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The Székely Action (1902–1914)

The Example of Regional Economic Development in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

Transylvania including Székely Land (*Székelyföld, Ținutul Secuiesc*) became part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy formulated with the Compromise in 1867 (Act XII). After the Compromise Hungary had an economic and social development that the country had never seen before. However, the general development did not apply to the whole geographic area or the population of the country. Especially the areas on the peripheries with worse natural supplies and more archaic social structure in the north and east – Upper Hungary (*Felvidék, Horná Zem*), Carpatho-Ukraine (*Kárpátalja, Sakarpatia*), Siebenbürgisches Erzgebirge (*Erdélyi Érchegység, Munții Metaliferi*) and Székely Land – had a rate of underdevelopment that required government intervention.

Székely Land with Maros-Torda County (*Maros-Torda vármegye, Comitatul Mureș-Turda*), Udvarhely County (*Udvarhely vármegye, Comitatul Odorhei*), Csík County (*Csík vármegye, Comitatul Ciuc*) and the Háromszék County (*Háromszék vármegye, Comitatul Trei Scaune*) were regarded as some of the peripheral regions with the worst condition: due to the dissolution of the archaic societies, the late urbanisation and economy, the underdevelopment of transportation, the traditional agriculture (simple and self-supplying land cultivation, extensive farming) the population surplus emigrated to find relevant life sources. Besides the lack of financial sources modernisation had to clash with conservative mind-set as well.¹

The Hungarian public realised the underdevelopment, the economic and value depression of Székely Land around the 1870s. The *Székely Issue* became a frequent topic of public communication. Pamphlets, memories, articles, moreover, cultural and economic societies were fighting for the governmental

¹ Ákos Egyed: A székelyek rövid története a megtelepedéstől 1989-ig. Csíkszereda 2013, 225–250.

developments of the region.² The issue of modernisation of the region got a national significance by the end of 19th century. Since one third of the Hungarian population of Transylvania lived in Székely Land (624,584 People), in addition, absolute Hungarian majority existed only in these areas: Udvarhely County, Csík County, Háromszék County and Maros-Torda County (97.6 per cent; 90.1 per cent; 88.9 per cent; 50.7 per cent).³

Due to its disadvantageous status of the Székely Land, which was considered to be the most eastern *fort* of the Hungarians, was unable to create the necessary conditions for its own development. The governmental participation on the one hand supported the gradual integration of the region, the late embourgeoisement, consolidating the different rates of the regions' development, on the other hand it contributed to the depression of the traditional farming and hand crafts, and it caused significant social friction and the impoverishment of wide layers of the society.⁴

Several development options had been proposed to improve the financial and ethical status of the Székelys, but they were rather a chain of superficial measures than parts of a deeply considered long-term strategy. Those social and governmental actions that aimed at the resolution of the Székely Issue, the economic, social and ethical values of Székely Land from the end of the 19th century are summarized under the name of *Székely Action*.⁵

The National Economic Policy

The economic liberalisation that translates into free competition and trade was the main principle of the official Hungarian economic policy. Harmonizing the economic measures of the two parts of the empire intensified in the issues of the necessary rate and possibilities of industrialization, as well as the methods of industrial development during the long period of depression (1873–1896).⁶ The development that started in the 1880s was related to the

² Petra *Balaton*: A székely társadalom önszerveződése: a székely társaságok. Törekvések Székelyföld felzárkóztatására a XX. század elején [I-II.]. In: *Korunk* 21 (2010) 1, 78–84; 2, 71–77.

³ Nándor *Bárdi*: A két világháború között, 1918–1940. In: *Székelyföld története I-III*. Eds. Nándor *Bárdi*, Judit *Pál*. III: 1867–1990. Székelyudvarhely 2016, 393–528, here 500–501.

⁴ Judit *Pál*: Városfejlődés a Székelyföldön 1750–1914. Csíkszereda 2013, 590.

⁵ Petra *Balaton*: A székely akció története. I/1: Munkaterv és kirendeltségi jelentések. Budapest 2004, 27–31.

