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Enlightenment, Modernization, Professional Training

Count György Festetics's Role in Establishing Agricultural Higher Education in Hungary at the End of the Eighteenth Century*

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Abstract. Western historical narratives of the Enlightenment tend to depict the eighteenth-century aristocracy as a unique promoter of overall progress, whereas Hungarian historiography is more inclined to appraise their role according to a deprecating approach based on the criticism of a traditional class system. However, it seems clear that a more balanced judgement of the Hungarian aristocracy should involve a complex analysis. In first place, it is to be decided whether erudite and financially well-off individuals existed, and if so, to what extent they were willing and capable of contributing to various forms of innovation, let alone social and cultural progress. For this reason, this paper is designed to focus on the activities of Count György Festetics, a Transdanubian Hungarian aristocrat who was educated in the *Theresianum*, an elite Viennese training institute, but whose career prospects were thwarted at the end of the eighteenth century on account of his involvement with the anti-Habsburg movement of Hungary's lesser nobility on the death of Emperor Joseph II. This analysis seems justifiable, because Festetics's decision to set up a farming college in Keszthely clearly shows his commitment to progress, aiming at the adaptation of modern methods as well as creating the institutional background for the dissemination of specialist knowledge among the various layers of contemporary society.

Keywords: Habsburg dynasty, Enlightenment, absolutism, Hungarian nobility, nationalism, *Theresianum*, Festetics family, English farming practices

Introduction

According to a somewhat exaggerated view, the Enlightenment is commonly thought of as a French intellectual affair for which the ground was laid by the English political revolution. For the English, there was no longer a collective authority which demanded submission, so they could turn their attention to practical matters and gradually excel

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in trade, farming, industry, and, of course, in sciences. Some historians even went as far as suggesting that the success of the British Isles should be attributed to 'social amalgamation,' or to the evolution of a 'classless society,' which implied rough political, economic, social and educational parity between citizens.[1] However, progress and innovative thinking on the continent were dependent either on monarchs assuming the role of 'first servant of the state' to promote the 'common good,' or on the various circles of *philosophe*s. As for the latter, they could often not do without the support of the privileged layers of contemporary societies, acting as *patronne*s in the widest possible sense.[2] At the same time, the success rate of the policies of absolute monarchs committed to the service of the 'common good' was also dependent on the cooperation of the influential layers of a given society. Should a monarch fail to win them over, all their intentions were doomed to failure—just as Robert Townson (1762–1827), a contemporary English traveler, observed in his book on Joseph II's (1780–1790) reign in Hungary.[3]

No wonder the influence of some individual members of the Hungarian aristocracy on economic, political, and cultural processes did not cease to be a core issue of contemporary national progress, as is reflected in a letter of 1816 by Dániel Berzsenyi (1776–1836)—a minor nobleman of low income—to Count György Festetics (1755–1819) of Keszthely. Berzsenyi compared Keszthely to the German city of Weimar, and the reference inevitably raises the question what prompted the 'poor poet,' as he commonly called himself, when addressing a man far above him in status and wealth, to liken a small town on the shores of Lake Balaton to a place as emblematic of European refinement and noble patronage as Weimar. The easiest solution would be to write it off as mere flattery of a 'great man' – one whom even his contemporary, the politically compromised writer Ferenc Kazinczy (1759–1831), released from prison fifteen years earlier, had chastised for his vanity. If, however, we weigh Berzsenyi's thoughts along the lines expressed in the memoirs of Transylvanian nobleman Sándor Ujfalvy (1792–1866), who judged the count's comportment from the perspective of the future of the nation, then it is upon the responsibility of an individual capable of acting on the basis of social privilege and financial position, or even the role undertaken by the Hungarian nobility in general, that one's focus necessarily falls.[4]

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1 Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, 17–19; Hawthorn, *Enlightenment*, 10–13.

2 For a general view of contemporary nobilities on the Continent, see: Scott, *The European Nobilities*; Canning and Wellenreuther, *Britain and Germany Compared*.

3 "Arbitrary indeed was the government of Joseph; yet noone [sic] I think will question the goodness of his intentions, however they may disapprove his measures. How severe a mortification must it not have been to him, after passing so many sleepless nights in planning for the welfare of his people, to find nothing but discontent and dissatisfaction within their breasts…" Townson, *Travels in Hungary*, 145. On Joseph II's personality and reign, see: Hajdu, *II. József igazgatási reformjai*; Beales, *Joseph II*; Reinalter, *Joseph II*.

