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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RAILWAYS AND
AGRICULTURE THROUGH THE EXAMPLES OF GYSEV
AND FERTŐVIDÉKI (HÉV) LOCAL-RAILWAY TO 1920***

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The agriculture and railways are two areas, which complemented each other during the period under consideration and usually one of the operation supposed the other. At the beginning of railway constructions great emphasis was placed on certain agricultural regions and their centres, which were influenced the construction of railway tracks. In western Transdanubia Sopron played a central role, which joined the second railway line in the country. At the time of Sopron–Wienerneustadt railway line opening (in 1847), in addition to the agricultural aspects, the coal mining played an important role around Sopron because both of them were fundamental demands in Vienna using the railway transported. In the establishment of GYSEV, the agricultural aspects were emphatics because the region's sugar factories supported the creation of the company. Due to the development of the main railway lines Sopron had a significant regional manufacturing and distribution central role. The railway of Fertővidék which is treating in GYSEV, crossed rural areas. The relationship between the railway and the agricultural products further increased. The period until 1920 was the best example for this discoverable and sensible contact.

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INTRODUCTION

The geographical conditions of the Carpathian Basin made it possible for several centuries to produce the necessary agricultural goods for local needs and from time to time some of the products got to foreign lands also. The producers of the villages and towns sold their goods at the neighbouring settlements or at the nearest weekly market. This was changed by the Napoleonic Wars, when the countries fought a war that lasted for a quarter century. The need for provision of the millions of soldiers generated a great agricultural prosperity. The Hungarian landowners and peasants both sold their grain, livestock and wine for gold. The prosperity disappeared after the closure of the wars (1815) but the producers already recognized their opportunities on the market. The modernization of agriculture has started and its principles first appeared in books (János Nagyváthy, István Széchenyi, Miklós Wesselényi, etc.) than some of the largest demesnes tried the production of new goods. The main obstacles of changes were the system of feudal services, which were only cancelled by the Civil Revolution of 1848. Beginning with this year the peasants could factually own the land they only worked on earlier. There were also major changes on the larger estates – they started to produce adjusted to the needs of the market. On one side of the market the habitants of towns and the industrial workers appeared as consumers, while on the other side the small and large estates were producing, but the goods could not reach all the regions of the country because the transportation was not resolved.

The trade across the country was finally ensured by the building of the railway system which was built in several stages in Hungary. Constructions were financed with money from private companies in the first period.² The most important producing areas and towns were connected by the railway lines (Map 1). The government could directly influence the constructions after the foundation of the Hungarian Royal Railways in 1868. The private lines were still important besides the state investments (Map 2). The Hungarian government tried to take the main lines into state management, to gain an influence on trade through the fares. In parallel to the line transference to state ownership, the government supported the construction of local rails. The companies got state support until one-third of the investments were complete, to create “cheap railways” from local materials, with local labour, satisfying local needs. This way one of the thickest railway networks of Europe could be constructed in Hungary by 1914 (Map 3). From the over 12 thousand Hungarian settlements most had its own railway station, or was only a few kilometres distance from one.

The thick railway system ensured that the agricultural products got to the markets fast enough. The radically reduced transportation fares by minister Gábor Baross made the use of the railway possible for almost everyone after 1890. The portage of seeds, machines and breeding animals also started along with the transportation of agricultural products. It can be stated that the modernization of agriculture was highly aided by the presence and usage of railways.

The annual traffic data recorded at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries excellently signifies that the railway transported everything but from certain regions mainly the products of agriculture.

