

Soup kitchens in Cluj-Napoca in 1817

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Rezumat: Marea foamete din Transilvania dintre anii 1813-1817 a avut urmări majore pentru economie și societate. Creșterea numărului de oameni înfometați și consecințele foametei au pretins acțiuni din partea Guberniului din Transilvania și au pus orașele sub mari presiuni. Una din soluțiile pentru asigurarea hranei oamenilor înfometați a fost „supa Rumford”. Lucrarea examinează modul în care administrația orașului Cluj-Napoca a încercat să diminueze foametea și discută crearea și modul de operare a „bucătăriilor pentru supă” în Cluj-Napoca în ultimul an al Foametei.

Cuvinte cheie: Cluj-Napoca, foamete, supa Rumford, „bucătărie de supă”, Miklós Wesselényi

Abstract: The great famine in Transylvania between 1813 and 1817 had a great effect on the economy and society. The rising number of the starving people and the consequences of the famine demanded actions from the Transylvanian Gubernium and put the municipalities under great pressure. One of the solutions to provide food for the starving people was the Rumford soup. The paper examines the question of how the Cluj-Napoca city administration and the local population tried to curb the famine and discusses the establishment and operation of soup kitchens in Cluj-Napoca in the final year of the famine.

Keywords: Cluj-Napoca, famine, Rumford soup, soup kitchen, Miklós Wesselényi

Since 1813, weather anomalies have repeatedly hit Transylvania, which was already economically burdened by the Napoleonic wars.¹ In the

¹ For details on the 1813 war harvest services and serf services, see: Domokos Teleki, *Az 1817-iki éhség és éhhalál Erdélyben*. [Famine and famishment in 1817's Transylvania] *Budapesti Szemle* 6/46–47 (1862), p. 311.; Zsolt Trócsányi, *Az erdélyi parasztság története 1790–1849*. [History of



first two months of 1814, unusually mild temperature were combined with a significant amount of rain, and due to the heat coming in March, agricultural work had to be started early. However, at the end of April, there were several days of snowfall that caused enormous damage to crops. In 1815 and 1816, there was a larger amount of rain than typically in the previous years which caused serious agricultural damage in Transylvania, and as a result, a severe food shortage occurred.² Access to the necessary food was made more difficult from January 1817 by the continuous and large increase in the price of grain, which was typical throughout Transylvania.³ As a result of the famine, emigration started in Transylvania, and the starving people left in large numbers for the neighbouring Hungarian counties, as well as for Wallachia and Moldavia.⁴

Governmental attempts to end the famine before 1817

For the Gubernium, the famine was a double problem. In the initial phase, the measures and decrees were aimed at solving the food shortage, and later, due to the ever-increasing number of beggars, the organization of

the peasantry in Transylvania 1790–1849.) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1965) pp. 29–50. For the situation of serfdom and Transylvanian agriculture see: Ioan Ciorba, *Marea foamete din Transilvania dintre anii 1813–1817*. (Oradea, Editura Arca, 2007) pp. 89–106.

² Sándor Újfalvi, *Emlékiratok* [Memoires], edited by Samu Benkő, Aranka Ugron (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1990) pp. 190–191. Contemporary Transylvanian reports on weather phenomena confirm Sándor Újfalvi's recollections. Antal Réthly: *Időjárási események és elemi csapások Magyarországon 1801–1900-ig* [Weather events and natural disasters in Hungary from 1801 to 1900] (Budapest, Országos Meteorológiai Szolgálat, 1998) pp. 100–190.; Ioan Ciorba, *Marea foamete*, pp. 77–88.

³ Teleki, *Az 1817-iki* pp. 312–313.

