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## ABSTRACTS

### Anna Klára Andor: Currency is everything: Hard-Currency Stores under Socialism: The Imprint of Social Inequality in a Shortage Economy

The study analyses one of the controversial ‘inventions’ of socialist trade and commerce, the system of hard-currency stores that sold Western goods in socialist Hungary, accessible only for customers with convertible currency. The analysis sheds light on the social impact of these shops on Hungarian society.

As is well known, compulsory substitutes and a shortage economy characterized by scarcity were defining traits of the socialist system. Shortage and its associated phenomena extended beyond the economic sphere, and encroached upon practices of everyday life, leisure, art, and consumption. Created in the 1960s as a commercial innovation of the softening socialist economic system, hard-currency stores (also known as diplomats' shops, “dollar shops”), further reinforced the sense of deprivation felt by those segments of society that – in the absence of convertible currency and jobs abroad – could only afford to gaze at their shop windows. The existence of dollar shops thus divided the population: those who had Western currency and could benefit from such stores, and those who had only forints and were excluded.

This study examines the impact of this unequal situation and its imprint upon society; in other words, what hard-currency stores may reveal about the social differences that pervaded socialist society. The brief overview of the customers eligible to shop in these stores, is followed by a discussion of shortage economy through a description of what was on offer there. It then focuses on the emergence of new practices aimed at reducing inequality and providing access to the much-coveted Western consumer goods, often in less than legal ways.

### Ádám Tibor Balogh – Róbert Török: The Portrait of János Gál, a Fiume Merchant of Colonial Goods: A Brief History of hHis Business

The portrait and business of János Gál of Olasztelek (1865–1944), a Fiume merchant of colonial goods, reveal hitherto unexplored phenomena in the history of commerce: how a Székely nobleman could become a proficient merchant at the end of the nineteenth century and how one can gain insight into the brief history of a successful Hungarian enterprise in the Port of Fiume. The figure of János Gál can be reconstructed from fragmented historical and museological

sources from the decades before and after the turn of the nineteenth century. The economic and industrial development of the port city of Fiume prompted Gál to move from Székelyföld to the Hungarian-Croatian seaside where he started his own business under the name *Első Magyar Kávé Beviteli Üzlet* (First Hungarian Coffee Import Business). János Gál became an active member of local Hungarian community life, for example, he became the president of the *Fiumei Magyar Kör* (Hungarian Association of Fiume). Ten years into his career, he was awarded the title of purveyor to the imperial and royal courts. He was a supplier to the Austro-Hungarian Navy and the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie. His professional history provides a glimpse into the business and social difficulties caused by the First World War and the subsequent Trianon Peace Treaty. Due to the unsettled conditions of Fiume and the termination of Hungarian state subsidies, several trading companies left the city, and in the end, János Gál also did the same: he moved to Budapest in the 1920s.

### Tünde Csendes: Grain Trade and Jewish Grain Merchants in Győr

This study traces the increasing importance of the Jews of Győr and Győrsziget in the town's grain trade. Using archival sources and contemporary press, the article explores how the city's flourishing grain trade and milling industry was built by entrepreneurial Jewish merchants, and analyses their activities in comparison with those of the grain trade in the city of Pest. The study also sheds light on the circumstances that brought about the need to change the economic profile of Győr at the end of the nineteenth century, and the prospects these wealthy Jewish merchants of Győr sought out to secure their future.

### Gabriella Eőry: "Wineries and Golden Millions": An Attempt at Increasing Hungarian Wine Export in the 1920s

The study examines the programme of the Hungarian ministry of agriculture, designed to boost Hungarian wine export after the Treaty of Trianon. The wine industry faced both the problem of a sharp decrease of consumers, and the fact that wine export became incredibly hard because of the new borders of Hungary. Therefore, the government focused on finding new markets for Hungarian wine in Europe. The study first describes the programme in detail and investigates the political circumstances and the Hungarian government's ways to finance this initiative, which is followed by an overview of wineries in different European towns and their incidental scandals and hardships.

The second part of the study explores the origin of the Hungaria Restaurant, the Hungarian winery in London, revealing that its entire foundation process was based on political connections and friendship. The figurehead of the Lon-

don winery was an intriguing person with a career that took him from Lancashire to Russia and back to England. He established companies, one after the other, and found the perfect person to be a manager of the winery. Meanwhile, the government invested more and more money in building and furnishing the restaurant itself. The Hungaria Restaurant in London was successful, but the management decided to open a new venue in a nearby town up the Thames. The Hungaria Restaurant River Club in Maidenhead became popular but never attained outstanding financial success.