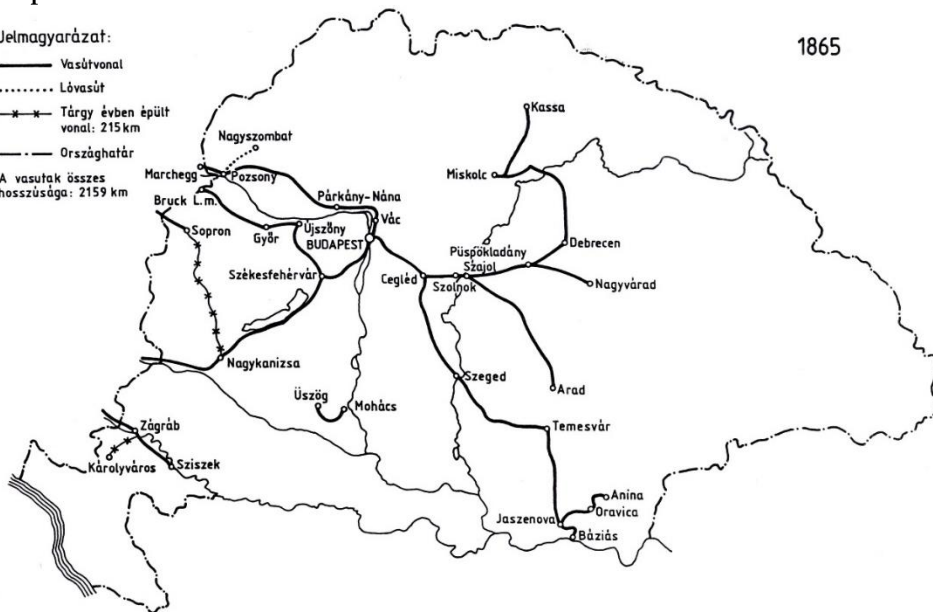
² Majdán János: *A közlekedés története Magyarországon (1700–2000)*. Pro Pannonia Kiadó, Pécs, 2014.

Map 1

Jelmagyarázat:

- Vasútvonal
 - Lóvasút
 - * — Tártya évben épült vonal: 215 km
 - — Országhatár
- A vasutak összes hosszúsága: 2159 km

1865



Map 2

Jelmagyarázat:

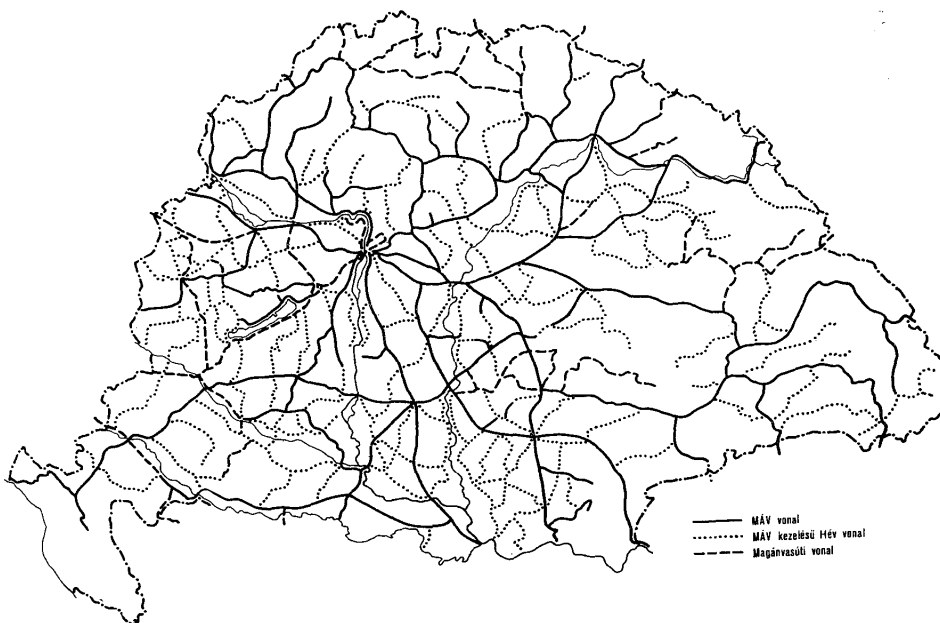
- MÁV vonal 1865 km
- Magánvasút 5355 km
- Összesen: 6420 km
- Újabb vonalrész a forgalomnak nem adott át.
- — Országhatár

1875



1875-ben újabb vonalrész a forgalomnak nem adott át.

Map 3 (1914)



Line of GYSEV with orange colour. In: Freytag Kiadó Bécs 1914. Magyarország közlekedési térképe (reprint)

Alongside the products of great quantities (wheat, corn, potato, livestock) other products such as poultry, dairy products and daily milk portages also had their customers several hundred kilometres from their point of origin.

With the help of the railway the collected eggs, feather, bone, the herbs of the meadows, the products of forests and many other small goods were successfully transited.³

It is important to know the suction effect of the railway traffic on agriculture, because this past routine could be an excellent example for today's farmers! The historical exploration seems to be a matter for only historians, but in practice is a background with great experiences! Nowadays many agricultural producers could take an example from the cultivating of those products that were produced economically with the help of the railways a hundred years ago. This study embarks to signal that the railways and the agricultural produce is in close relationship with the presentation of one main line and one local rail (Győr–Sopron–Ebenfurt Railway and Fertővidéki Local-railway). When building the railways, the constructing companies considered the geographical positions of the agricultural factories. Later, during the operations of the railway lines many different products came into the view of the producers, some of which were not known before in that region. If the transportation was solved, many producers tried the cultivation of economic plants.

The integrated national market and the cultivation of new agronomical products could not have been possible without the railways.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The relation of the Győr–Sopron–Ebenfurt Railway (GYSEV) and agriculture until 1920

The Kisalföld (Little Hungarian Plain) is one the important agricultural regions of Hungary. The agronomical cultures of the region have pasts of several hundreds of years and had an important role in the feeding and modernization of Hungary. The region engaged in the building of railways very early. The second railway line of Hungary was opened between Sopron and Wiener Neustadt on 20th August 1847.⁴ In these years, the main reason behind the opening of this line was the easy and fast transportation of black coal near Sopron, as well as the idea of a railway network connecting the imperial capitol of Wien with the port of Trieste, which never materialized though. The continuation of the railway line between Sopron and Nagykanizsa years later and not in its full length was carried out by the Cs. kir. szab. Déli Vaspálya Társaság (Imperial and Royal Free Southern Ironrail Company) ending on 21th September 1865.⁵

The first train arrived to Győr, the other important centre of the Kisalföld on 24th December 1855, which marked the opening of the line of StEG (Austrian National Ironrail Company) between Bruck and Győr.⁶ But one of the most important factors was overlooked

³ Edvi Illés Sándor: *A Magyar Királyi Államvasutak és az üzemükben lévő Helyi Érdekű Vasutak áruforgalmi viszonyai. Kereskedelmi monográfia I–II.* Budapest, 1896.; *A magyar korona országainak mezőgazdasági statisztikája.* Budapest, 1895.; *Magyar mezőgazdasági statisztika – Országos dokumentum-ellátási rendszer*

⁴ Lovas Gyula: *A bécsújhely–soproni vasútvonal 150 év.* In: *Vasúthistória évkönyv, 1997.* 172-176.

⁵ Lovas Gyula: *125 éves a Győr–Sopron közötti vasútvonal* In: *Soproni Szemle, 2001.* Vol: 3. 72.

⁶ Mezei István (ed.): *A magyar vasút krónikája a XIX. században.* MÁV, Budapest, 2009. 95.

by both companies at the time: that there was no railway on the fertile land between Győr and Sopron. On the said area, the largest agricultural factory was the Kapuvár estate of the Esterházy family. In 1864 József Schulhof, the tenant of this estate received permission together with Móric Fröhlich, a contractor from Pettau, for preparatory works on the Győr–Csorna–Kapuvár–Fertőszentmiklós–Nagyecenk line, which was designed to connect to the Southern railway on the banks of the river Rába. In that year baron Gusztáv Berg took over the management control of the Kapuvár estate,⁷ who was a great supporter of railway construction. Two other factors also meant great help for this project. First the rate insurance law which was ratified in 1867 along with the Austro–Hungarian Compromise, and second the national railway constructing plan of earl Imre Mikó minister for public works and transportation, in which the connection of these two municipal towns also appeared.⁸

A handful of people received permission for preparatory works on the railway connecting Győr and Sopron in 1870, but baron Viktor Erlanger won the construction permit following the codification of the XXVII. law article of 1872.⁹ The Győr–Sopron line was soon completed after, and was handed over to traffic on 3rd January 1876.¹⁰

The Győr–Sopron–Ebenfurt Railway Stock Company was founded at Budapest on 4th February 1875.¹¹ The agronomical producers of the affected region took their part in the preparations and implementations. Both the Kapuvár-centered plan of Gusztáv Berg, and the plan of baron Erlanger had the support of the sugar industrialists of Felsőzserfalva and Cinfalva.¹² The sugar factories were not only a crucial part of the region's agriculture and industry, but they also had nation-wide importance. The sugar-producing zone around Sopron ensured half of the sugar export of the country for around half a century, until World War I.¹³

The most important products transported on the lines of GYSEV were wheat, sugar and sugar beet, flour, livestock, rape, wood for building and fuel, and coal. Apart from the last two, all were the products of agriculture, or agricultural processing industry. These products gave almost 90% of the GYSEV's cargo transportation from the beginning.¹⁴

The volume of coal transporting exceeded the amount of sugar and sugar beets in certain years (e.g. 1886, 1890), but together with the other agricultural products the latter were

⁷ Pavlóczi Béla: Berg Gusztáv. Cypress Nyomdai Szolgáltató Kft., Kapuvár – Budapest., 2014. 54-55.

⁸ Lovas Gyula: A GYSEV kialakulásának története. In: Kovács László (ed.): Magyar vasúttörténet, 3. kötet, Közlekedési Dokumentációs Kft., Budapest, 1996. 167.

⁹ <https://1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3¶m=5561> (Downloaded: 2017.03.17. 17:09)

¹⁰ Képesy Árpád: A magyar vasútügy története. Wodianer F. és Fiai Műintézete, Budapest, 1908. 85-86.

¹¹ Mezei István (ed.): A magyar vasút krónikája a XIX. században. MÁV, Budapest, 2009. 186.

¹² Zwickl, Ludwig: GYSEV, Die Raaberbahn. Brücke zwischen Ost und West. Betriebsgeschichte der österreichischen Linien. Korneuburg, BahnMedien.at, 2011. (Zwickl 2011.) 12-23.

¹³ Tömördi Máté: A cukoripar és a vasút kapcsolata a soproni kereskedelmi és iparkamara területén a kezdetektől napjainkig. In: Horváth Csaba Sándor – Majdán János – Imre Lászlóné – Varga Gábor (ed.): Ezerarcú vasút. Vasút – történet – írás. Magyar Vasúttörténeti Park Alapítvány – Mandulavirág Kiadó Kft., Budapest – Pécs, 2016. 287.

¹⁴ GYSEV Éves Üzleti Jelentések, 1876–1890. (GYSEV Operating History Collection)

predominant. The traffic of the private company reached minimum the 70% of the volume of transportation even in the worst years.¹⁵

The products trafficked from the region – except for the woodworks and the coal from Brennbergbánya – all belonged to agriculture. Along the local producers, the investors of the sugar factories of Félszerfalva and Cinfalva also made a great deal, as they were the main stock holders of GYSEV. The railway provided them cheap, fast and effective transportation and their products could safely reach the large markets of Budapest, Wien or even Trieste.

The cargo traffic of the Győr–Sopron–Ebenfurt Railway grew continuously and evenly in the 1890's and 1900's as well. The business year of 1913 (the last peace year before World War I) was very important, as the volume of transported cargo exceeded 1.000.000 tons (1.017.894 tons).¹⁶ In that year, the transportation of sugar beet almost added up to 30% of all that year's traffic, and the dominance of other agricultural products was also discernible.¹⁷

A small decline was experienced at the outbreak of the war and the following year also, but the volume of trafficked goods was higher than any year of peace both in 1914 and 1915. The main reason for this was the appearance of a new product on the traffic lists: "soldier goods". These were probably catering goods and utensils for soldiers, and added up to 20–25% of traffic in both years.¹⁸

In the middle of World War I cargo traffic changed basically: in 1916, the volume of traffic was even higher (1.062.547 tons) than the ones of the last peace year (1913). At the same time in this year the dominance of agricultural products was gone, and were replaced by "soldier goods". The war transports approached the volume that of the record-holder sugar beet, and added up to more than 25% of the yearly traffic.¹⁹ In the critical years between 1917 and 1920 the decline was 60% compared to war transportations, and the different agricultural products fell in the background.²⁰

The relation of the Fertővidéki Local-railway (Fertővidéki HÉV) and agriculture until 1920

Agricultural products also had a great role in the traffic of the Fertővidéki Local-railway, which was an enterprise of GYSEV. The idea of creating a regional railway around the Fertő lake was already disputed at the beginning of the 1880s, but it could not materialize due to lack of sufficient support and veritable capital. After serious debates the Kiscell–Eszterháza–Fertőszentmiklós–Pándorfalu line was finally constructed according to the plans of Kálmán Radó's group. Radó owed his success to different factors. First, he had veritable capital through the Budapest Bank Association. Second, as the ispán (the leading administrative in a county) of the county Vas, a landowner in Répcelak and a person with excellent political sense, he had a serious influence on the affected areas, so he could gain many supporters. Radó in the meantime also acquired the directorial seat of GYSEV, and the company assisted the cause of this railway line. After all this it is not surprising, that his lobbying had a positive

¹⁵ GYSEV Éves Üzleti Jelentések, 1876–1920. (GYSEV Operating History Collecion)

¹⁶ GYSEV Éves Üzleti Jelentések 1890–1913. (GYSEV Operating History Collecion)

¹⁷ GYSEV Éves Üzleti Jelentések 1913. (GYSEV Operating History Collecion)

¹⁸ GYSEV Éves Üzleti Jelentések 1914–1915. (GYSEV Operating History Collecion)

¹⁹ GYSEV Éves Üzleti Jelentések 1916. (GYSEV Operating History Collecion)

²⁰ GYSEV Éves Üzleti Jelentések 1917–1920. (GYSEV Operating History Collecion)

outcome in 1897, and the local rail was constructed from Kiscell through Eszterháza-Fertőszentmiklós to Pándorfalu, which line was more suitable for Radó's group.²¹

Agriculture played the most important part in the design of this railway's eventual direction. If we search along the local rail we can find two production unit that was an obvious supporter and later beneficiary of this line. The first was the sugar factory of Petőháza, which was already a determinative factor in the primary plans for the railway, because the concessioners wished to connect the factory with the excellent sugar beet growing areas of the Rábaköz and the Fertő Region. The sugar production unit called Offermann Th. and Co. originally operated at Kőhida, which was in the outskirts of Sopron, and moved to Petőháza in 1879 to achieve greater productivity. At the end of the 19th century it had more than 400 workers and produced approx. 50.000 hundredweights of sugar per year.²² The factory was connected to an excessively productive area with the construction of the Fertővidéki Local-railway and later with its side-line, the Hanság Rail. This connection provided the factory with the required amount of sugar beet for a long time. Additionally, the sugar beet from the Kapuvár estate of the Esterházy Entail, which was previously transported to Nagycenk, Félszerfalva and Cinfalva, was now also processed in this new factory.²³ This way the Fertővidéki Local-railway soon had its agricultural and commercial function, since the transportation of sugar beet from the affected area became its main activity. It is no surprise that one of the main stock holders of the railway was the sugar factory of Petőháza. Thus, this new form of transportation also linked the Esterházy Entail's manors of Pomogy, Valla, Szentandrás and Boldogasszony to the factory.²⁴

The other important production unit of the area was the reed and bulrush processing factory of Pál Rüll, working with ten power looms. It was founded next to the railway station of Eszterháza, and proved to be a great competition for the similar small-scale industry of the vicinity, mainly Sarród. Rüll acquired the utmost quantities of the processed reed from the region of lake Fertő,²⁵ but this became even more easily, quickly and uncostly to access. An industrial rail was constructed between the factory and the railway station of Eszterháza-Fertőszentmiklós, to facilitate the transportation of raw materials and products.²⁶ The factory transported most of its goods abroad. Its main markets included Austria, Germany and Switzerland.²⁷

The important role of the Fertővidéki Local-railway in agricultural transportation was signified by the constructing of the industrial tow rails at Mekszikópuszta and Csapod, which

²¹ Horváth Csaba Sándor: A közlekedés és a tér. A GYSEV és a MÁV egyes helyiérdekű vasútjainak gazdasági és társadalmi hatásai az északnyugat-dunántúli térségben 1920-ig, PhD-disszertation, Budapest, 2014. 198.

²² Berényi Pál: Sopron megye. MTA, Budapest, 1895. (Berényi 1895.) 57.

²³ Fábíán Károly: A Petőházi Cukorgyár száz éve. Petőházi Cukorgyár, Petőháza, 1981. 43.

²⁴ Lovas Gyula: A Fertővidéki HÉV (1897–1997). In: *Soproni Szemle*, 1998. Vol: 1., (Lovas 1998.) 33.

²⁵ Berényi 1895. 46-47.

²⁶ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára. VI. 435. 162. doboz. A Győr–Sopron–Ebenfurth vasút (GYSEV) Soproni Igazgatóságának iratai 1872–1948. (SL, GYSEV VI. 435.) Nád gyékény gyári vágány Eszterháza állomáson.

²⁷ A Soproni Kerületi Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara évi jelentése. A kamarai kerület kereskedelmi, ipar- és forgalmi viszonyairól az 1895. évben. Sopron, 1896. 106.

enabled the agricultural products of these demesnes to reach the main railway line.²⁸ A shortage in wagons occurred in 1906 due to the continuously rising transportation needs, so the company expanded its vehicle pool. Narrow-gauge rails were constructed next to many railway stations of this local-railway, to aid the transportation of products to the main lines.²⁹ The most important one of these is the Hanság Rail, which reached its full length in 1916. This rail at the time connected the peat mine of Valla, the sugar factory of Petőháza, the railway station of Eszterháza-Fertőszentmiklós and the Esterházy estates in Moson county over the Hanság Main Canal to the railway built by Gusztáv Berg around Kapuvár.³⁰ The Hanság Peat Factory JSC, which was founded in 1904 and started to mine the rich peat sources of the area owed its opening to the construction of the Hanság Rail. Peat was already utilized industrially in Germany and the Netherlands by that time. Because of the foreign success, the vast treasure of the 450 km² peat site of the Hanság Region could not be overlooked. The area stretches from Valla to Lébényszentmiklós, so naturally it was easiest to connect it to the Fertővidéki Local-railway through the first settlement.³¹ Thus the peat production unit was built next to the Valla railway station and a separate connection track was constructed to the line of the Fertővidéki Local-railway. The mining operations starting in 1905 meant a plus income for the GYSEV, so it was not a coincidence that the company supported with 30.000 kronas the creation of the factory that provided continuous cargo for them.³² But the factory did not fulfil expectations as it simply proved to be uneconomical, thus after a few years of suffering the Esterházy Entail took over its management.³³ Cargo such as building material, livestock, sugar and sugar beet must be highlighted regarding the traffic of the Fertővidéki Local-railway until World War I, but hard coal and lignite, raw and processed iron, wheat, fuel and raw wood, flour, salt, wine, tobacco, bone, tatter, feather, beer, rock oil, petroleum, alcohol and plum also frequently occurred on the transportation lists.³⁴

²⁸ A fertővidéki helyi érdekű gőzmozdonyú vasútra vonatkozó engedélyokirat. In: *Vasúti és Közlekedési Közlöny*, 1896. november 29. Vol: 144., 1293-1295.; A fertővidéki vasút. In: *Soproni Hírlap* (SH), 1896. december 6. Vol: 281., 2.; A fertővidéki vasút. In: SH, 1896. december 8. Vol: 282., 3.; A fertővidéki vasút. In: SH, 1896. december 10. Vol: 283., 2.; A fertővidéki vasút. In: SH, 1896. december 11. Vol: 284., 2.

²⁹ Waggonhiány. In: *Soproni Napló* (SN), 1906, november 8. Vol: 89., 3.; Lovas 1998. 33.

³⁰ Pammer László: A Gazdasági Vasutak. Hansági Vasút: A kapuvári Gazdasági Vasút. In: Kövér István (ed.): Százéves a vasútigazgatóság Szombathelyen. Vasútvonal történetek. II. kötet. MÁV Rt. Szombathelyi Üzletigazgatóság és Közlekedéstudományi Egyesület Vas Megyei Szervezete, Szombathely, 1995. 610-611.

³¹ Tőzeggyár a Hanságban. In: SN, 1904. július 7. Vol: 134., 2.

³² A Hansági Tőzeggyár Részvénytársaság. In: SN, 1904. augusztus 4. Vol: 142., 3.

³³ Lovas Gyula: Fejezetek a Győr–Sopron–Ebenfurti Vasút történetéből 1872–1945. (script) 1976. 69.

³⁴ This conclusion was reached by comparing the works titled *Adatok a vasutak 1915. évi állapotáról és üzleti eredményeiről*, and the *1891–1915. évi összesített eredményekről*. In: *Adatok a vasutak 1915. évi állapotáról és üzleti eredményeiről*, valamint az *1891–1915. évi összesített eredményekről*. Kereskedelemügyi m. kir. minister, Budapest, 1917. This source material was only completed until 1915, because after the disintegration of the Austro–Hungarian Monarch, no such works were ever printed again.

The excessively important role of the Fertővidéki Local-railway in agricultural and industrial transportation is evident.

The function of the Fertő region railways changed slightly after 1914. This railway did not transact systematic traffic connected to soldiers, because it was far from the frontlines, but a war timetable was prevalent.³⁵ The line got significant, when the number of transportations rose due to the building of a POV camp near Boldogasszony.³⁶ The mainly Serbian and Russian POVs sent to this camp worked on the Esterházy Estates.³⁷ Also notable was the hay cut at Szentandrás, Valla and Pomogy in the years of war since it was transported via railways. It served as a fodder for the horses of the army on the frontlines.³⁸ Trains transporting food – mainly cabbage, canned food, potatoes and flour – were also common on this line.³⁹ War never actually reached the local-railway but the wagons and the infrastructure suffered decay as its consequence and thus sometimes the traffic stopped for a while. The Fertővidéki Local-railway was used primarily for transporting POVs and food during the war years.

It can be stated, summing up all the above, that in the construction of the Fertővidéki Local-railway the greatest role was that of the sugar factory of Petőháza, which gravitated towards itself the raw materials of the area round the Fertő lake, and that of Kiscell and Répcelak in the Rábaköz. Besides this, but with smaller significance, the reed production unit of Eszterháza and the peat mining facility of Valla were also interested in the construction of the railway. This latter created its mine in the featured area because the company behind it trusted in the new markets provided by the railways. It can be stated that the main driving force behind the construction of the Fertővidéki Local-railway was the opportunity to directly access the processing places of the agricultural products. The geographical conditions provided the basis for this, thus this railway principally conducted agricultural transportation.

CONCLUSION

To sum up historical experiences: the above detailed construction and traffic of West Hungarian main railway lines and local rails is a great example for the beneficent effect of agriculture on developing and maintaining a new transportation method. The economical exploitation of the existing good opportunities of the geographical aptitudes were enhanced by railway transportation. In the meantime, in certain regions previously not cultivated products (sugar beet) or only locally eligible products (reed) gained greater opportunities in marketing as the result of the stable transportation provided by the railways.

In the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, which operated as one economical unit until the end of World War I, the railways ensured those fast transports that the producers of rural

³⁵ Helyi vonatok közlekedése. In: SN, 1914. augusztus 15. 5.

³⁶ Locsmándi Szabolcs: A határon átnyúló vaspálya. A GYSEV fejlődése és szerepe a határ menti kapcsolatokban Eisenstadt (Kismarton) – Sopron térségben. In: *Tér és Társadalom*, 2009. Vol: 2., 139.

³⁷ SL, GYSEV VI. 435. A fertővidéki HÉV közlekedési naplója. 1916. január, 1916. február 22., 1916. április 4.; Lovas 1998. 33.

³⁸ Zwickl 2011. 64

³⁹ SL, GYSEV VI. 435. A fertővidéki HÉV közlekedési naplója. 1916. január 20., 1916. június 12., 1917. november 6.

areas and the owners of factories needed to successfully sell their products in distant markets. The railway provided the integrated national market, it stimulated and in some cases even specialized the agricultural production.

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