⁴ Trócsányi, *Az erdélyi* pp. 183–192. For the demographic datas, see: Ioan Ciorba, *Marea foamete*, pp. 186–205.; Mátyás Hodgyai: Ínséges évek Biharban 1814 és 1817 között [Years of famine in Bihar between 1814 and 1817] *Történelmi Szemle*, 33/1–2 (1991) pp. 59–69. On the relocation of serfs from Bihar County to Békés County: József Implom: *Olvasókönyv Békés megye történetéhez*. [Reader for the history of Békés County] vol. II. (1695–1848). (Békéscsaba: Békés Megyei Tanács Művelődésügyi Főosztálya, 1971) pp. 193–194.; László Kósa: Adatok Gyula város művelődéstörténetéhez és történeti néprajzához (1801–1850) [Dats for the cultural history and historical ethnography of the city of Gyula (1801–1850)]. In: László Kósa: *Gyulai dolgozatok*. [Dissertations from Gyula] (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2012) p. 69. Péter Takács made an attempt to reconstruct the migration and death in Szekler Land at the local level. Péter Takács: Adalékok az 1813–1818-as székelyföldi éhínség történetéhez [Supplements to the history of the 1813–1818 famine in Szekler Land]. In: *Emlékkönyv Orosz István 70. születésnapjára*. [Memorial book for István Orosz's 70th birthday] edited by János Angi, Jr. János Barta. (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézet, 2005) pp. 121–130.

social care took on an increasingly significant role. The latter particularly affected Cluj-Napoca, where the starving poor from other parts of Transylvania came in large numbers during the years of the famine in the hope that they would be able to get enough food for themselves and their family in the city.

According to the tabular statement compiled from the reports received by the Gubernium, the weather anomalies of 1813 already caused severe damage to the crop. In the majority of counties and county seats, wheat, barley and rye were produced only in medium or small quantities, and according to the comments attached to the data, in the counties of Cluj-Napoca and Crasna, as well as in Țara Chioarului, famine appeared as early as 1813.⁵ From the first months of 1814, requests from counties, cities and villages continuously arrived to the Gubernium. The Gubernium first wanted to solve the problem of food shortages with central lending. The legislative authorities and the settlements could primarily demand oats – this was available in larger quantities in the warehouses – the value of which was calculated at a central rate determined by the Gubernium and had to be repaid within a year. The second condition of the request mostly affected smaller settlements and expected the community to take responsibility, because in case someone was unable to repay the price of the demanded crop, the population of the settlement had to repay one's debt together.⁶

The opportunity provided by the Gubernium could not offer a substantive solution for several reasons. In many jurisdictions, oats could be purchased at local or neighbourhood markets cheaper than the centrally determined exchange rate.⁷ On the other hand, even though it was ordered in all Transylvanian municipalities to show the serfs how to bake oat bread and other uses of oats, people were distrustful of the plant and did not accept it as a grain.⁸ In addition to all this, the crops available in the warehouses also turned out to be an insufficient amount. Of the many surviving reports and requests, only two reports of Zsigmond Katona, chief captain of Țara Chioarului, are mentioned as an illustration. According to Katona's data, a total of 14,831 starving people were registered in the municipality he led, and according to his calculations, in addition to the grain requested and distributed,

⁵ National Archives of Hungary [hereafter cited as: NAH], F 46 (Gubernium Transylvanicum in politicis), 3610/1814.

⁶ NAH, F 46, 3878/1814.

⁷ NAH, F 46, 4318/1814.

⁸ NAH, F 46, 4076/1814; 4290/1814; 4750/1814.

they would have needed an additional 16,872 quintals.⁹ In his next report, he sent bread made from corncobs and wood shavings to the governor of Transylvania, György Bánffy, to illustrate that the population was forced to eat this for lack of other food.¹⁰

In addition to the crop loan, the decrees of the Gubernium aimed to introduce and distribute plants suitable for human consumption, serving as an alternative to cereal crops, as another measure to alleviate the shortage. In the long run, the propagation of potato was the most successful, the cultivation of which was advocated by the Gubernium from 1814. Informative literature also played a key role in the wide spread of the plant, not only in dispelling prejudices and misconceptions, but also in introducing various methods of utilization. Ferenc Pethe regularly published articles discussing the cultivation and use of potatoes in the magazine *Nemzeti Gazda*, which he edited, and Zsuzsanna Rátz published her cookbook in three booklets between 1816 and 1818, which contained more than a hundred recipes for potato dishes.¹¹ The county of Middle Solnoc chose a different way of propagation, there the three villages producing the most potatoes were rewarded.¹²

Although the social problems arising from the famine had to be dealt with by the Cluj-Napoca magistrate from 1813 onwards, the first related submission to the Gubernium that survived is from December 1814, penned by the city's police director András Pál. According to this, even though begging in the city was regulated from 1813, and even though beggars arriving from elsewhere were expelled, the Transylvanian municipalities could not take care of their own deprived people, many of whom went to Cluj-Napoca.¹³ By December 1814, the number of beggars, especially child beggars, had grown

⁹ NAH, F 46, 5458/1814.