4 Merényi, *Berzsenyi Dániel,* 59–60; Gyalui, *Mezőkövesdi Ujfalvy Sándor,* 217. For more on the

Not surprisingly, this is a controversy later generations would continue to debate. In 1889, for example, Independence Party member Lajos Mocsáry (1826–1916) would reflect on Béla Grünwald's (1839–1891) book *A régi Magyarország 1711–1824* [Old Hungary 1711–1824] of the previous year, now regarded as the first "critical analysis of feudal society and mentality," in a separate volume of his own authorship.[5] Entitled *A régi magyar nemes* [The old Hungarian nobleman], Mocsáry's book began with an introduction accusing Grünwald of having put into Hungarian an undeservedly and unjustifiably uncritical acceptance of the Habsburgs' absolutist system of governance. He writes:

> "Béla Grünwald, who, since the publication of his book *A régi Magyarország* [Old Hungary 1711–1824], has been styled a mouthpiece for Hungarian democracy, has, in his work, treated the nation most harshly. Among the reasons for which the country finds itself in the present age in such a regrettable state, he cites as first and foremost the relationship between the foreign ruling house and its inherited provinces, among them Hungary; yet in elaborating upon this point, places the near-full burden of responsibility upon the nation. He finds excuses for the powers that rule over us, even portraying them as initiator in the trappings of progress, while casting blame upon the nation for its own backwardness. The constitutional liberty our nation has managed to keep alive in its breast under even the most grievous of circumstances he labels penury, praising instead the absolute monarchy that, having everywhere destroyed feudal constitutions, has created a state administration filled, as representative of the public good, with noble, ideal content. […] The sons of this nation he denies all greater mental faculty, depicting contemporary generations as ignorant, uncultured, barren of ideas, incapable of grasping the fundaments of politics, and both naive, and inexperienced in matters of public import."[6]

The main question in the above debate—"if it is true that the absolute monarchy did more to promote progress and healthy national development than did the feudal constitution"—has remained (if not in such an explicit fashion) one of

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Hungarian Jacobin movement and the activities of Ferenc Kazinczy and associates, see: Benda, *A magyar jakobinusok*. On the topic of Festetics's literary patronage, see the corresponding chapters in: Cséby, *A keszthelyi Helikon*.

5 Mocsáry, *A régi magyar nemes*. Lajos Mocsáry raised many a contemporary eyebrow with his 1855 piece of writing, *A magyar társasélet*, in which he opined that the forces of modernization and urbanization in Hungary might be strengthened through the active, public, scientific energies of the former noble classes, who possessed both the requisite culture and distinct national consciousness to do so. Béla Grünwald, as writer and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Zólyom County, was a personage of some note in his time. For more on his activities, see: Kocsis, *A Felvidék*.

6 Mocsáry, *A régi magyar nemes*, 21.

the fundamental issues *vis-à-vis* Hungarian historiography as it strives to interpret developments in the eighteenth century. In the process, many have painted the Hungarian nobility—in a manner that is beyond simplistic—as a social and political barrier to progress; one which, clinging to the privileges it was accorded during the dark centuries of the Middle Ages, obstructed all service to the common good; and which, though incapable of bearing the burden of taxes necessary for the operation of a modern state, oppressed the peasantry on the basis of its prerogatives. This view is enhanced by some historians who, for example, juxtapose the policies of Queen Maria Theresa's (1740–1780) emblematic statesman and diplomat Chancellor Wenzel von Kaunitz (1711–1794) and the resistance of the Hungarian nobility to reformist ideas.[7]

The complementary element of this line of thought is that true progress resided with the Habsburg dynasty and its government, as only the person and politics of its ruling head, the true representative—by virtue of their absolute power—of the notion of statehood, might rise to obtain the status of being the single and legitimate embodiment of the common good and interest. In this oversimplified formulation, therefore, the original representative of all evil in the face of enlightened absolutism was the Hungarian nobility, which, by the late eighteenth century, had found itself unable to effect 'modern' responses to the challenges of centralized politics as practiced by the enlightened Habsburg monarchs; undertaking only what constituted the representation of its own provincial interests in the form of hidebound feudal nationalist projects.[8]

As to whether the Hungarian nobility were actually—to use Grünwald's phrasing—wholly "uncultured, barren of ideas, [and] incapable of grasping the fundaments of politics," there is plenty of room for doubt. Firstly, while nationalist theory

