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Why did István Türr become an adult educator? Personal aims and actions in the establishment, national development of Folk Education Circles (Népoktatási Körök).

Abstract: This paper will elaborate upon the personality and personal impact of István Türr on the development of hungarian adult education. Türr was the founder and one of the leading figures in the establishment of so-called Folk Education Circles and its related movement in order to start the education of more than 4 million hungarian illiterate adults. The great Hungarian politician voluntarily became an adult educator as he, having met some peculiar examples of adult education in France and Italy during his exile, recognised that one key element of being an enlightened statesman was to join the hungarian Aufklärung after the 1867 compromise with Austria. Therefore, apart from supporting and organising economic modernisation of modern Hungary, Türr believed in the necessity of education of adults not only through informal, but also through formal or semi-formal education. This paper, based upon relevant bibliography, will examine major impacts to have formed his and some of his fellow intellectuals' minds in becoming moral leaders in hungarian adult education.

Chapter 1

Sub-chapter 1.1 A short walk of life of István Türr

István Türr was born into a well-off bourgeois family in the small merchant-city of Baja on the bank of the river Danube on the 10th of August, 1825. He had a personal experience of unexpectedly having to stop attending school after the first four years for a while because of the sudden death of his father. He tried to get closer to some crafts, like merchant, locksmith-servant, miller, and brick-layer until he joined the Austrian Army in 1842 and was moved into the regiment of his royal highness, Prince France Charles. He started his service as a private, however, six years later he already served in the army of field-marshal Radetzky in North-Italy as a lieutenant. Not too later, he left his position as he favoured the Italian freedom-fight that was sympathetic for him, so he escaped to Italy where he was entitled to form a hungarian legion. After the defeat of the Italian army

Türr moved to Baden and joined the upraisal there as a colonel. The fights having been put down, he went to Switzerland where he was informed of the collapse of the hungarian revolution and freedom-fight against Austria. Türr chose exile and served even in the British expedition army in the Crimean-war. In 1859, he joined Garibaldi's army and had a strong role in conquering Palermo as a general. Later Garibaldi entitled Türr as the civic and military governor of Naples and later was positioned as aide-de-camp to King Victor Emanuel with special diplomatic missions. Türr married the cousin of the french emperor, Napoleon III. in 1861.

István Türr became a leading figure of hungarian groups in exile, however, he could return to Hungary after the 1867 Compromise and general amnesty to follow the hungarian revolution eighteen years after it was ended. He, then, started a new way of life with lots of new, yet, rather modern ambitions and plans. Türr turned towards economic and cultural affairs and it seems that it was not an impact of fashion or mood, but it was a well-based decision formed by personal experience and established moral attitude of a grown-up intellect by recognising and sharing the message and meaning of modernity and civic society.

Also, Türr was influenced by intellectual and social efforts of the Free Masonry he saw in Italy and in France reflecting thoughts, actions to modernise and develop the society and the economy through the dissemination of knowledge and practice. Türr studied water-canal engineering and became an entrepreneur to work out water-system plans and programmes in order to modernise water usage, to irrigation and even to the introduction of cultivation of rice in Hungary. He managed the building of some smaller water-canals in Hungary and participated the engineering-preparations of the Panama-canal. Türr won the right to start the planning of the building and running of the Corinthos-canal in Greece, but was another firm to finish that project.

Türr joined several political missions, he made several unofficial efforts to make a french-italian and austro-hungarian alliance. Later he joined and led many kinds of cultural, educational and economic movements and societies, he also made plans, gave public lectures in order to promote hungarian economic development. István Türr died on 3rd of May, in Budapest in 1908.

Sub-chapter 1.2 On becoming an adult educator

Having received the amnesty of the court in Vienna Türr tried to

implement and realise a new way of thinking and made all efforts to get into rather close relations with open-minded liberal intellectuals, politicians and scientists so as to learn more and more about reality referring to hungarian economy, society and public thinking. This approach, surprisingly, implied the clear desire to know and understand the level and quality of education as an important and inevitably necessary tool in major steps of trying to modernise the country and its population. Türr, amongst other intellectuals, had to personally conclude that the only way to make success in those efforts was to educate through being educated and to disseminate each and all personal experience and knowledge through new public places and halls for education, culture and science, from the academy to simply associations of craftsmen, workers, bourgeois circles, coffee houses, casinos to the academy of sciences.

That is why István Türr's liberal attitude was a great help in getting acquainted with leading intellects of his birthplace, in the town of Baja, where he founded the first Folk Education Circle for the education of adults and in Budapest where most of his educational plans were realised with growing intellectual and public support.

Therefore, it must be recognised that a hungarian army-man, having been in exile for many decades, learned most of his talence not in schools but in life, and yet, the continuous longing for quality-education and knowledge with all his education and science oriented 'adventures' turned Türr's thinking to having to change from a 'classical' self-help intellect, having been a model of an adult educator from the end of 18th and early 19th century Britain and Scotland, to an active community educator and one of the moral leaders and founders of hungarian adult education in the second half of the 19th century (Fieldhouse, 1996).

Türr realised that the first decades of modern primary education for school-age children should be a model and an example for adults. That was why he became the motor of the movement of establishing Folk Education Circles to start from Baja and was spread into other small and medium sized towns and the capital in Pest-Buda, becoming Budapest after 1873.

The circles tried to copy the role of primary schools with their strict rules, however they were rather open and flexible with some of their programmes according to the upper level of dissemination of scientific knowledge in a coeducated way.

Türr founded the first Folk Education Circle in his home town of Baja for adults in 1868, right after the first modern Law was put into

action by the Hungarian parliament to start elementary education of school-aged boys and girls. This attempt was soon followed by many other circles to be established, then Türr also gathered intellectuals to formulate such circles for workers and bourgeois adults' groups in several cities. Having lead an urban adult education movement, Türr opened a public debate on the necessity of involving the public in educational and cultural programmes for adults, namely, by giving them more access to institutions and organisations of that kind.

The opening and the spread of the Folk Education Circles movement changed Türr's personality, whilst he slowly became a well-known promoter of education and especially of the education of adults, many leading politicians involved his movement into lobbying activities to stabilize the financial background of the hungarian primary and secondary education and the fight against illiteracy. Right after 1867, Count József Eötvös, the first minister of education in the hungarian government, considered him as a influential figure with european mind and thinking to promote education and radical social thoughts and moral leadership (Bényei, 1996; Kelemen, 2002)

In his letter and call for the establishment of Folk Education Circles, Türr explained and outlined that the education of the community was a clear social and moral responsibility of the educated and enlightened members of the society representing unrest and ongoing activities to disseminate knowledge, science, culture and arts. He also realised that the state itself would hardly be able to sole and respond effectively to relevant social claims, therefore, the education of the public, namely of adults can only be solved by adults themselves (Gyulay, reprint, 2002)

Türr took examples from Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France with its 'Ligue de l'Enseignement' referring to the necessity to educate adult communities in rural Hungary as well. He tried to underline the importance of developing a real social movement in the community and public education of adults to gain useful knowledge in a world where law, political, social and economic rules would influence of everyday life of each citizens.

Therefore, Türr promoted the formation of local and national associations, alliances for public education and invited all teachers engaged in primary education to help his initiative with extra teaching for adults in their schools after regular education for school-age children during evening hours. Türr envisaged an alliance of folk education circles from almost all villages where primary schools started, where school-teachers were active and available.

Türr published his call on the 30th of September, 1868, and, according to historians of education, that was the first planned public call in Hungary for the education of adults (Felkai 1995, 2002). In the same year, Türr started the process of education in Baja with his fellow intellectuals of the town. Count Eötvös, having heard of the initiative of Türr, suggested that Türr should receive national publicity to spread the idea of establishing a national movement and alliance for the development of adult education in Hungary. There was a special meeting in Pest-Buda at the end of 1868 with leading thinkers in modern hungarian politics, culture and literature, like Kálmán Tisza, Ferenc Deák, Dániel Irányi, Miksa Falk, Pál Gönczy, Mór Jókai, Zsigmond Kemény and Ferenc Pulszky, etc.