¹⁰ NAH, F 46, 5516/1814.

¹¹ László Kósa, *A burgonya Magyarországon*. [The potato in Hungary] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980) pp. 39–50.; László Kósa, „Búza szűkségben felsegítő jegyzések”. *A burgonya a magyarországi táplálkozásban a XVIII. század végén és a XIX. század elején*. [„Helping notes in the need of wheat”. Potato in the Hungarian diet at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century]. In: László Kósa, *Nemesek, polgárok, parasztok*. [Nobles, civilians, peasants] (Budapest: Osiris, 2003) pp. 130–141.; Ioan Ciorba, *Marea foamete*, pp. 167–173.

¹² NAH, X 4556, 144. microfilm, Protocols of the County Assemblies of Middle Solnoc, 18 December 1817.

¹³ Several decrees on the regulation of poverty and begging have been issued since Maria Theresa, but none of them could be fully implemented, so they were ineffective. For these decrees see: Andor Csizmadia, *A szociális gondoskodás változásai Magyarországon*. [Changes in social care in Hungary] (Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977) pp. 23–40.

so large in the city that, according to András Pál, the situation became unmanageable. The crisis was not only critical for the city administration in terms of public safety¹⁴ and care, but also in terms of public health: the starving people arrived in the city sick and weakened, the city had to provide them with healthcare too. Several of these people died on the streets or at the homes of individuals who took them in. In his report to the Gubernium, András Pál recorded one of the tragic cases, the story of a family with four children who moved into an abandoned house at a peripheral part of the city. They found the father and mother unconscious next to the dead bodies of their four children. Despite the attempts, the mother could not be saved, and the father's condition was also critical at the time of writing the report.¹⁵

In March 1815, the new city police director, János Pákei, gathered and listed the beggars in the city, and among them he found that 140 of them were locals. He sent back the others to their respective municipality. However, the number of child beggars did not decrease, so the Gubernium ordered the city's police director to gather them and give them work under the supervision of an inspector.¹⁶ The situation did not improve even after a few months passing by: at the end of November 1815, the chief judge of Cluj-Napoca, János Deáky, once again raised the problem with the city council, according to which children were begging and following the residents of the city in groups, thus making it impossible to have smooth traffic in the city. The magistrate saw as a cause of the problem the fact that some of the residents of Cluj-Napoca pitied these children and helped them, so they forbade the residents to support them, and ordered the citizens to collect the children and give them work in accordance with the previous instructions of the Gubernium.¹⁷ Despite the

¹⁴ The city council meetings in Cluj-Napoca show an example of the criminalization of beggars which has been typical since the 18th century. Although it had been hinted at earlier, in September and December 1816, the increased thefts in the city were openly blamed on the wandering beggars. National Archives of Hungary, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 23 September 1816, 28 December 1816.

¹⁵ NAH, F 46, 12451/1814.

¹⁶ NAH, F 46, 2729/1815. The contents of the instruction are remarkably similar to the institution of the workhouse, but this temporary institution has not yet been named as such. The first workhouse in Cluj-Napoca was established in 1826 by the Cluj-Napoca Noble Benevolent Women's Association under the leadership of János Jósika's wife, Rozália Csáky. For the history of the association see: Andor Csizmadia: *Szociálpolitika a reformkori Kolozsváron*. [Social policy in Cluj-Napoca in the Reform Era] (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 1943),

¹⁷ NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 20 November 1815.

previous measures, the donation of grain received in the meantime, and the ticket revenue of the German theatre in Cluj-Napoca offered to the poor, the financial possibilities of the city's poor fund were still limited.¹⁸ By the fall of 1816, the number of beggars coming from elsewhere had increased to an extent that the magistrate of Cluj-Napoca had to take action again, mainly due to financial reasons. In addition to the banishment of non-local beggars, the residents were forbidden to help the poor and hungry who were not from Cluj-Napoca with food or accommodation.¹⁹

The establishment and operation of soup kitchens

By April 1817, the number of deaths in the city had increased to such an extent that the guild responsible for funerals could no longer cope with the work, and they had neither time nor money left to provide food for themselves.²⁰ By this time, one of Gubernium's initiatives to set up soup kitchens and distribute Rumford soup, had come to fruition.

Bavaria was one of the important stops in the adventurous life of Benjamin Thompson (Count Rumford). He started his European journey from England in 1783 and arrived in the Electorate a year later. Thompson got on well with the Bavarian Elector Charles Theodor, in whose service he joined the Bavarian army, where he quickly rose through the ranks. He submitted several military reform proposals to Charles Theodor, and thanks to these, in 1788, Thompson was appointed Bavarian Minister of War. Although he did not achieve success as a military leader, his reforms in the field of reintegration of demobilized soldiers into society had noticeable results. He resigned from his ministerial post after the death of Charles Theodor in 1799 and devoted his days to scientific work. As a result of respect coming from his position as Minister of War, Thompson also held the position of Chief of Police in Munich, which gave him the opportunity to implement his social reform proposals. In 1789, he established state-owned workhouses for beggars in Mannheim and Munich, where uniforms were made for the Bavarian army. He created the recipe for the soup named after him to feed the workers here, the ingredients of which – barley, yellow peas, bread, salt, beer, water,

¹⁸ NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 9 February 1816, 6 April 1816.

¹⁹ NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 23 September 1816.

²⁰ Elek Jakab, *Kolozsvár története*. [The History of Cluj-Napoca] vol. III. (Budapest: Kolozsvár város közönsége, 1888) pp. 800–801.

potatoes – were selected in such a way that they had adequate nutritional value and the food provided enough energy for the daily work. Although he was proud of the fact that, according to his own words, those employed in the workhouse never bought additional food for themselves with their modest wages, it is clear based on the modern calory calculations that the Rumford soup did not provide the necessary nutrient intake for an entire day of demanding work.²¹

The idea of setting up soup kitchens appeared for the first time in Transylvania in the spring of 1815, although not on the part of the government, but as a grassroots initiative.²² Farkas Cserey, the imperial and royal chamberlain, translated a German-language work into Hungarian under the pseudonym “a Transylvanian Patriot” about the benefits and preparation of the pauper meal. He sent the manuscript to his friend, the editor of the *Erdélyi Múzeum*, Gábor Döbrentei, with the request that he present it to the governor. According to the letter sent to Döbrentei, Cserey already used Rumford soup among his serfs at that time, in May 1815, and it is because of his own successful experiments that he wanted to establish the existence of soup kitchens throughout Transylvania.²³ Döbrentei personally handed over Cserey’s manuscript to the governor,²⁴ but there is no indication in the surviving documents of the Gubernium that Bánffy paid attention to Cserey’s proposal.

A year later, in 1816, the Viennese government and the Gubernium regarded the soup as a possible solution for the famine, after the recipe used in Leipzig was sent from Vienna to Cluj-Napoca.²⁵ Bánffy commissioned the gubernatorial councillor, József Teleki, to experiment with the Rumford soup recipe. At the end of September 1816, two gubernatorial clerks, József Tunyogi Csapó and Dániel Aranka, cooked fifty portions of soup for the

²¹ Fritz Redlich: *Science and Charity: Count Rumford and His followers*. International Review of Social History 16/2 (1971) pp. 187–196. On Benjamin Thompson’s social actions and the preparation of Rumford soup (in detail) see: *Count Rumford’s Experimental Essays, Political, Economical and Philosophical. Essay I: an Account of an Establishment for the Poor in Munich*. (Dublin: W. Porter and J. Archer, 1796) For Rumford’s extensive work, see: Thomas Weidner: *Rumford. Rezepte für ein besseres Bayern*. (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2014).

²² Zsolt Trócsányi: *Wesselényi Miklós és világa*. [Miklós Wesselényi and his world] (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1970) p. 26.

²³ Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Department of Manuscripts [hereafter cited as: LICHAS DM], M. Irod. Lev. 4-r. 55. Farkas Cserey to Gábor Döbrentei, 4 May 1815.

²⁴ LICHAS DM, M. Irod. Lev. 4-r. 55. Farkas Cserey to Gábor Döbrentei, 2 June 1815

²⁵ NAH, F 46, 8058/1816.

inmates of the Cluj-Napoca prison. After a few small modifications, the final recipe was created during the next experiment on 3 November, and Teleki submitted his report to Bánffy on 12 December 1816.²⁶ In addition to the Cluj-Napoca experiment, the pauper meal was also tested in the prison of Gherla, but the results were not so positive. According to the report of the Gherla castle's captain, József Josinczy, since the prisoners did hard physical work from the dawn till night, the amount in the recipe was not sufficient for the whole day's work.²⁷ Nevertheless, Bánffy, based on the results of the Cluj-Napoca experiment, sent the recipe to all Transylvanian legislative authorities on 29 March 1817, and instructed them to set up soup kitchens, as well as to create committees responsible for the organization and providing the necessary financial background and the ingredients.²⁸

In parallel with the action of the Gubernium, but even before the circular decree was issued, in March 1817, an initiative was started among the wealthier residents of Cluj-Napoca: a supportive action, thought out and led by Miklós Wesselényi, was launched to help the local people who were suffering from the famine. The 21-year-old Wesselényi was helped by his young aristocratic friends: Lajos Gyulay and his tutor, Gábor Döbrentei, Ádám Kendeffy, László Bánffy, Gergely Bánffy, Ádám Bethlen, József Bethlen, and György Wass.²⁹ According to their printed pamphlet, they undertook to supply 100 people of Cluj-Napoca in need with Rumford soup, for which they already had the necessary financial background when preparing their call. They expected monetary help, raw materials and firewood from the residents of Cluj-Napoca. Governor Bánffy welcomed the initiative and supported the aid campaign with enough money to feed ten people for a month.³⁰

The originator, Miklós Wesselényi, had several sources of inspiration. His maternal uncle Farkas Cserey, the first propagator of the Rumford soup, and his mother Heléna Cserey, who set up a soup kitchen for their serfs in the

²⁶ NAH, F 46, 760/1817.

²⁷ NAH, F 46, 2572/1817.

²⁸ NAH, F 46, 760/1817.

²⁹ *Kazinczy Ferenc levelezése*. [Correspondence of Ferenc Kazinczy] Vol. XV. ed. János Váczy. (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1905) p. 151; Zsolt Trócsányi, *Wesselényi Miklós*. (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1965), p. 41.

³⁰ NAH, F 46, 130/1817; Arhivele Naționale ale României, Serviciul Județean Cluj [hereafter cited as: ANR SJC] Wesselényi family archive, fond nr. 250/133. György Bánffy to Miklós Wesselényi, 30 March 1817.

centre of the family's estates in Jibou, were examples to follow.³¹ Related to their family, sr. László Teleki noticed the boy's high degree of social sensitivity in early in his childhood.³² This is confirmed by Wesselényi's letter to his mother in January 1815, according to which he sharply criticized the lack of interest and wastefulness of the aristocratic youth of Cluj-Napoca, while the number of people struck by the famine in the villages increased and the number of beggars in Cluj-Napoca was constantly increasing too.³³

The young aristocrats' action to curb the famine started soon after the public call. By April 1817, their soup kitchen was already operating, where they took care of 100 starving people, and by the middle of May this number had risen to 146. Gábor Döbrentei and the renowned linguist and doctor Sámuel Gyarmathy also helped with the food distribution for several weeks, and another member of Wesselényi's close circle of friends, the later American traveller, Sándor Bölöni Farkas, also participated in the fundraising.³⁴ The list of the donators included nearly 40 names, and except for 3 individuals listed as unknown, all of them were aristocrats. 9 aristocratic ladies helped the initiative with donations, whom Gábor Döbrentei remembered in his epistle to his fellow poet, Emil Buczy.³⁵ The case in Cluj-Napoca is not unique, in May 1817, in connection with helping the starving people of Târgu Mureş, Governor Bánffy asked Sámuel Teleki, following the Western European model, to ask her wife to make the call to the ladies in his circle of acquaintance to participate in the subsidization.³⁶ Thanks to the significant monetary donation received, Wesselényi and his

³¹ NAH, F 37 (Gubernium Transylvanicum Praesidialia), 192/1817.

³² At the mother's request, Teleki wrote an educational advisory piece, from which we get a detailed picture of 13-year-old Wesselényi's personality. Attila István Kárpáti: „Akit szeret, szíve szerint szereti”. Id. Teleki László Cserei Helénának írt nevelési tanácsai. (‘‘Whoever he loves, he loves according to his heart’’. Sr. László Teleki's educational advice written to Heléna Cserei.) Fons, 23/3 (2016) pp. 305–336.

³³ ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond 250/159. Miklós Wesselényi to Heléna Cserei, 23 January 1815.

³⁴ *Kazinczy Ferenc levelezése*, pp. 151., 191.; Elemér Jancsó: *Döbrentei Gábor kiadatlan levelei Bölöni Farkas Sándorhoz. I. közlemény*. [Gábor Döbrentei's unpublished letters to Sándor Bölöni Farkas. Part I] *Keresztény Magvető*, 75/3 (1943) p. 91.; ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond 250/135. Gábor Döbrentei to Miklós Wesselényi, 28 September 1817.

³⁵ For the list of the donators see: ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond nr. 250/456. For Döbrentei's epistle see: LICHAS DM, M. Irod. Lev. 4-r. 3. Gábor Döbrentei to Emil Buczy, 2 April 1817.

³⁶ NAH, F 37, 180/1817.

companions were able to buy 30 pounds of meat per day for the Rumford soup in June 1817, and they took care of feeding 200 people every day. Following the closing of the soup kitchen in September 1817, they had 1,381 forints left, which Wesselényi, supplemented with his own contribution, offered to the Karolina Hospital in Cluj-Napoca.³⁷

The magistrate of Cluj-Napoca was able to start the soup kitchen maintained by the city quite slowly, mainly due to the lack of money. As early as January 1817, various forms and ideas of the fundraising appeared continuously at the city council meetings. They hoped to obtain the necessary money through donations: on one hand, from the fundraising organized among the residents, and on the other hand, in accordance with the decree of the Gubernium, from donations at the ball venues at the beginning of the ball season.³⁸ Although on 9 April 1817, the magistrate already had Bánffy's decree and the recipe for Rumford soup, they were only able to buy the necessary dishes at the end of April, and presumably they were only able to set up the soup kitchen at the beginning of May.³⁹ Unfortunately, there is no record of the number of beneficiaries, only one piece of data is available regarding the urban poor: at the end of July 1817, 246 orphaned children were gathered in the city, for whom they tried to take care as much as possible.⁴⁰ The crisis also affected the prison seriously: the magistrate received reports seriatim about the problems of feeding the prisoners and the continuous deterioration of their health. In order to prevent the outbreak of the epidemic, prisoners sentenced to corporal punishment, who had committed petty theft due to starvation, were released, and the prison cells were all whitewashed and smoked out.⁴¹

From the point of view of the Cluj-Napoca city administration, the solution of the beggar issue was further urged by the visit of Emperor Francis I

³⁷ For the tabulation of the young aristocrats' soup kitchen see: ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond nr. 250/456.; ANR SJC, Wesselényi family archive, fond nr. 250/133. György Bánffy to Miklós Wesselényi, 29 December 1818; NAH, F 46, 11480/1818.

³⁸ About the balls of Cluj-Napoca in detail, see: György Kovács Kiss: *Kolozsvári bálók a bécsi kongresszust követő években*. [Balls in Cluj-Napoca in the years following the Congress of Vienna.] In: György Kovács Kiss: *Megidézt múlt*. [The past recalled] (Kolozsvár: Komp-Press Kiadó, 2008) pp. 95–118.

³⁹ NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 22 April 1817.

⁴⁰ NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 2 August 1817.

⁴¹ NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 24 June 1817, 27 June 1817, 2 August 1817.

and his wife, Caroline Augusta, to Cluj-Napoca in August 1817.⁴² From May 1817, the sick beggars were gathered in the hay storage building at the Central Gate under the direction of the chief city physician István Barra, and they were treated there. In July, healthy beggars were ordered to be collected from the streets and kept locked up under the constant watch of four guards, and in early August, this provision was extended to orphan children wandering the streets of the city.⁴³ Although it is not clear from the sources what was the exact reason behind the closing of the young aristocrats' soup kitchen, it is conceivable that the measures of the magistrate may have played a role in it. In July 1821, during István Széchenyi's trip to Transylvania, he learned in Cluj-Napoca that the activity of the society, which supplied 400-500 people a day, had been stopped by the Gubernium before the monarch's visit, and the starving and beggars had been locked up, "so that the emperor would not see the misery in the country".⁴⁴ It is not known how well-founded the count's hearsay information was; however, the coincidences in time allow us to conclude that there may have been a connection between the events. However, all the efforts of the magistrate to make Francis I satisfied at his arrival was all in vain. At the beginning of September, György Bánffy forwarded the ruler's complaints to the city, according to which he was sad to see that the orphans were kept locked away, that they were not provided with food and clothing, and wrote down his instructions regarding the organization of the care of the orphans.⁴⁵