7 Szabó, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*.

8 Since the 1970s, the principle influence on the concept of "feudal nationalism," its connotations, and related problems has been the interpretation furnished by the influential historian Domokos Kosáry (1913–2007). For a more detailed reflection on Kosáry's views, see: Tarnai, "Magyar jakobinusok, bonapartisták," 383–96. In 1990, Kosáry made concessions to the Hungarian nobility by exposing Joseph II's character traits, most of all his uncompromising "aggressivness," which undoubtedly contributed to the rejection of his enlightened reforms: Kosáry, *Újjáépítés*, 164–65. For an overview of Kosáry's interpretation of his stance on the issue of Hungary's economic, social and cultural development in the eighteenth century, see: Krász, "Kosáry Domokos," 1442–47. For more on this particular set of issues and the dilemma of progress and historiographic interpretation of the era, see: Miskolczy, *A felvilágosodás* és *liberalizmus között*. Offering a critical survey in relation to Gyula Szekfű's (1883–1955) use of "feudal nationalism" as a category in post-1945 historiography is an essay by András Gergely, published in a collection of essays commemorating the birth of Ferenc Kazinczy: Gergely, "Kazinczy a történelemben," 285–93.

and its collateral political and intellectual movements do not conform to the privileged, feudal structure of a given society, they do presume the emergence of a broadly based cultural, linguistic, and spiritual community and corresponding national identity. Beyond that, however, is the evidence provided by the processes that defined Hungary in final decades of the eighteenth century. When in 1790, following the death of Joseph II, the Diet of Hungary convened for the first time in more than two decades, deputies conspicuously focused their attention not only on the practice of constitutionality and protection of their privileged status, as had been the case in the past, but also on the advancement of Hungarian commercial and business interests, and even on the matter of the Hungarian language.[9] The Hungarian nobility, in reaction to what had been considered the arbitrary practice of the Habsburg government, did not restrict its initiative to the political realm alone; rather, prompted by the arguments of the enlightened gentry and aristocracy, it went as far as to pass a resolution regarding regular preparatory work on the part of the Diet committees, signaling to the new ruler, Leopold II (1790–1792), that real change had begun in Hungary, and that he might well concede to having detected signs of the emergence of a new mentality.[10] It is revealing, therefore, that for the government, that great representative of the 'common good,' discrediting the nobility's movement via power politics and targeted communications became a priority objective. Agents with persuasive pens argued that it was only the 'Hunnic barbarism' of the Hungarians that hindered the 'benevolent' monarch from effectively advancing the matter of public well-being.[11]

There can be little doubt that the reforms enacted by Queen Maria Theresa and Joseph II during the second half of the eighteenth century, with particular reference to the consistent regulation of the rights and obligations of the feudal peasantry with respect to their landlords, were of considerable socio-political significance, and that the institutional processes founded in relation to vocational education in medicine and other aspects of healthcare were of European standard.[12] It should not be forgotten, however, that with the exception of the Academy of Mining and Metallurgy

9 See the Diet of 1790, Articles 12–13, 16, and 67. For a most comprehensive evaluation of the procedures and issues tabled by the estates of Hungary throughout the eighteenth century, see: Szijártó M., *A diéta*. For a more recent study on the relationship between the Imperial Court and the Estates of Hungary with special regard to the nobility's resistance to Joseph II's policy, see: Szakály, "Managing a Composite Monarchy," 205–20.

10 H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs,* 312–17. For a concise analysis of the intellectual and political background to the era in Hungary, see: Barany, "Hoping against Hope," 319–57.

11 Benda, "A magyar nemesi mozgalom," 64–104. For more on the reign of Leopold II, heir to Joseph II, see: Peham, *Leopold II.* For an example of the infamously commissioned pamphlets, see: [Hoffmann], *Babel*; [Hoffmann], *Ninive.* For an analysis of the orientation of contemporary political pamphlets and treatises, see: Bíró, "A történelem mint politikai provokáció," 3–28.