⁶ László *Katus*: A modern Magyarország születése. Magyarország története 1711–1914. Pécs 2009, 402–408; György *Kövér*: Iparosodás agrárországban. Magyarország gazdaságtörténete 1848–1914. Budapest 1982, 31–37.

development of railway constructions and wood trade. The period of growth did not last for a long time, and it was even deepened by the Hungarian-Romanian customs war (1886–1891) in the southern areas. 1886 was the turning point.⁷ By the end of the 1880s the 20-year-long government deficit was over, and aside from the depression at the turn of the centuries (1897–1905) a permanent growth started.

The difficulties of the development demanded the direct inference of the government in the areas of industry and agriculture development. The wave of industrialisation reached the eastern regions by the end of the 1880s, which was supported by the development of the vocational schools and education, the financial and engine supports, the loans without any interest, zero tax and other allowances.⁸

The foreign capital appeared in Székely Land at the end of the 19th century, investments were realised in the infrastructure (local railways), industry based on the local resources (mainly wood industry), as well as in mining and metallurgy.⁹ It must be added that the railway constructions, which demanded huge investments were late and not fully completed in Székely Land. The organized and institutionalized governmental action was not totally executed before the World War I.

The social mirror image of the cereal trade depression in the 1870s and 1890s was the birth of the agricultural movements, whose programme contained the more extensive governmental support, and the introduction of more intensive economy to gain modernisation. After the foundation of the independent Ministry of Agriculture (1889), especially during the 12-year-long ministerial period of Ignác Darányi (1895–1903 and 1906–1910) a series of reforms were introduced in the area of agriculture.

Ignác Darányi and his successors (Béla Tallián, Béla Serényi) provided the economically underdeveloped northern and eastern regions with special support: *support actions* (ministerial sub-offices) were organised in the Ruten

⁷ József Sándor: Az EMKE megalapítása és negyedszázados működése 1885–1910. Kolozsvár 1910, 356–357; Zoltán Szász: Gazdaság és társadalom a kapitalista átalakulás korában. In: Erdély története. I–III. Ed. Béla Köpeczi. Budapest 1986, III, 1508–1623, here 1520–1522.

⁸ László Katus: A tőkés gazdaság fejlődése a kiegyezés után. In: Magyarország története 1848–1890. Eds. Endre Kovács, László Katus. II. Budapest 1979, 913–1039. The lack of sources makes the research of the topic more difficult as the documents of the Ministry of Trade perished except the period of 1889–1899.

⁹ Róbert Nagy: Külföldi tőkebefektetések a Székelyföldön 1880–1918. In: Areopolisz. Történelmi és társadalomtudományi tanulmányok. VIII. Eds. Mihály Gusztáv Hermann [a. o.]. Székelyudvarhely 2008, 119–132.

counties from 1897, in Székely Land from 1902, in Upper Hungary and Transylvania from 1908, in Banat (*Bánság*) and Partium (*Részek*) from 1913.¹⁰ The public identified the Székely action mainly with the activities of the sub-offices of the Ministry of Agriculture.

During my research of the sources it became clear that the few professional literature research introduce the Székely Action separately on their own creating a false impression, as if the governmental support given on local basis had aimed superficial solution of the greatest local problems. As opposed to the fact that Ignác Darányi in 1899 already considered the action in the mountains as “the starting point of a longer and wider chain of activities that would cover the whole area of the Carpathian Mountains”.¹¹ The development of the regions at the borders from central resources was completed with the same tools and was based on the same office apparatus. The offices contributed to the development of the economy as well as the change of the mind-set with financial aid proposals, and suggestions.¹²

Until the 1910s the governmental actions were carried out mainly in the mountainous areas with minority, Ruten and Slovak population. The management of the office system claimed that via the straightforward propagation of the agricultural principles “they can be included in the community of the Hungarian national development creating the preconditions of economic development, the assurance of their existence.”¹³ In Transylvania however, the economic action aimed at the economic strengthening of the Székelys (1902) and the Hungarian minorities (1909). Due to the Romanian rapprochement as a consequence of the changes in the minority policy of Prime Minister István Tisza the mountainous areas with Romanian population were also included in the national actions from the 1910s.

Due to the country-wide aid actions after the extreme weather in 1912 and 1913 (heavy rain and floods) the measures lost their special poverty aid feature and became secondary level authorities with regular tasks that organised

¹⁰ *Balaton: A székely akció története*, 39–45.

¹¹ *Indoklás a Földművelésügyi magy. kir. Ministerium 1899. évi költségvetéséhez*. Budapest 1898, 86.

¹² Imre Takács: *Magyarország földművelésügyi közigazgatása az Osztrák–Magyar Monarchia korában, 1867–1918*. Budapest 1989, 81–83.

¹³ *Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára*, Budapest [furthermore: MNL OL]. K 184 Ministry of Agriculture [furthermore: K 184]. General records 1916, 128. General issues of the sub-offices of the Ministry of Agriculture. Operational report of the sub-office in Temesvár 62713, 27911/1914.

the development of the local economy.¹⁴ Béla Serényi, Minister of Agriculture (1910–1913), issued an organisational and operational regulation concerning the ministerial sub-offices on 28th April 1913. The task of the sub-offices was to support the organisations of agriculture and the agricultural society in their respected area, as well as to prepare proposals, and to check the fulfilment of laws and regulations. They supervised, checked and coordinated the external bodies of the Ministry of Agriculture, except the educational and academic institutes (schools and research institutes), governmental lands, national horse breeding issues, governmental spa baths and holiday resorts, forestry and water authorities, and the authorities supervising handling of national assets, and assured the relationship to the county.¹⁵

The minister wanted to found a separate organisation to fulfil agricultural management. As the first step on 1st September 1913 he established new ministerial sub-offices with centres in Nagyvárad (*Oradea*) with authority of Arad County, Bihar (*Bihar vármegye, Comitatul Bihor*) and Szilágy County, and in Temesvár (*Timișoara*) with authority of Krassó-Szörény County and Temes County (*Temes vármegye, Comitatul Timiș*). Serényi planned to expand the system to cover the whole area of the county and then he formulated agricultural directories of them.

The Government of Tisza (1913–1917) starting its work in June did not consider the plan accomplishable. Imre Ghillány, Agricultural Minister, finished the operation of the office in Temesvár on 1st May 1914, and he organised a new ministerial office in Eperjes (*Prešov*) using the generated surplus financial sources. From the summer of 1913 István Tisza started to evaluate the minority status in Upper Hungary, and planned the introduction of a general economic and social action with governmental support.¹⁶ The general programme was not completed, however, upon the examples in Transylvania the Ruten sub-office in the mountainous area was divided and a new ministerial office was established in Eperjes.¹⁷

¹⁴ Official agricultural reports: *Zárszámadás a Földművelésügyi magy. kir. Ministerium 1912. évi költségvetéséhez*. Budapest 1911, 309; *Indoklás a Földművelésügyi magy. kir. Ministerium 1913. évi költségvetéséhez*. Budapest 1912, 119.

¹⁵ MNL OL K 184 Order of the Minister of Agriculture Nr. 4670 on 28th April 1913, praes. 1913–128–87548.

¹⁶ László Szarka: *Szlovák nemzeti fejlődés – magyar nemzetiségi politika 1867–1918*. Pozsony/Bratislava 1999.

¹⁷ MNL OL K 27 Archives of Prime Ministry, Cabinet minutes. Minutes of the meeting on 23rd October 1913.

By the spring of 1914 the sub-office system covered almost the half of Hungary, and first it was increasing, and then stabilized at the rate of 3 per cent (3 million Krona) credit limit. Due to First World War new sub-offices were not established between 1914 and 1918. After the collapse of historical Hungary the activities of the sub-offices ended.

The Economy Development Policy of the Székely Action

The first practical steps to introduce the governmental aid action were made by Ignác Darányi Minister of Agriculture when he defined 38,000 Krona for the development of Székely Land and 70,000 Krona for supporting the economic societies, cooperatives from the annual budget of the ministry in March 1902. According to the reasons of the ministry: “[...] it may not be a great amount, however it can obtain significance in its importance and effect for the future” and “it is a great enough amount that the government uses to support the financial development of the Székely people.”¹⁸

The Council of State decided to establish a *Székely Governmental Bureau*, which was positioned above the council authorities. János Sándor, landowner who had climbed the ladder of the public administration, and was the Lord Lieutenant of Maros-Torda County, Kis-Küküllő County (*Kis-Küküllő vármegye, Comitatul Târnava-Mică*) and Marosvásárhely (*Târgu Mureș*), was appointed as the head of the bureau, and he had three weeks to work out his proposals concerning the guiding principles of the governmental support.¹⁹ The bureau started its operation in Marosvásárhely on 1st June 1902, and it had authority on four administrative units of Székely Land Csík County, Háromszék Counties, Udvarhely County, and Maros-Torda County.

The appointment of the government's people before the Székely Congress planned by the end of August caused public revulsion. János Sándor Government Commissioner made his first roundtrip in Székely Land before the congress, he had discussions with the economic organisations, although he started his real operation after the congress in Tusnád (*Tușnad*), in September. The decisions made by the Székely Congress in Tusnád served as the global

¹⁸ *Költségvetés a Magyar Korona Országai részére az 1902. évre.* Budapest 1901; *A Magyar Állam költségvetése az 1902. évre.* Budapest 1902.

¹⁹ The memorandum of 1897 by the Székely delegates served as the bases of the operational plan: “Az erdélyrészi képviselők emlékirata Székelyföld közigazdasági és kulturális fejlesztése érdekében Sándor Jánosnak megküldetik”. MNL OL K 178 Archives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Presidential records 1902, 4977.

proposal collection for the development of the region, as the documented proof that the Székely Issue is a national issue that requires organisation, national and social alliance. In this sense Minister Darányi issued the decisions of the congress and its minutes in 1902.²⁰ The work schedule of the sub-office was created upon the decisions of the congress in Tusnád, mainly based on the agriculture related decisions, on 218 pages by the 27th March 1904.²¹ 15 key areas were identified, and the decision details of the issues of animal husbandry (cattle, sheep, horse, pigs, and poultry rearing), the land cultivation (grapes, flax and hemp, fruits, and vegetables), forest industry, pasture culture, planting, the employment and emigration, home crafts, loans, transport (railways and roads), water operations, land coordination, mining, hunting, spa baths and other economic issues (economic societies, village small holders' societies, cooperatives, agricultural education, public libraries, example farms, awarding system, agricultural machinery). The operational programme started in autumn 1904, however the planned debate was overwritten by the governmental and political depression in 1905–1906.

Meanwhile János Sándor resigned from his post as Government Commissioner due to disappointment to Political Secretary of State of the Home Office, thus the management of the office was taken over by Mihály Koós Junior Secretary from November 1903.

The sub-office of the Ministry of Agriculture was not only its executive body, but it had its independent right for decisions, it had its own area of operation, making suggestions, had an educational and advisory role in Székely Land. In the autumn of 1904 the operational area was greater than the four counties: it also covered the Aranyos seat (*Aranyosszék, Scaunul Secuiesc al Arieşului*) Székelys in Torda-Aranyos County, the upper part of Kis-Küküllő County that had borders to Székely Land, and the Csangos in Hétfalu (*Şapte Sate*) as well as the three Hungarian settlements in Barcaság (*Ţara Bârsei*) in Brassó County (*Brassó vármegye, Comitatul Braşov*).²² From spring 1909 the

²⁰ *A Székely Kongresszus szervezete, tagjainak névsora. Tárgyalásai és határozatai.* Ed. Béla Budai. Budapest 1902.

²¹ *Jelentés vizeki Tallián Béla v. b. t. t. m. kir. földművelési miniszter ő méltóságához a tusnádi székely kongresszusnak a földművelésügyi minisztérium ügykörét érintő határozatairól és a székelyföldi földművelő nép gazdasági felsegítésére irányuló javaslatok.* Előterjeszti a m. kir. Földművelésügyi Minisztérium székelyföldi kirendeltség. Marosvásárhely 1904. MNL OL K 26 Archives of the Prime Minister, Centrally registered and archived records 1904–XXIX–1628.

²² MNL OL K 178 Order of the Minister of Agriculture Nr. 51710, 22 September 1904, 1903, 2146.

programme called the Transylvania Economic Action had competence in the areas of Transylvania (Erdély, Transilvania) where Hungarians, Székelys and Csangos lived (Kolozs County [*Kolozs vármegye, Comitatul Cluj*]) and Szilágy County [*Szilágy vármegye, Comitatul Sălaj*] and the 58 Hungarian villages of Alsó-Fehér County [*Alsó-Fehér vármegye, Comitatul Alba de Jos*]).²³ Some of the settlements with Hungarian population were involved in the programme secretly, as the land owners' society in Héjjasfalva (*Vânători, Nagyküüllő* County [*Nagy-Küüllő vármegye, Comitatul Târnava-Mare*])²⁴ in 1908, and the five settlements by River Sajó (*Slaná*) in 1911 (Beszterce-Naszód County [*Beszterce-Naszód vármegye, Comitatul Bistrița-Năsăud*]).²⁵ The Romanian delegates asked for the involvement of Topánfalva (*Câmpeni, Torda Aranyos* County [*Torda-Aranyos vármegye, Comitatul Turda-Arieș*]) in the regional aid actions in 1906. The memorandum of the Romanian National Party (1910) wanted the expansion of the governmental action to the areas populated by Romanians. The inclusion of the Romanians that liked the Hungarian state concept started from 1910s: Hunyad County (*Hunyad vármegye, Comitatul Hunedoara*) was being involved in the economy development programme from 1911, while Szolnok-Doboka County from 1912.

The separation of the sub-office into Marosvásárhely Sub-office (Brassó County, Csík County, Háromszék County, Kis-Küüllő County, Maros-Torda County, Udvarhely County), and Kolozsvár (*Cluj*) Sub-office (Alsó-Fehér County, Hunyad County, Kolozs County, Krassó-Szörény County, Szolnok-Doboka [*Szolnok-Doboka vármegye, Comitatul Solnoc-Dăbâca*] and Torda Aranyos County) in spring 1913 helped the realisation of the development of the different economic, social and geographical regions.²⁶

The regional aid action had a control over a continuously increasing credit limit of the Ministry of Agriculture budget that stabilized at a rate of 1 per cent. Thus about half a million Krona was spent on the development of the agriculture of the region via this channel annually.

However, the relation of the sub-office with the authorities of the Ministry of Agriculture (Offices of the Agricultural Engineers, Animal Husbandry Supervisors) had not been clearly defined, thus it was problematic. Later it

²³ MNL OL K 184 Order of the Minister of Agriculture on the spread of Székely Action 1909, 29811.

²⁴ *Udvarhelyi Híradó* 11 (1908) 50, December 13th, 5.

²⁵ MNL OL K 184 Issue of the involvement of the settlements near Sajó river 1911, 46582.

²⁶ MNL OL K 184 Issue of the split of the Transilvanian Branch Office into two 1913–128–87548.

supported their work, and took over the simple tasks with low budget. In the interest of the cooperation with the municipalities and the organisations of the landowners the cooperation of county councils was proposed. The cooperation was not completed due to the manifold tasks of the governmental commission, and the organisation of the so called local agent jobs was decided in 1904 (the job was called economic supervisor from 1911). The agents became key figures having wide range of tasks, obtaining strong relationship with the villages: Pál Benkő Teacher of Economy in Háromszék County and Brassó County, Ernő Kiss Senior Forester and excellent photographer in Csík County, and the extremely spirited Béla Dorner Economic Journalist and Viktor Székelyhidny in Udvarhely County.

The office supported the economic development, relief the area from poverty and the change of the mind-set with financial aid, as well as suggestions, propositions based on the local status. “The real support of the people is the one that teaches the abandoned people who lost their trust due to this abandonment to help themselves.”²⁷ “Delivering financial aid that helps today only was not the aim of the action. Tools and equipment had to be obtained, institutes had to be established, people had to be educated, [...] so the cleverness and diligence of the Székely people, thus their own power would change this poor agricultural state.”²⁸

The support and aid policy of the economic programme always favoured the communities or the institutes serving the communities’ interests. In the one hand in the form of low interest (2.5–4 per cent) loans that had to be paid back in 1.5–3 years, and reduced (10–30 per cent) prices in case of payment by cash. The fulfilment of the compulsory contribution (monetary, own power or animal power, land, building) was the condition of the governmental aid. Individual aid was rarely given, only in the years of depression and in extraordinary circumstances (fire, flood, ice).

The target group of the action was mainly the low and middle layer of ploughmen who had family farming, were involved in production, made some improvements in their work, and who amounted to the 30 per cent of ploughmen. The wealthier and cleverer smallholders, about 40–50 people per a village recognised the necessity of improvements by the beginning of the 20th century; they dared to improve, buy pedigree sires and invest in machin-

²⁷ Mihály Koós: *A székelyföldi gazdasági actio 1905. évi működésének ismertetése*. Budapest 1906, 48.

²⁸ Mihály Koós: *A székely actio ismertetése*. Budapest 1905, 64–65.

ery having both the spirit and the finances. The poverty stricken majority were out of the aid programmes due to the lack of finances, knowledge and trust. First of all the office wanted to captivate the charismatic leaders of the villages; parishioners, teachers, their efforts were awarded financially from 1908. Gaining the opinion leaders became essential in completing the economic action, as well as its local issues. The middle and large-size landowners missed the more significant inclusion of the local elite and the consideration of their interests.

The operational circle of the governmental programme continuously changed due to the lack of practical experience, and permanently occurring new tasks. It is corroborated by the general practice of the overhead budget reasoned by the minister: "due to the short time since the action started we have not been able to gain enough practical experience to define and separate the necessary finances of each issues occurring during the year, on the other hand new and unknown issues occur during the development of the action whose completion results in expenditure, which can only be covered by using the overhead budget."²⁹

The moral renewal enhancing action plan of the Ministry of Agriculture based on the organic society model of the agrarians accentuated the importance of establishing the organisation of landowners and cooperative system. They became the basic units of the Hungarian governmental modernisation aid that channelled the state subventions. In the developed villages the so called people's houses or cooperative houses were responsible for the modernisation of the villages and the development of the county.

The sub-office aimed at the development of animal husbandry into key agricultural branch based on the geographical features of the regions at the borders, they cooperated in the definition of the breeding goals, the purchasing of the necessary quality and quantity of breeding animals (bull for service, cow, doe, pig, and sheep) together with renewals and changes in breed. The high death rate of the animals was an unfortunate side effect of the changes in breed in Székely Land, uniform western breed did not evolve due to the forced necessity of interbreeding. Changes in mind-set slowly started to develop due to the prizes in animal keeping and the exhibitions.

The sub-office gained higher success in the field of pasture management. The recovery of the pastures in Hungary resulted in the possibility of better

²⁹ *Indoklás a Földművelésügyi magy. kir. Ministerium 1904. évi költségvetéséhez.* Budapest 1903, 95.

animal keeping. The water management activities of the sub-office was also significant; providing the poor Székely communities with water supply started with construction of water supply pipes and drilling wells.

The office did everything to spread economic knowledge; the establishment of the public library system, organisation of lectures on economy in the winter, riding the marches, and organising study tours. The model farms established besides the teacher training colleges, and the primary economy school in Torda (*Turda*, 1908) had a great importance in agricultural education.

The governmental development of fruit and vegetable growing, home craft industry, dairy production, poultry rearing, and honey production served the better living conditions as well. The home craft industry was promoted by the agricultural government to assure winter employment and bread earning from the end of the 19th century. However, the development of the home craft industry had a significant nostalgia element in it, and its movement could gain a long-term and weighty result in neither trade nor social area.

The employee service activities of the sub-office were accompanied with several debates; besides finding jobs for non-skilled, servant and day-wage labourers, they also supplied labourer groups to prevent harvest strikes.

The sub-office could not cope with a load of accepted tasks (infrastructure, rafting, industry, mining, child safety, spa baths, hunting, and fishing), and after the manifold and extremely complex, *unfulfillable* and naïve programme package of the start in 1905 the vernacularization of the intensive agriculture and the animal husbandry based economy became the primary tasks. The Ministry of Agriculture acknowledged that significant and important changes could not be reached solely by agricultural developments. Thus the necessity of the harmonisation of the development programmes of the ministries became a reoccurring topic of the discussions, especially the issue of the development of Székely Land's industry and infrastructure. They emphasized that 'malpractice of several decades cannot be overwritten by the work of a few years'. The big social regret that followed the establishment and operation of the actions gradually changed into disinterest and indifference.

Results and Afterlife

The regional economic actions seemed to be the most effective positive measures in the industry and minority policy of the governments at the era of the Compromise, which aimed at reducing the problems of supply and employment. On the one hand the goal of the aid actions was to strengthen the Hungarian small, middle and great landowners economically, on the other hand to complete positive economic actions among the landowners of the minorities.

The Székely Action did not result in development in the area of social problems (loans, land distribution). The sub-office had to face an unsolvable task due to the lack of re-parcelling and land consolidation, obscure loan situation, legal uncertainty. These tasks were over the limits of the sub-division, their lack of solution could not be blamed on them. At the same time the sub-office had a positive effect on the lives of the small-holders with the favourable distributions they got machinery that they could not have afforded.

The economic programme contributed to the spread of a developed economic culture, overcoming the disinterest and indifference, as well as the change in the mind-set of the people especially in the more developed, open areas.

The success and the image of the programme highly depended on the employees, especially the personality of the leader, and the agents that played a key role in the relationship with the people; positive results could only be obtained there, where the employees of the sub-offices were diligent, devoted and skilful people.³⁰

The unforeseeable economic and political events, like the completion of the aid action because of the heavy rains in 1912–1913, World War I and then the military occupation, created extraordinary tasks for the sub-offices.

During World War I the sub-offices played an important role in the areas burdened with military actions, they supplied the people with work, food, seeds during the paralysed operation of trade and traffic routes, in moving the population, supporting the spring and autumn agricultural work, as well as informing the people about the status of the war.³¹ The sub-offices completed a significant action concerning real estate issues from autumn 1917; in

³⁰ MNL OL K 184 Order about the organisation of the Ministry of Agriculture's External Offices 1919–128–2233.

³¹ *Magyarország földművelésügye az 1915–1918. évben*. Budapest 1924, 96.

smaller issues they had the right to decide without the permission of the authorities, while in greater issues they had the task of data supply and proposal.³²

The sub-offices in Kolozsvár and Marosvásárhely operated in an occupied area from 1919 with very small budget. During the Hungarian Soviet Republic they were called *commissar sub-offices*. The operation of the sub-office in Kolozsvár was terminated on 15th October 1919, and then it moved to Marosvásárhely. In the first half of 1920 some employees still worked there, and then the Romanian government confiscated the offices.

The majority of the employees of the sub-offices moved to Hungary, and they were employed by the ministries, agricultural supervisory offices or agricultural educational institutes. In the first half of 1920 the ministry eliminated its sub-office system.³³

After the First (1938) and Second Vienna Award (1940) the Ministry of Agriculture organized the sub-offices as they had been organized during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and learning from the earlier experiences they put more emphasis on the direct work relationship with the Transylvanian agricultural society.

To sum it all up, based on my research it can be said, that the importance of the governmental actions lie in the change of the Hungarian economic policy rather than their economic-social effect. It is also linked to the changes in the national public mind-set, moreover, the liberal government realised that the state had to play a greater and more direct role in the development of the economy, thus levelling the regional differences, and supporting the improvement of the underdeveloped regions as it is practiced in the counties that are more developed than Hungary.

³² MNL OL K 184 Branch Office in Eperjes, Order of the Prime Minister Nr. 4000/1917. About the restrictions of the real estate trade 1918–127–18528.

³³ MNL OL K 184 Liquidation of the Branch Office system 128–1922. 60943/1922; 128–1919. 91001/1919.

