

**Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation**

**An Aristocratic Portrait from the Nineteenth Century**

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**Count György Andrassy in the Reform Era**

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Debrecen  
2011

## **I. The aim of the dissertation, the circumscription of the topic**

In contrast with the former ages, the Hungarian aristocratic society issued substantially more people in the first half of the nineteenth century, whose lives resonated to several, independently possible weird, thanks to the multifarious, contemporaneously and successfully filled roles. Count György Andrassy belonged to these aristocrats. He can appear in front of us in the shape of a social welfare-donor, a cultural Maecenas, a modern industrial contractor, a “rational” agronomist, a “széchenyian” reform-magnate, and a representative role-player conservative peer.

In our thesis, we tried to examine the period of his life, which started from the mid-1820s and finished with the end of the Reform Era. We chose this period because he became a versatile character and public character that time. However, we aimed to create a portrait collection of the count, not only a political biography.

Thus, we attempted to introduce him as a politician, a “széchenyian” reform magnate, a rationally farming landlord and industrial contractor, and, for example, a European traveller. However, we obviously knew the limits, as well. Despite every diligence, we have not managed to create a “whole” character-reconstruction. This is due to the fact that there are few sources between those we have found until recently which allow for self-reflection (diaries, letters containing information related to private life).

These, at the same time, strengthen our aim to extend the list of those monographs, comprehensive (political) portraits, which, thanks to the growing interest in the nobility, have been published in the last two decades, and to examine such political characters having a magnate or better-to-do nobleman origin, whom we have not have a biography yet.

We aim to establish a biography about him that provides a good base of analysing how a „széchenyian” aristocrat’s behaviour could become a model even in the case that he did not have a career Széchenyi himself assigned to him at the turn of the 1820s-1830s. On the other hand, it aims to provide some additional facts for the analysis of the activities and private walk of life of the conservative politicians in the 1840s.

## II. Sources, bibliography, and the methodological background of the topic

In spite of his eventful life, the count belongs to the less studied figures of the Hungarian history. No major monograph has been written about him yet, and, since he is also underexamined in the works related to the history of the House of Andrassy, we can get information about him and the main results of his activities from the entries found in some encyclopaedias.

The majority of the works that are aspiring to submit a comprehensive view of his life were published in the Age of Dualism. However, they were not written by historians, but publicist and his acquaintances. They appeared in the pages of newspapers and books, and they are similar to a narrative-style, contemporary memoir. In addition to that, some of them do not exceed a cyclopaedic entry. Nevertheless, even if they can therefore operate only as a biographical database, we use them as biographies.

In connection with the transfiguration of aspects of the depiction of Andrassy, we wish to emphasize that they lack the adequate exposition of turning points of the career. Thus, we cannot get to know from them when and how the Count's political role-conversion took place.

Firstly, this fact is ascertained in two short biographies appearing in 'Vasárnapi Újság.' One of them was published in October 1859, still in the life of the count. The second one was already written after his death, in January 1873. These mainly show appreciation for his national-public acts, but only mention his conservative-ministerialist period, and withhold the oppositionist. The same can also be told about Soma Vereby's work, which appeared in the magnate portrait series, printed in the 1860s.

Two later works, above all, have to be mentioned due to their apologetic style and political tendentiousness. The first of them was written by Károly Galgóczy, one decade after the Count's death. It is found in a biography-collection that is about those persons who had played significant roles during the pre- and protohistoric period of the work of *Országos Magyar Gazdasági Egyesület*. Galgóczy's work emerges from the group of the Andrassy-biographies written in the Age of Dualism. However, it tells us nearly nothing about the Count's activities during the War of Independence and the Age of Neo-Absolutism, or shows them as testified by a "moderated" conservative politician in favour of his homeland.

Artur Maurer tried to re-interpret or simply dismiss the ministerialist aspirations even more than Galgóczy. It explain his method, of course, that he was the medical advisor of the

House of Andrassy, and, for that very reason, he could only speak of them in the voice of obligatory homage. Nevertheless, it is to his credit that he attempted to collect the facts and several anecdotes related to the genus. His biography about György Andrassy concentrates on the Count's activities in the Reform Age. It emphasizes that the "*illustrious protagonist*" of the era's political fights always acted in favour of the public benefit, and, "*during his career, went pari passu*" with István Széchenyi. However, speaking about the 1840s (the Count affiliated to the conservatives in that decade), Maurer creates the portrait of a magnate with an apolitical behaviour, whose acts then were not turning points in his life, but could help to bolster the national-public modernization even more.

Sarolta Vay, too, did not expose clearly the change of the Count's political affiliation, which divided his public duties into two parts. Moreover, there is a remarkable contradiction between those two statements of her that the Count "*belonged to the moderated conservative party*", and "*he was not only one of those, who supported the reform-issues built up to laws by the parliament of 1830-32, but one of their protagonists in the upper chamber*".

In addition to that, there is also a common feature in the five biographies, namely that they intermediate such a narration connected to the Count's political activities, which does not lack the frequent mentioning of his relationship with Széchenyi. And this contributed to the fact that his acts during the War of Independence and the Age of Neo-Absolutism got less interest by them.

On the contrary, the works written after the Second World War, exactly concentrate to that aspect. Whereof they do not even mention accidentally, is his national-public activity. It is clear, of course, that there is ideological prejudice and political tendentiousness in contrast to Galgóczy's, behind this behaviour. Especially in the case of Erzsébet Andics. She only named the Count as one of the aulic politicians of the Reform Age and 1848-49, who, as a member of the conservatives' brains trust, the closest adjudging group, exerted in favour of triumph of the retaining efforts. Alike her, Iván Zoltán Dénes mentioned Andrassy as one of those ealdormen, who guaranteed the government's influence in the counties, as an imperial commissar of the Freedom Fight, and as a banneret in his monographs written about the political role and world of values of the conservative politicians of the Reform Age. However, we think that, although these forms of political representation do not judge in accordance with acts related to national reform, it would have been worthy to talk about the former stages of his life, in connection with the mentioned commissions, and, particularly with the genesis of the political group.

Not incidentally, there were no biographies came out during the two world wars and the socialist era. However, after 1989, the newest, largest, and most deeply-written of all monographs appeared, thanks to László Zsámboki's work, *„Vérrel, vassal, értelemmel” – Gróf Andrássy György (1797-1872) és az Andrássyak az ország fölemelkedéséért.*

The author examined primarily the Count's career in the Reform Age, and concentrated less on the period after the War of Independence. He concentrated to Andrássy's acts as a dietarian deputy, and built up his oppositionist attitude. Zsámboki also mentioned the Count's friendship with István Széchenyi, the support of Széchenyi's reform-initiations, and, in connection to the latter, Andrássy's role in economic life, too. This second topic provides the backbone of the biography. Within this framework, especially the modernization of Andrássy's ironwork and the brotherhood of the Upper-Hungarian mineworkers are being exposed.

This biography emphasizes more than any other does the specific characteristics of Andrássy's reform-magnate attitude. Nevertheless, we deem that similarly to most of the former works, it hardly speaks about his position among the conservative peers. It also does not give a thorough picture of that stage of career during which the Count definitely worked to conserve the political and social structures of the country.

Beyond the reviewed biographies, there are many works related to the notables of the Reform Age, in which the major events of the Count's career are mentioned. We can find information about him especially in the Széchenyi-bibliography, but volumes pertinent to other coevals, like Ferenc Deák or Lajos Kossuth, also enlighten one or two details of his political profession.

We can see him from another side through the Festschrift introducing the life of Mrs. Dénes Andrássy, Countess Franciska Hablawetz. This book was published at the beginning of the last century, and, thanks to its authors, it emphasizes the Count's strict ethic, his distance-keeper behaviour with people belonging to other social classes. It also shows him such a magnate, who is very proud of his gentility.

In contrast to his public career and his family life, there is not any work, which can present his wide-ranging activity on the terrain of agriculture and industry in detail. Nevertheless, some monograph-like studies introduce us into the topic, and provide a good summary about the Count's role in the transfiguring economic life of his era, and about his enterprises and economic assets. It also cannot be let out of attention that his attempts to modernize his domains and ironworks are mentioned in numerous volumes. Especially the second aspect is exposed in the related literature. The works primarily reflect on the fact that

he was one of those pioneers who applied the newest European metallurgy methods in Hungarian practice. Hence, he took a significant part in Hungary's nineteenth century industrial modernization.

The representation of the eventful career, of course, is surrounded by many methodological problems. We emphasize here the relationship between the Count and his social milieu, and, in favour of the course of life and portrait to be written, the selection among the events considered decisive. The first one bears in itself the possibility of proportion displacement. As Patrice Gueniffey has shown, if attention focuses on the order of things, and the reconstruction are built on the assumption of similarity among the experiences taken by the examined person and his contemporaries, the implication of the context into the biography may cause that the historical/social correspondence finally takes the place of biography.

Therefore, we have accomplished the contextualization mostly in little details, and allowed some room for both the frame-like form, i.e. the chapter- and subsection-opening articles, both the explanations in the units of the text related to a social, political, economic or cultural issue or phenomenon. This has been demanded by the upkeep of the dissertation's structural unity and the style of text writing, too. That is, we have tried to let the narrative (which is better for the genre of biography than the interpreting-problem-focused method) triumphs in our thesis. However, in the case of the latter stages of the Count's career, for example, his joining to the conservatives, we have, at least up to this, attempted to concentrate on analysis and interpretation. Nevertheless, besides every simplification, we wanted to avoid (particularly related to his youth) the depiction of life-situations and stages of career in a way that could deprive the personality of the possibility of selection.

The other problem is connected to the searchable stages of the Count's career. Here, we have also not managed to avoid the subjective selection. To achieve this, political activity, society- and self-favoured pursuit, helping socio-cultural initiations and family life give constant, fit-into-the chronological frame of dissertation aspects. The last ones, at the same time, have justified our decision to create a portrait collection reflecting his eventful stage of career, not only a more detailed political biography. Thus, besides having examined his political activity and his work on the terrains of economy and culture, we tried to introduce him as a European traveller as well as a rationally farming landlord and industrial contractor.

Nevertheless, since only few sources have been found during our researches that allow self-reflection, we have desired to avoid psychological interpretation. This is due to the fact that we can, in most cases, approach the Count largely through opinions that were formed of

him by other people, or through his roles and acts, and he is less exposed as a thinking man, who enlightens the “*internal seed*” of his personality.

Maybe this is not accidental. Count Andrásy was the man of practice, who turned to the frame of things, both on the private and public scenes of his life. He searched for concrete challenges, and did not leave documents reflecting on his feelings and thoughts.

The situation is quite different with the documents referring to his corporational activity conceived in the spirit of national reform, and with those that present him as a farming and contracting magnate. Their most important deposit is the mighty family records in the Archives of Levoca, in which there are more than a hundred (with the other records, the “betléri”, more than one hundred and eighty) linear metres, rough source material. The documents are from the period between the Age of the House of Árpád and the 1940s, and arranged into 748 boxes. The records contain papers with economic reference in more than ninety percent. This last factor has forced us to select eagerly in the material, for we have not seen the documents referring to the Count’s domains, forest economies, and industrial buildings workable in the frame of our thesis.

We also indicate that as we have attempted to create a portrait of the Count as a magnate who tried to fill the role of a practical landlord and a model farmer contemporaneously, we have focused mostly on those documents during our researches, which give us information about his personal ideas, various experiments, and some of their results. Thus, further research is needed to introduce his domains by the amount of lands, the proportion of manorial and peasant propriety, the government of estates, furthermore, the peasant rent in kind and work. Apart from this, we will speak about his domains, the natural-environmental surroundings of the settlements connected to them, the quality and usability of their lands, and their farming, as well.

We have examined administrative archival material during our researches at Levoca. One part of this material is from the Count’s activity as an administrator, a lord lieutenant, and a royal commissary, between 1838-1848. The documents are partly from the Hungarian Chancellery and the Regentship. Above all, there are the documents of the county administration in Gömör and Sáros, as well, such as captive and cause registers, memorials to the Count, accounts of dietal and county events, minutes of assemblies, notes and letters taken and written in the midst of commissarial work.

Besides them, we have gathered information from the Archives of Kosice from the National Archives of Hungary, from the Archives of Sátoraljaújhely, from the National

Széchenyi Library, and from the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

We bring out from our sources the Széchenyi-heritage, especially the diaries and the correspondence, and, for Andrassy was an agile member of the political, economic and cultural life since the beginning of his career, as the contemporaneous press depicted him.

Furthermore, we have taken sources into the research, like the Count's largely unpublished diary about his travel accounts and observations, or its accessories, such as accounts of expenses, itineraries.

### **III. The theses of the dissertation and the results of the research**

In the case of György Andrásy, it is really a difficult task to summarize the biography in a thesis-like manner, because of the judgement of the numerous, simultaneously, and completely fulfilled roles. As we have organized our research around the political, the national-public and the economic activities (and the character-depiction can added to them), as principal aspects of examination, the main theses of the dissertation are the following:

#### **1.) Stages and turning points in the Count's political career**

The first stage of György Andrásy's career, which started in comitat-milieu, bore the marks of the order-gravamenal oppositionism. This attitude conceived in 1822-23, during the national protestation against the unlawful edicts avenging the counties, and, as it can see from the sources, it embodied in some not too forceful displays against the activity of the royal commissaries and the governmental actions. Andrásy focused on defending the order-constitutional self-government, but his attitude towards the nasty financial-economic themes was not too determined. However, it is clear that his decisions were not only affected by his deputy instructions, but his loyalty to the king, too.

Thus, he could represent himself as a magnate demonstrating a careful attitude, on the one hand involuntarily, and on the other hand, by tactical thoughts. Despite this, he was a well-known member of the order opposition in the first half of the 1830s, who was followed-up by the government.

However, he already explicated during the first reform parliament that he is not in accord with all of his friends' thoughts on Hungary's future, and, for example, he abided by his opinion against the majority of the opposition in ecclesiastical matters.

That is the reason why we have emphasized recurrently that he did not belong to the liberals. His aptness to support reforms had inspired him only to assist the improvements wearing the marks of order-modernization, already in early times. It is connected to this that he did not form his relationship with peasantry along the amplification of civil rights, but in the spirit of traditional, benevolent paternalism. To conserve the actual social order and political structure, he cut himself from everything, which surpassed this.

Therefore, although he had begun his career as a "széchenyian" magnate, and this role had coupled with oppositionism for a while, he started to float to a new political-public field

along of the evolution of reform movement. Nevertheless, his first period among the peers certified that he continued to keep himself in the camp of the opposition.

Furthermore, our research has certified, that although in political aspect, his career was quite a wide-ranging on the way from István Széchenyi's magnate-elite company to the conservatives, national reform, and sometimes oppositionism were the defining factors for him in the period of cooperation. This aspect was dropped out from the latter works summarizing his career. It is not accidental that the contemporaneous biography about him, published in 1859, did not mention the phase spent with the opposition, and only appreciated his national-public acts, and lists him among the conservatives.

The years between the first reform parliament and the turn of the decade opened probably the most interesting, but at the same time, most contradictory chapter of the Count's public career. His connections with the peers of the opposition were gradually weakened during this period, and he approached more and more the camp of the Viennese government. The first milestone in this process was his inauguration into the administratory of Gömör, that, of course, he helped to come about as a "Gutgesinnt" peer with his loyalty to the king and with that, he exposed himself as a magnate, who refuses the initiations which can lead to structural changes.

Nevertheless, although he began a new stage of his political career in August 1838, and his connections with the government became closer and closer, his displacement in political field did not reach its final point. In that process, he achieved the second milestone during the second half of the parliament of 1839-1840. He represented conservative thoughts in the senate-house, and by that he did not engage in sharp discussions with the notables of the opposition, but supported the ministerialist peers in important cases, he almost cut off those political and personal threads which yet associated him with the opposition. However, that is the reason why we look at the stage of his career between February and May 1840 as the *first stage* of the process of *integration* to the new political community, not as a period, in which he would have already been a member of the group of the conservative magnates.

This statement is bolstered by a conversation between Andrassy and a conservative magnate, Count Albert Sztáray. According to this, it seems that Sztáray accounted Andrassy as one of the széchenyian/oppositionist aristocrats even in the spring of 1841, and did not count him definitely into the conservatives. In addition to this, in Gömör, the relationship between Andrassy, the administrator, and the opposition was not polemic, but pragmatic.