12 Szabo, *A magyarországi úrbérrendezés*; Krász, "A mesterség szolgálatában," 1065–104.

of Banská Štiavnica (Selmecbánya, Schemnitz), which, subsequent to its inauguration in 1735, operated under the supervision of the Royal Hungarian Chamber, the central government founded no educational institutions with the potential to enhance the nation's economic performance.[13] Furthermore, such campaign-like initiatives on the part of the government as did affect farming (e.g. the publication of pieces of work providing information on agricultural or veterinary practices) brought no measurable change of any kind.[14] It is not of negligible import, therefore, that the Habsburg government, having in the years following the Diet of 1790 become embroiled in the latest European conflict against revolutionary France, continued to ignore the issue, and, for that matter, that the actual vocational educational groundwork in the matter of agricultural production, a sector responsible for the majority of state revenue, was in fact laid down by a highly cultured member of a Transdanubian aristocratic family, Count György Festetics, in the founding of an institution charged with transmitting knowledge about the modern principles of agribusiness and related practical knowledge.

To understand Festetics's unparalleled decision, the personal motivations behind it, and the elements that composed his vision for the future, one must consider both his family background and the events that marked the various stages of his life. The justifications for doing so are many and include not only the palpable influence that Grünwald's judgement—or the chief elements of it, as exposed by Mocsáry—continues to exert on perceptions today, but also, and not incidentally, the attitudes of contemporaries Berzsenyi and Ujfalvy. Certainly, the count's family background and financial position would have required no more of him than that—identifying in full with the politics of the central government and accepting the current state of affairs—he choose a life of leisure spent in private circles, colored from time to time by entertainments appropriate to his social status: balls, hunts, theatrical performances, gambling, or even the diversion of the *salonnière*s.

Yet the count's life path, nourished by the spirit and ideals of the Enlightenment, diverged from the pattern set down by his family in a manner that must have seemed irregular to even his contemporaries, and that was necessarily attended by a measure of conflict. The paths to success pursued by various members of the Festetics family included options in both administration and the military, yet for Festetics recognition at the national and European level derived precisely from having broken with such traditions.

13 Mihalovits, "Az első bányatisztképző iskola," 5–24; Tárczy-Hornoch, "Mikoviny Sámuel," 25–42.

14 Dóczy, Wellmann, and Bakács, *A magyar gazdasági irodalom*, 98–185.

The status, education, and career prospects of young Festetics

The wealth and status of the Festetics family had its origins in the transactions of György Festetics's great grandfather, Pál Festetics (1639–1720), a veteran of the 1686 recapture of Buda, who expanded upon the family fortune partly through trade with Turkish prisoners in the service of the Batthyány family, and partly through serendipitous marriage.[15] Of his three sons to reach adult age, two entered military service. Only the youngest, Kristóf Festetics (1696–1768), acceded to his father's desire that he undertake a career in administration, studying law at the University of Trnava (Nagyszombat) before accepting, by virtue of his experience in county administration and the meetings of the Diet, an appointment to the Hungarian Royal Council of the Governor-General in 1736. Eight years later, he would be found serving as a justice on the Court of Seven, a judicial body dealing primarily with cases of escheat.[16] Unlike his predecessors, Kristóf had his own first-born son, Pál Festetics (1722–1782), educated not only in his home country, but also abroad. The chosen institution was the Protestant university in Leipzig, where he was accompanied and supervised by András Károly Bél (1717–1782), son of the culturally accomplished Lutheran pastor and teacher, Mátyás Bél (1684–1749). The intellectual atmosphere of the Saxon city in which the young Pál found himself is perhaps best reflected in the words of Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832), likewise a student of law in the city, who in his autobiography would later describe Leipzig as similar to Paris.[17] It is not surprising, therefore, that the Festetics family library should have been expanded during the time of Pál's studies there with books purchased from Leipzig booksellers; in particular works by Montesquieu, Voltaire, John Locke, and other French, English, and (naturally) German authors of the Enlightenment.[18]

The career opportunities opened up to Pál Festetics through his education and legal training were indeed prodigious, and as an officer of the Royal Hungarian Chancery he would eventually become an indispensable advisor to the Habsburg sovereign, Queen Maria Theresa, in matters pertinent to Hungary, particularly as regarded his work toward the development of an urbarial decree that would regulate the situation of the peasantry against seigneurial excesses.[19] In 1772, having become

15 For more on the early history of the Festetics family, see the relevant sections of: Szabó, *A herceg Festetics család története*. Pál Festetics participated in the siege of Buda in 1686 as an officer of Transdanubian Captain-in-Chief Count Ádám Batthány (1662–1703). MNL OL Festetics Lt, Memorabilia, P 235 Box 117 fol. 40.

16 Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja*, 65–67.

17 "Da mir alle Hoffnung nach Göttingen abgeschnitten war, wendete ich nun meinen Blick nach Leipzig." Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* Book 6.

18 Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja*, 63.