The study then traces the decline of the Hungarian wine export programme and the failure of the wineries involved all over Europe. In conclusion, even though the attempt eventually failed to resolve the original problem, it made the treasury accumulate significant debt.

### Károly Halmos – Máté Tamás: Distribution, Trade, Distrust: On Army Provisioning

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the provisions for the imperial and royal army consumed a large part of the Habsburg Monarchy's treasury expenditure, making army supply one of the most important public procurement procedures of the time. In this article, this complex system, which, in the words of O. Williamson, operated on the borderline between market and hierarchy, is presented through the memoirs of Ignác Vörös de Farad (1757–1825). The author of this ego-document was a commissioner during the war between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire in 1788–1791, and as such was involved in the management of the supply system. Through textual analysis, the system and its stakeholders in a period of military conflict are made visible and interpretable, using methods of new institutional economics and new economic criticism. The paper is based on the forthcoming publication by the authors, entitled *A katona, a kereskedő, a tisztviselő és az egér: Hadsergellátás és mikrotörténet: a regénytől az aktáig* (The Soldier, the Merchant, the Clerk, and the Mouse: Military Supply and Microhistory from Novels to Archives.).

### Éva Mikos: Foreign Matter in Our Food: Mercantile Legends in the Hungarian Press of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

The type of contemporary or urban legend known as the mercantile legend was first registered in the United States in the 1970s. In these stories, unsuspecting customers are shocked by animals or animal remains found in the food items bought in a shop, supermarket, or fast-food restaurant. US researchers saw in this type of story the embodiment of the common man's opposition to the modern commercial structure, with an underlying critique of capitalism and the

global economy. From the early twentieth century onwards, mercantile legends have become a regular feature in Hungarian-language press, even though the region has not always been part of free competition and market economy. However, the interest in these legends is not exclusively sparked by concerns about economic trends. They may also reflect people's anxiety about the superficiality and negligence of large food manufacturers, the unhealthy nature of frozen or fast food, and concerns about the poor hygiene during transport and storage, which were an equally legitimate fear of the public during the socialist shortage economy too. By providing simple and reassuring answers to complex questions, urban legends are used to reduce people's anxiety about the opaque operation of highly structured societies.

### Balázs Tinku-Szathmáry: When the Danube Was an International Freight Corridor: The Landscape of International Transport after the Regulation of the Iron Gates through the Example of the First Danube Steamship Company

The regulation of the Iron Gates Gorge, completed in 1898, gave a new impetus to Danube freight transport, with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy becoming the biggest beneficiary of the process. Thanks to the records of the Royal Hungarian Navigation Authority of the Lower Danube region (Aldunai m. kir. Hajózási Hatóság), authorised to collect shipping and towage dues, detailed data are available on the ships passing through the Lower Danube. The records kept from 1898 onwards were published in the Statistics section of the annual Government Report, published by the Central Statistical Office. The data series allows the analysis of the cross-section of records to provide insight into the characteristics of freight traffic on the Danube. Since these data are independent of those recorded in the customs offices of the countries involved and are arranged by shipping company, the analysis extends to the freight volume of the shipping companies and the business cycle of the goods they transported. The study focuses on the first Danube Steamship Company (Dunagőzhajózási Társaság / Donau-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft: DGT/DDSG) as an unavoidable major player in Danube freight transport. In addition to the traffic volume of DDSG, the study also explores the factors that gave this company a competitive edge, such as corporate investments, vessel fleet, agency network, and coal loading solutions.

## Máté Rigó: Winners of a Lost War: Why Could Some Hungarian Industrialists Turn a Profit between 1914 and 1918?

This article expands on the themes explored in Rigó's *Capitalism in Chaos, How the Business Elites of Europe Prospered in the Era of the Great War* (Cornell University Press, 2022) and traces why some industrial companies were enriched even as imperial treasuries were drained. It shows that the blockade of the Central Powers by the Allies and a series of pro-business policies led to an industrialization drive in East-Central Europe, even in previously underdeveloped regions such as Transylvania; as a result, the era of the First World War bred its own class of ultrarich military suppliers who profited from low taxes and increasing demand. In the meantime, military conquest in Southeast and Eastern Europe gave rise to Hungarian plans of economic expansion. Ironically, in the meantime, Hungary became subject to German economic domination. The second part of the article explores these themes through a case study of the Renner tannery's expansion in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár).