

Mónika Kozári, *A nyugdíjrendszer magyarországon Mária Teréziától a második világháborúig* [The Pension System in Hungary from Maria Theresa to World War II]. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2012. 366 pp.

Reviewed by Balázs Sipos, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Social policy history is a much neglected field of Hungarian historiography due to lack of interest and research as well as the marginalization of policy history in favor of "more important" topics like the history of politics and polity. As a consequence of this lack, the history of social policy in Hungary was a neglected area of research despite the fact that it was studied by historian Gábor Gyáni and sociologist Zsuzsa Ferge. In the last ten years, however, three important works had been published on the subject: a volume by Béla Tomka published in 2003 and titled *Szociálpolitika a 20. századi Magyarországon európai perspektívából* [Social Policy in Twentieth-Century Hungary from a European Perspective], a monograph by Katalin Egresi from 2008 titled *Szociálpolitika Magyarországon: nézetek, programok és törvények, 1919–1939* [Social Policy in Hungary: Perspectives, Programs and Regulations between 1919–1939], and, recently, the work of Monika Kozári dealing with one aspect of social policy, the establishment of the Hungarian pension system from its beginnings in the 18th century until 1945, which is the focus of the present review.

Monika Kozári is considered a renowned historian in Hungarian circles. Her latest work was preceded by two monographs, one on Kálmán Tisza, one of the most influential Prime Ministers of Nineteenth-Century Hungary, and his terms as Prime Minister between 1875 and 1890, and the other on the political system of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Kingdom of Hungary between 1867 and 1918 in particular. Kozári's work on the Hungarian pension system discusses a major topic that had never been processed extensively before. One may consider it a manual in which the author introduces and analyzes relevant laws and regulations, policy concepts, drafts and the debates surrounding those drafts, while also discussing state, local government, and private pension institutions.

Kozári's is a complex project owing to the following, at times intertwined, reasons or factors: (1) the volume discusses almost 180 years of history between 1771 and 1945; (2) within that period, an immense number of laws, regulations and local government measures were issued about pensions, not to mention measures that may have principally regulated other issues (such as the education system) but also affected certain aspects of the pension system. There is also an enormous amount of data waiting to be processed because (3) from the last few decades of the Nineteenth-Century, there had been countless political debates on the subject due to the fact that (4) pension institutions were established and operated not only by the Hungarian State but also



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by local governments, companies, professional and interest protection organizations, and (5) the author rightly discusses the issue of pensions alongside issues of accident, disability and health insurance as well since the history of the pension system should be placed in the context of the history of the inclusive social security system.

The five points I have outlined show that the Hungarian pension system is not a marginal issue but on the contrary, it has been discussed extensively by monarchs, governments, parties and politicians between 1771 and 1945. Its history in a nutshell is as follows: the establishment of the Hungarian pension system began in 1771 when Maria Theresa, enlightened despot of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy ruling between 1740 and 1780, declared that the widows and orphans of deceased officers of the Habsburg Empire must be helped and supported should they be in need due to financial difficulties. By 1867, this provision was followed by seven more royal decrees that focused on the subject of the pension system, and even the *Ratio Educationis* of 1777, which dealt with the reorganization of the education system, also contained several pension-related paragraphs.

The expansion of the pension system accelerated after 1867. Pensions for judges and court officials became regulated in 1871, pensions for elementary school teachers as well as soldiers of the united army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the independent Hungarian military were legalized in 1875; the unified pension act was issued in 1885, and so on and so forth. After 1867, local governments devised their own measures to provide pensions for their officials, leading to the establishment of the first company of professional pension systems and pension funds, while the government debated individual pension requests and devised newer and newer drafts of future pension laws.

Between the two World Wars, the Hungarian social security system was extended to more and more social groups. The detailed discussion of this expansion in Kozári's monograph is especially important, since historians researching the inter-war era often describe its social system as underdeveloped, despite the fact that the above mentioned work by Béla Tomka already proved in general terms (such as the analysis of GDP data) that this was far from the truth. Monika Kozári tackles this issue by, on the one hand, presenting relevant laws, debates and the operation of social institutions, as well as clarifying which social groups were included in the system; and, on the other hand, by emphasizing that not only was there an important difference between the benefits and provisions of different social groups, but also the majority of society was deprived of these benefits altogether.

To conclude, Monika Kozári's monograph is a rigorously researched work on the establishment of the Hungarian pension system between 1771 and 1945. Furthermore, Kozári provides a wider context for her topic by including the history of social security (accident, disability and health insurance, and orphan benefits) in her study as well as offering a brief overview of the European models that influenced Hungarian regulations. This monograph is an excellent addition to discussions of other areas of Hungarian Studies as it offers examples related to nationalism, anti-Semitism, and women's history (via the history of women's social rights). More specifically, Kozári's findings could, for example, furnish a cultural history of the professionalization of certain occupations in Hungary around the nineteenth century.