19 Szabó, *A magyarországi úrbérrendezés*, 64–65.

Vice-Chairman of the Hungarian Court Chamber, the office which administrated Hungarian state finances, the Queen elevated him to the rank of count.[20] This success in administrative affairs Pál held up as an example to his own first-born son, György, a product of his marriage to Countess Julianna Bossányi (1735–1805), to whose education he dedicated considerable attention. Born in 1755, György Festetics was twelve years old when he was sent to the *Theresianum*, an elite Viennese academy for career administrators founded by Queen Maria Theresa in 1746, where, in addition to the traditional ancient classical languages and literature, he had the opportunity of mastering the fundaments of law, state administration, feudal state finance, mathematics, statistics, geography, and even military studies, defense, and architecture.[21] At the academy in Vienna, however, care had also been taken to incorporate into the curriculum a general course on agriculture—one that in his time was taught by Lajos Mitterpacher (1734–1814), a member of a family of Bilje (Croatia, Bellye) understewards, who would later—following the dissolution of the Jesuit Order—go on to teach agricultural studies at the university in Pest.[22]

Festetics's interest in the vocations is reflected, among other things, in his juvenile library, which included, for example, both Adams Smith's classic *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* in its original English edition, and Part I of a German translation published at nearly the same time.[23] For an understanding of finances and economy in the world beyond the borders of the Habsburg Empire, Festetics turned primarily to source material in the French and German languages.[24] Within the count's private library, which he maintained independently from that of family, his 388-item catalogue on state administration reflected the influence

20 Nagy, *A Magyar Kamara 1686–1848,* 178–80; Czobor, *A Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum könyvtárának címjegyzéke,* vol. 6, 2–3.

21 Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja*, 76. For the importance of *Collegium Theresianum* concerning the prestige and status of young Hungarian aristocrats, see: Khavanova, "Official Policies and Parental Strategies," 95–116; Kökényesi, "A tudomány és a nyilvánosság," 35–68.

22 "Der Unterricht für einen adelichen Jüngling muss in dieser Wissenschaft so weit gehen, dass er die Wirtschaft seines Landgutes gründlich verstehe. Er muss in der Stand gesetzt werden, dass ersie zu betreiben, nach dem Umständen zu verbessern, seine Beamten und Untergeordneten zu übersehen, die Wirtschaftbücher, ihren Inhalt, oder, was er sonst höret, richtig zu beurtheilen wisse." [Mitterpacher], *Entwurf der oekonomischen Kentnisse*, 7.

23 Smith, *Untersuchung der Natur und Ursachen*.

24 [Forbonnais], Élémens *du commerce*. This work covers factors influencing trade from antiquity until the eighteenth century, including the role of loans and fluctuations in exchange rates. Its pages have been marked by Festetics in numerous places. [Graslin], *Essai analitique*. Two other works from Festetics's early library merit mention here: [Durban], *Essais sur les Principes des finances*.; [Dutot], *Réflexions politiques*.; Mills, *Vollständiger Lehrbegriff.*

of Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732–1817).[25] From Karl Anton Martini's (1726–1800) textbooks in general and legal philosophy, Festetics would have absorbed the ideals of the classic thinkers in natural law, and would certainly have fallen under the influence of such authors as were frequently mentioned by his Viennese teacher—Grotius, Hobbes, Wolff, Thomasius, Pufendorf, and their followers—as well.[26] Both his library and his correspondence reveal Festetics as a man with a broad education in literature, a reader of works by Shakespeare, Fielding, Swift, Richardson, and Gibbon, the basis for which was largely laid down by his other instructor, Michael Denis (1729–1800).[27] It should not be forgotten, of course, that in addition to his own mother tongue, the young count also spoke, read, and wrote fluently in Latin, German, French, English, and Italian.

In the years following his return from Vienna, Festetics first served briefly as a financial administrator with the Royal Hungarian Chamber in Buda, then he was transferred to the Royal Council of Croatia in Zagreb, where he met Miklós Skerlecz (1729–1799), the Banate Council member who, as a member of the trade committee created by the Diet of 1790–1791, would later draft elaborations articulating the adverse effects of Viennese court economic policy on developments in Hungary.[28] In opposition to his father's wishes, however, György Festetics soon turned his back on administrative work to join the hussar regiment of Count Ferenc Nádasdy (1708–1783), the Ban of Croatia. In an attempt to gain speedy promotion, he followed this with service in other regiments, including the Royal Hungarian BodyGuard.[29] In 1782, under pressure from his father and accepting his family's dynastic strategy, he took a wife, a decision clearly prompted by the rather serious debt in which the family found itself due to the ongoing expansion of the Festetics estate. Indeed, the count's father had threatened to disinherit him should he eschew the proposed marriage as the girl chosen for him, Countess Judit Sallér (1765–1829), came with a substantial dowry.[30]