In our opinion, the events that fixed the shift round on his political career and strengthened his linking up with the government were, definitely, his naming to the lord

lieutenant office of Sáros County. This was the act that made the changing of the Count's position eventual in the political field, and created the chance for him to join to the camp of the government, already undoubtedly. In the subsequent years, this magnate, whose relationship with other confessions, view of society, social behaviour and taste wore upon themselves traditional marks, reached political conservatism.

However, in the new milieu, he got representative role rather than theoretical work. It had already seen in the case of those fragments of thoughts coupled with historical citations, which had been exposed at his inauguration to the lord lieutenant office of Sáros County. Those, although undoubtedly conceived in a long mental development, depict the Count only as a "conceptionizing" magnate who did not turn to the systematic and particularly not to the theoretical political thinking, and lacked the ability for this, too. He did not become an ideologist of his party, for he lacked the required mental attainments and often chose meticulous methods.

These statements are confirmed by his lord lieutenancy, during which he represented, although with bigger and bigger prestige, but sometimes with missing the adequate assurance in the interest of his political community. His behaviour might supposedly be due to the fact that he usually had a calm administration work, in which there was no need for forced decisions. He did not have to intervene into severe political fights, thanks to that he led a traditionally ministerialist county. Therefore, unlike many of his colleagues, he could dispense with those strict methods, which were necessary in other counties to strengthen the influence of the Viennese government. Arising from this situation, he simply could not induce serious conflicts, unlike the infamous administrators, Lajos Tisza and Sándor Luka. However, he would not have managed to avoid the sequential application of unlawful methods, if the king had sent him into one of the oppositionist counties in the spring of 1842.

Drawing to the peak of his career in the Reform Age, he was working more and more against the reform initiations advanced to boost sweeping changes, which he deemed dangerous. He, as the lord lieutenant of Sáros County, belonged to the strongest pillars of the government in the diet opened in October 1843. After this, he fixed formally his political affiliation, too, when he joined to the Conservative Party in November 1846.

## **2.) National-public acts and economic activities**

Andrássy built up his relationship with Széchenyi contemporaneously with his first commission as a deputy. He did not only esteem Széchenyi as one of his friends, but also as

his main mentor. Széchenyi's guidance coincided with the period of Andrassy's first national-public acts. While he, with the help of his friend's admonitions, tried audaciously to systematize those thoughts in him that had been awakening him for public service for a long time, he supported Széchenyi in his pursuits of founding institutes, consequently. Therefore, he became an eminent member of the magnate company that helped to realize Széchenyi's cultural and economic initiations, excelling from that group by his assiduity and hard working.

Thereafter, as the research has certified, he, in the spirit of the national reform, worked with great enthusiasm and responsibility on the countrywide and county terrains of public life, throughout the era. In our thesis, we demonstrate this across some organizations, giving constant tasks, like the horse-race founder, later Stock-Breeder Society (afterwards Economic Association) or the Upper-Hungarian Mineworker Association.

It indicates the growing importance of his role in the Economic Society that, after he was the leader and an active participant of the regulation-creating activity, he made some individual initiatives concerning the Society's working areas in the second half of the 1830s, and he wanted to work his will at the office-restorations of the Society, too.

Similarly to his activity in public life, his pursuit as a landlord and an iron industry-contractor is a really visible counterpoint against his political career. It wears in itself the marks of modernism; besides, we would like to emphasize that Count Andrassy was the man of practice, who turned to the frame of things, both on the private and public scenes of his life. He searched for possibilities of concrete actions, in which he found the adequate method of conserving change.

In favour of enriching his income and wealth, and differently from his political acts, Andrassy expressed his aptness for innovating tendencies, and he tried to modernize his domains and industrial works in accordance with them in the 1830-40s. In the sight of economic modernism coupled with political conservatism, he emulated the example of such magnate farmers, personages in economic issues, like Count Lajos Károlyi or Baron József Wenckheim.