Apart from István Türr, the other key figure in the development of hungarian adult education was Dániel Irányi, who, for a was elected as an MP, fought for political recognition, namely, for the legitimation of adult education in Hungary after 1868 and also for the establishment of government-led financing of adult education. Irányi continuously helped Türr in his efforts, whilst Türr accepted the friendship and support from his friend whereby excluded rivalry from their tremendously hard work, especially when Irányi, temporarily, led the Central Folk Education Circle during Türr was away or abroad according to engineering works.

The task of Türr in adult education implied writing articles for the support and participation of intellectuals in adult education as civic responsibility and a moral duty. Moreover, many public lectures and visits having been held in local circles in small towns reflected the urban and bourgeois background of that social process (Németh, 2004; Koltai, 2001).

Sub-chapter 1.3 The Central Folk Education Circle and the national recognition of Türr in hungarian adult education

The Central Folk Education Circle for adults was founded on the 27th of February, 1870, where István Türr was elected as the president of the circle (*Néptanítók Lapja*, 1870). This central circle, as any other tow-circle, had its own charter, promoted the national development of adult education through the hard work of Irányi to gain political and financial support for adult education, and established prize for teachers being involved in the education of urban and rural adult groups through formal and informal activities. The central circle sent out hundreds of letters and calls for the establishment of local folk education circles (*népoktatási körök*-Hungarian translation). Aslo, it

started the very important and complex activity of publishing useful and cheap booklets (Gyulay, 2002) Therefore, the circle invited well-known scientists, teachers, professors, doctors, lawyers, engineers, priests, artists, etc. to disseminate science, art, culture and the mechanism of modern political institutions through understandable writings and lectures. It was not a surprise that the hungarian government recognised its role in the development of education of adult apart from primary and secondary education and separated fifty thousand hungarian forints in the national budget for all relevant activities be supported. Unfortunately, a law on adult education, on the contrary, was not regarded as a necessary tool for promoting the modernisation of hungarian society and education by .

The period in between 1868 and 1875 was the first liberal era of hungarian adult education: many intellectuals, politicians and outstanding scientists, thinkers gathered to participate community activities in order to establish and start modern educational, scientific, cultural institutions from primary to tertiary education, from formal to non-formal and informal settings. It is outstanding how many kinds of formations indicated after 1868 that the claim for education and for being educated was immensely influenced by participation of emblematic figures of modern european thinking, experience and Weltanschauung.

After 1875, the development and spreading of folk education circles slowed down because of the impact of a long, 15 years period of conservative government not considering the education of adults and other struggles to promote informal education and learning of hungarian as a severe task. It was only after 1890, when the movement reached another peak until the turn of the century and during the first couple of years of the following decade.

István Türr convinced teachers' associations to get support on quality development of teaching in the folk education circles. When he returned back to some educational activities, it was strenghtened by his presidency reelected in the Budapest Folk Education Circle, then he took honorary presidency until his death in 1908 and mainly dealt with the collection of donations.

I think Türr's role was very important in the first decades of hungarian adult education as he symbolises a new, modern thinking and active participation in modernising structures, content, and tools of education and making those structures capable of repending to community and personal claims according to learning and education so as to tackle illiteracy, undereducation and to expand knowledge

with quality. The folk education circles have so far been the example of the mixture of formal and informal education, in between static and flexible teaching methods. Türr himself became an adult educator by not having constantly prepared for that mission, and yet, he considered his role and position as turning back to a never finishing school without havng to ever leave (Felkai, 2002).

After 1890, folk education circles and their colourful activities gave new impetus to workers' education, trade union education and church-oriented adult education (e.g. catholic and protestant adult education). Also, new formations, like the Elisabeth Folk Academy, the Popular College Courses, the establishment of the hungarian Urania movement reflected a variety of community places where taching and learning of adult came into the focus of social activities.

Chapter 2

Sub-chapter 2.1 Education of Adults in the Folk Education Circle

The elementary education of adults was one of the basic tasks of folk education circles. Elementary education was formed into two basic sets. The first set was a '3R-course' (reading, writing, arithmetics) for complete illiterate at evening hours of three occasions on mid-week days and a second set, for those who were literate, a development course with new knowledge given through lectures and public readings at afternoon hours of week-end days, namely, on Saturdays and on Sundays. It is interesting that teaching in the folk education circles was not coeducated, and women were mainly taught by female teachers and lecturers. Board members of the Budapest Folk Education Circle visited lectures and examinations and gave presents to some adult students to make courses more popular to attend.

Many teachers offered free lectures for the circles and almost all members of the boards of circles joined in for lecturing as well. The Ministry of Religious and Public Education Affairs let the national alliance of folk education circles to issue certificates for those who successfully passed final examinations. There were two special curricula, one for mixed groups of beginners and advanced students, and another for pure beginners. (Gyulay, 2002).

Lectures for beginners covered natural science according to basic geography and biology, and social science referring to history.

Some folk education courses and lectures were hosted by elementary schools of cities and smaller towns, like Budapest,

Cegléd, Székesfehérvár.

Folk education circles of some cities organised special courses in Hungarian grammar and literature. Also, the circle in Budapest started courses on basic trading and marketing and were mainly favored by female adult students. Subjects of the course involved book-keeping, business-letters, office-work, etc. When Sunday became a free day without having to work after 1891, most irregular and special courses for advanced adult students and well-attended popular lectures were mostly held on Sundays.

The folk education circles, after long enquiries to the Ministry of Defence, received the right in 1872 to hold courses for illiterate soldiers which, surprisingly, did not become very successful. On the contrary, the teaching of illiterate prisoners was a real success, and, moreover, courses on moral philosophy were organised especially for prisoners upon request.

Sub-chapter 2.2 The Importance of the Folk Education Circle in the Modernisation and Development of Hungarian Adult Education

Researchers on the history of the development of formal and informal adult education in Hungary must realise that the folk education circles movement influenced informal teaching and learning which became popular by the end of the 19th century and that fact is generally considered as the impact of a liberalised society with more civic rights gained and practised.

Folk education circles invited University and college professors and lecturers who offered mostly free and open lectures and had effective ways to disseminate scientific knowledge and to promote reading and intellectual discussion on nature, life, society, economy, the world, environment, culture, arts, sport, etc.

Folk education circles also took up courses and lectures on industry and entrepreneurial studies after 1873 which can be easily explained as clear reflections of a systematic development of Hungarian industry and trade through modern industrial and trade law implying the education and training of craftsmen with open and public examination to follow.

The folk education circles welcomed the idea and plans to open 'folk-libraries' in almost all urbanised communities and organised its own library service for poor and semi-poor citizens and, moreover, it proposed, in 1873, the establishment of a cultural-hall similar to the Toynbee-hall in London to be set up in Budapest for huge public lecturing and open readings. István Türr shared all those initiatives

and negotiated upon several of them to be supported by national and local politicians and businessmen. It seems, finally, that the educational ideas and plans of a military personnel from the town of Baja could be realised and spread country-wide reflecting the mentality of a peculiar Hungarian adult educator.

Number of adults participating courses of folk education circle in Budapest

school year	male	female	Total
1870/71	922	958	1880
1871/72	1131	1163	2294
1872/73	1160	762	1922
1873/74	1113	924	2037
1874/75	1184	990	2174
1875/76	830	759	1589
1876/77	667	372	1039
1877/78	666	335	1001
1878/79	670	360	1030
1879/80	592	254	846
1880/81	547	240	787
1881/82	452	208	660
1882/83	514	217	731
1883/84	476	232	708
1884/85	446	229	675
1885/86	530	271	801
1886/87	225	231	456
1887/88	315	337	652
1888/89	298	402	600
1889/90	300	351	651
1890/91	293	366	659
1891/92	300	371	671
1892/93	391	267	658
1893/94	448	295	743
1894/95	449	341	790
Total of 25 years	14819	11235	26054

Source: B. Gyulay, reprint, 2002.

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