turned to Soviet-style Marxism (Romsics 2011: 356–77). Pál Zsigmond Pach, Emma Lederer, Gyula Mérei and others became prominent in this period; many felt or at least showed loyalty to the new political system. All of them had to conform to it to some degree. The Marxist ‘young garde’ learned from them either at university or in the archive reading rooms. However, from the 1960s onwards, they were met with the challenge of international scientific life, mostly through periodicals

and books but, for a small group, through participation in international conferences and fellowships abroad.

In this area of Europe, the state has always played an important role in financing historical research and publications. Without public funding, no major specialized periodical could have been established. After the nationalization of the research infrastructure and its transformation according to principles of the planned economy, state socialism was able to enforce ideological preferences in the conceptualization of research agendas (capitalism, industrialization, the 'Prussian way' and so on). Of course, the existence of a Marxist orthodoxy offered no legitimate possibility of free choice at the crossroads, but the way to revert to the good old historiography remained open for everybody. Those fortunate enough to experience the political transition at the end of the 1980s had a new chance to adapt themselves to these changed circumstances.

The discipline embraced the trends of international historiography to various degrees in different periods. Almost every contributor to the *Hungarian Economic History Review* spent some time as a student at German or Austrian universities and links with German-speaking historiography remained strong in the interwar period. On the other hand, the promising contacts with Strasbourg at the very beginning of the *Annales* school did not develop into closer collaboration until the age of Braudel. A gradual release from the grasp of the Soviet International started during the 1960s and 1970s. Bilateral academic cooperation, fellowships, participation in common international research projects and World Economic History congresses must be mentioned in this respect, along with the impact of foreign periodicals (e.g. *Annales*, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, *Journal of European Economic History*). Since the late 1990s, in addition to the free flow of the ideas due to the Internet revolution, the migration of university students has become more and more important. Today Hungarian economic history is definitely not threatened by the danger of straying into a specialist niche of the 'new economic history' (Boldizzoni 2011). Although statistical approaches and quantification have an indigenous tradition, this is alien from cliometrics. The discipline has remained equally unaffected by the more recent linguistic turn (Trencsényi and Apor 2007).

In sum, Hungarian economic history has striven to keep up with international trends and produced influential scholars as well. However, both organizational inertia and radical institutional changes hampered all but informal continuities among succeeding generations. In the midst of recurrent ideological and scientific paradigm shifts, economic history developed a special form of pragmatism. The discipline's strengths remain its links to other fields and its ability to survive and to reinvent itself over time, following paths not often congruent with the latest international fashions, in ways that address economic change and economic characteristics close to hand.

Notes

- 1 The main task of the work was to show 'how important economic history is for inductive problem-solving in national political economy' (Weisz 1878: 3). After 1881, Weisz took the name Földes. He later made an academic career as an economist and served in government during the war.
- 2 Thallóczy (1879). The idea that this was a pioneering work comes from Gunst (1961: 89).
- 3 Zorn (1985: 457–75). The *Zeitschrift* informed its readers about the launch of the Hungarian periodical: ZSWG 3 (1895): 533–4.
- 4 He was highly respected by the younger generation of historians, but he was seen as an 'odd person'. Cf. Lederer (1969: 76–7) and Glatz (1980: 113–19).
- 5 He referred to J. E. Thorold Rogers, Karl Lamprecht and Theodor Inama Sternegg. Report on the history of Hungarian agriculture for the committee meeting of 23 January [1894], OSzK Kt Fol. Hung. 1547.

- 6 Acsády (1890: 375–87). He quoted an economist with indignation: ‘Hungarian economic history? It’s a swindle; some old rubbish pieces of guild charters, that’s all’ (1890: 378).
- 7 Acsády (1895: 142–3). It is worth noting that the main international authors cited by Acsády were not Germans, but Louis Bourdeau and James [Edwin Thorold] Rogers, in French translation.
- 8 Paikert became the director of the newly founded Agricultural Museum. The relation among the co-editors was not harmonious. Tagányi wrote in a personal letter: ‘it was known by everybody that he hadn’t helped me at all in editorial work’ MTA KIK Kt Ms 2357/237, letter to Kováts Ferenc, 9 January 1901. In an earlier note in his diary, Paikert lamented the opposite: ‘I have to keep Tagányi in check – he wants to use my services under the cover of friendship’, OSzK Kt Quart. Hung. 3264/ 4 (12 February 1895).
- 9 See Sombart’s letters to Ferenc Kováts, MTA KIK Kt Ms 2357/179–200.
- 10 Takáts to Kováts (29 April 1903), MTA KIK Kt Ms 2355/123, italics mine. An important article of his was on world trade (Takáts 1903). Takáts also carried out extensive research in the archives of Nuremberg on the early modern Hungarian cattle trade.
- 11 In the series of ‘*Fontes historiae hungaricae aevi recentioris*’, only one volume was published on economic and social history (Vardy 1976: 56–8). On changes in the original publication plan see Ujváry (1996: 76–83).
- 12 On the importance of Domanovszky in Hungarian historiography see Glatz (1988); Granasztói (1984).
- 13 Marc Bloch’s letter to Hóman, OSzK Kt 15/327 (1928). Hóman’s letter to Domanovszky, MTA KIK Kt Ms 4524/618 (20 July 1928).
- 14 About the original project of the ‘*Revue internationale d’histoire économique*’ see Erdmann (2005: 92).
- 15 A review article on Hungarian economic historiography (Kring 1937) was written on the request of the Polish historians F. Bujak and J. Rutkowski (see correspondence of Bujak, Rutkowski and Kring with Domanovszky, 1936–37. MTA KIK Kt Ms 4523/337–338; Ms 4527/61–62; Ms 4525/635–638). On Dopsch and his school, see Dopsch (1968: 543–65), Hoffmann (1979: 57–61); Buchner (2008: 155–90).
- 16 On the reception see Eckhart (1928: 828–32).
- 17 See Letters to Sándor Domanovszky, MTA KIK Kt Ms 4523/19; 4526/645, 647.
- 18 Domanovszky (1938: 441–69). These views were certainly close to those of Jan Rutkowski and Polish historiography.
- 19 ‘*Tanulmányok a magyar mezőgazdaság történetéhez*’, 15 vols. (1932–43).
- 20 Szekfű, in: Hóman and Szekfű (1933: VII, 445).
- 21 Domanovszky (1939: I, 16–17). The chapters on economic and social history were written by Imre Wellmann, Jenő Berlász, Oszkár Paulinyi, László Ungár and others.
- 22 On the Stalinist reorganization of the Academy, see Péteri (1998).
- 23 AL MTT Titk. Box 23/8.
- 24 The first and second volumes were published in 1954, the fifth and last in 1980, but the whole series was never completed.
- 25 Lederer was originally Domanovszky’s student. Mérei’s mentor was Gyula Szekfű, Vilmos Sándor came from the interwar workers’ movement. Berend and Ránki, who had been Pach’s students since Gymnasium years, represented the new generation.
- 26 Szabó (1960, 1965). On István Szabó as a historian Erős (2003) is an essential read.
- 27 A special variant of quantitative economic history was elaborated by Tibor Tóth (1941–2011) who attempted to unify micro and macro viewpoints in agrarian history (Tóth 1982).
- 28 In his memoirs, Berend emphasizes the importance of the Ford fellowship programme (Berend 1997: 153, 168).
- 29 Just before his death, Ránki was elected vice president of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, a position that was inherited by Berend, who finally became its president 1995–2000 (Erdmann 2005: 362). At UCLA, Berend continued the comparative programme started with Ránki (Berend 1996, 2003).

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