As we have seen, the city's soup kitchen in Cluj-Napoca struggled mainly due to financial problems, and due to the considerable number of people in need, the initiative of the young aristocrats was very necessary. They had a great advantage that, due to their better financial situation, they were able to start their soup kitchen earlier than the magistrate. In addition, based on the surviving data, similar figures can be seen in terms of the number of people served, as in other soup kitchens organized by the

⁴² For details on the monarch's trip to Transylvania and the events of the visit to Cluj-Napoca, see: Domokos Teleki: *Ferencz osztrák császár, magyar király és Erdély fejedelmének erdélyi útja*. [The Transylvanian journey of Austrian Emperor Ferenc, King of Hungary and Prince of Transylvania] *Budapesti Szemle*, 13/45 (1869) pp. 83–101.

⁴³ NAH, X 1250, 191. microfilm, Protocols of the city council meeting of Cluj-Napoca, 9 July 1817, 2 August 1817.

⁴⁴ István Széchenyi: *Napló*. [Journal] Selected and edited by Ambrus Oltványi. (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1982) p. 231.

⁴⁵ NAH, F 46, 8189/1817.

magistrate. In May 1817, György Bánffy gave instructions to set up the soup kitchen in Târgu Mureş, which began operating on May 9 under the supervision of Sámuel Kemény. They received significant donations from noble families living in the city, as well as members of the Târgu Mureş court, and the local butcher's guild supported the soup kitchen with beef, the city with firewood.⁴⁶ However, residents of the city criticized the city council for what they felt was insufficient support for those suffering from the famine. As a result, a special aid fund was created under the leadership of the city councillor of Târgu Mureş, Vencel Peielli, whose 27 members took care of a total of 31 people in need every month. In May 1817, the number of people provided with Rumford soup increased from the initial 158 to 197, and on 8 June, 210 people benefited from it. The number of portions distributed peaked on 20 July, when soup was distributed to 214 people. From the end of July, however, the number of portions distributed continuously decreased, and by the end of August only 119 people went to the soup kitchen set up at the town hall.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, with the decrease in the number of beneficiaries, the operation of the soup kitchen was not stopped, and from August to November, the operation was financed from the donations received from Peielli's fundraising.⁴⁸ In addition to Târgu Mureş, soup kitchens were also set up in other Transylvanian cities. On 4 June 1817, the distribution of food among the starving began in Sibiu, where thanks to the donations of the citizens, they were able to give food to 100 people.⁴⁹ At the beginning of July 1817, István Haller, the lord lieutenant of Inner Solnoc County, established a soup kitchen in the town of Dej, where they were also able to feed 100 people.⁵⁰

In the initial stages of the famine that affected Transylvania between 1813 and 1817, the Transylvanian Gubernium made several attempts to solve the crisis, but they were unsuccessful. The Rumford soup proposed by Farkas Cserey as early as 1815 provided a certain solution to the supply of starving people, who appeared in increasing numbers over time in the cities, including Cluj-Napoca. In the spring of 1817, following the decree of Governor György

⁴⁶ NAH, F 39 (Gubernium Transylvanicum, unregistered documents), Sámuel Kemény to György Bánffy, 14 August 1817.

⁴⁷ NAH, F 39, Vencel Peielli to György Bánffy, 1 July 1817.

⁴⁸ NAH, F 39, Sámuel Kemény to György Bánffy, 29 August 1817; Vencel Peielli to György Bánffy, 28 October 1817.

⁴⁹ *Hazai 's Külföldi Tudósítások*, 13/II/3 (1817) p. 18.

⁵⁰ NAH, F 39, István Haller to György Bánffy, 8 July 1817.

Bánffy, counties and cities throughout Transylvania began to work on the creation and provision of financial support for soup kitchens, and Cluj-Napoca was no exception from the situation. Besides the city council, the young aristocrats led by Miklós Wesselényi also operated a soup kitchen in the city. Due to their better financial background, they were able to start their charity campaign earlier than the magistrate of Cluj-Napoca and in terms of the number of people they supplied, their capacity was similar to the other institutes maintained by the magistrate. The distribution of the Rumford soup throughout Transylvania saved many people from starvation in 1817, the last year of the famine which; however, was the most struck by it.

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