The dissertation, unlike the methods used in political biographies, focuses neither on the extent of the Count's domains, nor on the number and living conditions or income circumstances of people under his jurisdiction, but on trying to depict the Count as a magnate, who tried to fill the role of a practical landlord and a model farmer contemporaneously. In accordance with this, as we mentioned above, we focused mostly on those documents during

our research, which give us information about his personal ideas, various experiments, and some of their results.

We have tried to apply the same manner during the depiction of the Count as an industrial contractor. We used to this the European journeys, the qualification of manpower, the modernization of production, or the attempts in favour of assuring the possibilities of marketing as aspects.

Andrássy started to transplant his experiences concerning mostly to modern technical manners of heating into practice gradually, during the modernization of his ironwork in Dernő, in the 1830s. Due to this, his ironwork, that was, at once, an “iron industrial school”, an experimental base, became a capital-financed factory by time of the War of Independence.

Like other ironwork-possessor aristocrats, he largely used the manpower of his peasants. Not only in aid-work (wood-cutting, charcoal-burning, transporting), but, after indoctrination, in factory work, too. Due to training his workers, modernizing the structure of manufactory and renewing the technology, he managed to increase the productivity of his iron-maker yards. That was the reason why he was appreciated so greatly as a contractor in the Reform Age. It must be added to this that he, as a factory owner, belonged to those magnates of his era, who amplified their traditional catalogue of values with some civil-like elements, such as the aptness for investment or the eagerness in making benefit.

Owning these things, this pragmatic, modernist magnate, who continuously tried experiments, became a respectable and considerable figure of Hungary’s economic life by the 1840s. That is why we consider this the most important from every of his roles in terms of exposing and realizing individual initiatives. In our esteem, this is also the one, which can chiefly be exposed by the individual marks of his personality.

However, it is really a difficult task to appreciate his diversified career. Mostly the numerous, contemporaneously and completely filled role can cause problems in emphasizing. There can be some slight assistance to his judgement, however. To appreciate him, we have to search for the words in the frame of things, rather than in the frame of thoughts. Namely – and we would like to emphasize this again –, he was not a political theoretician, because he lacked abilities. However, he was a hard-working man, whose acts were guided by practical thinking.

Sometimes, in party, he threw himself into the role of a magnate who likes to emphasize the social differences between himself and lowborn people. Nevertheless, his behaviour wore such marks of a modern gentleman, like self-discipline (during our research, we did not find any source mentioning that he came into such conflict with someone that ended up in duel) or good manners. Therefore, beyond his pragmatism, we would like to

emphasize – in contrast to his political-public acts, which are put into focus in his biographies – that, although we consider him undistinguished by his mental abilities and as a politician, we account him to those personalities of his era, whom were regarded highly due to their ideal life. Certainly, his distinguished behaviour was not only a forced result of occasional congruence befitting to a man of birth and breeding, but a characteristic formed by careful education that followed him during his public activity.

We have to recommit the thoughts written in the first paragraph of our thesis, yet. Namely that György Andrassy appears before us as an equally successful man in three aspects. Through his political career (certainly, the use of attributive compound does not cover a value judgement that grade a certain political community, but reflects on numerous offices and appointments, given to and filled by him), his economic activity, and his several, public-minded donations that provided honour to him.

#### **IV. Publications**

1. The travel accounts and observations of György Andrassy on English agriculture (1832) [forrásközlés]. In: *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 2007. Vol. 1-4. 185-196. p.
2. A Diary Worth a Study: György Andrassy's Travel to Britain [study]. In: *Történeti Tanulmányok XVI.* (Acta Universitatis Debreceniensis Series Historica LX.), 2008 (2009). 167-188. p.
3. Magnate contractors in the Reform Age – György Andrassy' instance [study]. In: *Arisztokrata életpályák és életviszonyok* (Speculum Historiae Debreceniense 4. – A Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete Kiadványai), 2009. 145-163. p.
4. Anna Fábri: *Everyday Life in the Era of István Széchenyi* (Corvina Kiadó, Budapest, 2009. 203 p.) [recension]. In: *Debreceni Szemle*, 2011. Vol. 1. 108-111.
5. A political scandal from the Reform Age: the “case in Gömör” [study]. Accepted for publication: *Történeti Tanulmányok* (Acta Universitatis Debreceniensis Series Historica). Size: 20. p. Expected publishing: 2011.