
THE ROLE OF INDUSTRY IN 'KEEPING THE POT BOILING' IN THE REGION OF SOUTHERN HUNGARY DURING THE ERA OF SOCIALISM

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces one of the sources of livelihood in the era of socialism focusing on the district of Southern Hungary. The main aspect of my research is analyzing a saga in connection with the relationship between the family and the industrial market. I scrutinize the world of everyday routine in the family-living in Hódmezővásárhely, in the south part of the country. According to recalls, two significant firms are shown in this thesis; one of them is called Elektrofém Factory, and the other is named as Minőségi (Qualitative) Shoe-Maker Corporation. The fields of industry I present here are – on one hand – electronic business, especially lamp-painting and – on the other scale of the spectrum – shoe-making line. The family is called Vanderstein, and I bring on the memories of my mother and of my father about the topic.

1. INTRODUCTION

I made a research on the topic of industry. I listened to people who lived and worked during the period of socialism, and I identified a picture of the era in connection with their livelihood. Writing my thesis, I quote the interviews I made with the subjects of my research, I use my parents' memories and their recalls to highlight the topic.

In this publication, my aim is to give a brief presentation of industry focusing on the era of socialism in Hungary. I intend to show the southern part of the country and I primarily focus on the city of Hódmezővásárhely. To achieve my goal, I introduce how two people, how my parents got in touch with industrial products and how they realized the sides of trade during the period from the ages of 1970s until the ages of 1990s.

What is more, in my paper, I give a short presentation of my family-tree from the point of view of showing the professions of my family members. I give evidence that the occupations of my ancestors are determined by family fashion.

2. INDUSTRY

Since my childhood, I was always interested in my parents' jobs. I was curious about their daily routine in their workplace. However, I am an adult now. In this sense, the topic of my curiosity changed. My questions turned towards the living of my family and towards the role of industry in the period of socialism.

Some years ago industry was the main source of everyday living of my family. The reason I tell this statement is that both my parents worked in the field of industry as active workers. My mother worked as a shoe-maker and my father was a house-painter.

As a child I was happy because I noticed that we had everything we needed in our living. We lived in a flat with two rooms, one of them was used by my parents and the other served for the comfort of my brother and of me. To tell the truth, my parents owned a car, too, and we often made programs together. However, our family takings only consisted of my parents' salaries.

The goal of writing this paper is neither to present a whole statistics nor to invent a full study on the industrial or manufacturer field of Hungary, although I intend to show how international affairs happen in the politics. I focus on one of the greatest developed countries, and the perspective of the time is in the sequel, it is from the early twenty-first century. The researcher of the theme of industry in Hungary during the era of socialism can read the following few lines in the recent report of the Department of State of the United States of America:

"Although Hungary enjoyed one of the most liberal and economically advanced economies of the former Eastern Bloc, both agriculture and industry began to suffer from a lack of investment in the 1970s. Belated reaction to the economic crisis of the early 1970s and deteriorating terms of trade resulted in increasing indebtedness. In response, the Hungarian Government launched a restrictive economic policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, followed by the "Dynamization Program of 1985," which increased consumer subsidies and investments – mainly in unprofitable state enterprises – eventually leading to a doubling of foreign debt levels. By 1993, Hungary's net foreign debt rose significantly – from \$1 billion in 1973 to \$15 billion." (Background Note: Hungary, 2009)

2.1. The characteristics of my mother's family

My mother was born in Szeged, in the southern part of Hungary. My grandmother took care of the children (my mother and her brother) at home, while my grandfather worked as a shoe-maker. He worked at a company in Szeged.

My grandparents did not have much money, so when my mother stood in front of the challenge of the career-choosing, it was bound to happen that she chose a school lasting for only three years in order to start working and getting money as early as possible.

The choice of my mother was determined by her father's position. She decided to learn the profession of shoe-making as her father had done. My mother started the school and took part in the training at the same time. She was successful in her routine and she got an award for her sedulity: she became the best student of the shoe-making business. Together with this title, she got an opportunity to work at the same company as my grandfather did. She snatched at the chance and started regular work at the age of seventeen.

2.2. The characteristics of my father's family

On the other side of the scales, there lived the paternal side of the family thirty kilometres from my mother's family. My father was born in Hódmezővásárhely. He was born into a family where my grandmother grew up the children (my father and his sister), and my grandfather worked as a house-painter.

According to the family custom, when my father looked facts in the face of the choice of the business, he chose the most plausible option: he started to learn the house-painting field from his father. They continued working together.

2.3. Hódmezővásárhely between the ages of 1970s and 1990s

Hódmezővásárhely was a determining factor of the southern part of Hungary in the sense of industry and industrial market, as well. In the city, a number of companies and corporations existed in the 1970s, in 1980s and in 1990s. There were majolica, pot, porce-

lain, textile, scales, sizer, shoe and lamp-maker firms. Together with the citizens of nearby villages, most of the population of Hódmezővásárhely worked in the above mentioned factories. These jobs meant the livelihood of all those people who were employed in the concerns.



Figure: The Map of Hungary

Source: Background Note: Hungary, 2009.

In 1967 an important change happened in my parents' lives. They got to know each other and they decided to live their days together. The living place of the couple became Hódmezővásárhely. After their wedding, my mother started her living in a shoe-maker company in Hódmezővásárhely, and my father got a job as a painter in the lamp-maker corporation. Both of my parents worked hard, their schedule consisted of eight-hours-work a day. However, there were years when my father stayed in the business sixteen hours a day because a lot of lamp waited to be painted.

In order to realize my parents' feelings and opinions about manufacture, about industry and principally about their workplaces, I asked them the next questions: "1) How do you remember the factory where you worked?, 2) What was your job there?, 3) What was the main profile of the firm?."

In the following few lines I cite my father's thoughts about the industrial factory where he stayed twenty years as an active worker.:

"I liked working in industry. Elektrofém Factory was a very nice and friendly place to pass the days. The firm ensured workplaces to more than a thousand people from the neighbouring distance and from the town. There were departments such as: repairer base for wrong fridges, for wrong televisions and for wrong washing machines, lamp painter and decorator field, electronic and mechanical service.

I got a job as a lamp-painter in 1975 and I worked in the corporation until it was closed in 1995. I enjoyed the days since the task was not difficult to deal with and what is more, I got a lot of friends from my colleagues.

We painted the lamps for different colours as the orders said. The ready objects were sent abroad as export. For the company one of the greatest export partners was the Soviet Union. More than ten thousand lamps were sent to the country by trucks in a year." (Interview with Mr. János Vanderstein, 2000.)

The next opinion about the role of industry in everyday living in Southern Hungary was the judgement of my mother.:

"My job was to be a work-master of forty people in Minőségi (Qualitative) Shoe-Maker Corporation. We made topsides of shoes for women using real leather during the process.

The company consisted of four parts; each of them did the same progression that resulted in hundreds of ready tops for shoes during a day. We changed shifts which meant

that one week we worked from six o'clock until two in the afternoon, and the next week from two o'clock until ten in the evening.

I liked working in this factory because my bosses were emphatic and they were full of energy at the same time. My best memory was to meet the orders of the supply. Most of the packages were sent to the Soviet Union as export objects.

My opinion was that we always had money in harmony of the work. This resulted in our daily lives that we always had safety in our subsistence." (Interview with Mrs. János Vanderstein, 2000.)

The essence of the hard work was the fact that the subsistence of our family was guaranteed.

3. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I gave a brief summary on the topics of industry during the period between the ages of 1970s and 1990s. I introduced the main aspects of living of the people of that era. To show the main points of the question, I used interviews made with my parents.

The south part of Hungary is a well-defined place. This territory is neither included in the most modern nor in the well-developed part of the country. However, industry – nowadays – plays a very important role in the income of the region.

In the period of socialism, industry gave the basis of the proceeds of the towns and villages of Southern Hungary, so of Hódmezővásárhely, and the incomings of the industrial commerce were higher than any other seizure in that era. There concerns existed dealing with different kinds of manufacturer products.

All in all, I state that our family lived on sufficient level in the era of socialism when my parents actively worked in the field of industry in the city of Hódmezővásárhely.

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