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25 Sonnenfels, *Sätze aus der Polizey-, Handlung und Finanzwissenschaften*; Sonnenfels, *Grundsätze*; Sonnenfels, *Ueber die Liebe des Vaterlandes*; Sonnenfels, *Der Mann ohne Vorurtheil.*

26 Martini, *De lege naturali positiones*.; Martini, *De lege naturali exercitationes.* For an overview of Festetics's juvenile library, see: Kurucz, "Könyv és főnemesi műveltség," 93–108.

27 Compare the list of authors given: Pleticha, *Adel und Buch*, 80, 86–87; Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja*, 78–80.

28 For Skerlecz's works in print, see: Skerlecz, *Projectum Legum motivatum*; Berényi, *Skerlecz Miklós báró művei*.

29 General Ferenc Nádasdy, Ban of Croatia, in a letter dated 27 July 1778, expressed joy at his regiment's gaining "such a worthy new member." MNL OL, Festetics Lt, P 246 Box 1 fol. 430. Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja,* 103–5, 118.

30 Festetics expressed his bitterness in a letter of 1782 written to his brother-in-law Count Ferenc Széchényi (1754–1820), as follows: "In meinem Vaters Hause, denket man an Reformen, der Necker französischer Finanz Minister wird zu Schande […] Familie, Zukunft, diesen

As Festetics's hopes of military promotion crumbled, however, the young count felt compelled to identify with the efforts of the emerging Hungarian noble opposition to the planned general tax reforms of Joseph II—measures intended to restrict the constitutional privileges of the Hungarian nobility as well. At the same time, the country was beginning to be exhausted by the unsuccessful war against the Turks which also contributed to the growing disenchantment of the Hungarian public with the Emperor's policy. Although the new monarch convened the Diet of Hungary, the political mood in the country was quite distrustful regarding his intentions and certain members of the enlightened nobility and aristocracy contemplated dethroning the Habsburg dynasty and offering the Crown of Hungary to a prince of the House of Hannover. Pamphlets appeared treating the unlawful procedures of the Habsburgs at length and Baron Miklós Vay (1756–1824) went on a secret mission to discuss the conditions of the anticipated dynastic change in Hungary with Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, in London.[31] The country was in turmoil, and the officers of the Hungarian regiments also had high hopes about the possible decisions of the anticipated Diet in the summer of 1790. Festetics, lieutenant colonel of the Graeven hussar regiment, was ordered to march at the head of two squadrons to the capital in order to secure law and order during the sessions of the Diet. With the participation of his fellow officers, Festetics dispatched a high-profile petition to the Diet, essentially declaring the priority of the legislative power *vis-à-vis* the ruling dynasty in a manner that could potentially have served as a basis for the creation of an independent Hungarian military.[32] The incoming Leopold II, however, in a shrewd sequence of plays, succeeded in isolating the nobility's aspirations, first placing Festetics under court martial proceedings with the clear intent of making an example of him, then—again out of consideration for the political situation—refraining from any actual act of retribution. Instead, the Hungarian officer was subjected to multiple reassignments until it became clear that his career in the Imperial and Royal Army had come to an impasse. In 1791, with the sovereign's approval, he left military service.[33]

Enlightened ideals and the development of an educational program

Despite the enormous debt encumbering his estates and a private life that was far from ideal, Festetics did not refrain from commencing practical work on several large-scale

lehren Wörtern soll man ihn sauer werden lassen, sorget nicht Gott gleich für alle." MNL OL, Széchényi Lt, P 623 Box 25 fol. 413; Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja,* 106–9.

31 Benda, "A magyar jakobinus mozgalom," 108; H. Balázs, *Berzeviczy Gergely*, 152–55; Szakály, *Egy vállalkozó főnemes*, 111–33.

32 ÖSta Kriegsarchiv, HKR Akten, 1790/44/420 fol. 59–60.

33 Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja,* 135–36.

projects intended as services to the 'common good.' In the early 1790s, for example, despite his own Roman Catholic affiliation, he founded a Hungarian Reformed secondary school in the Somogy County town of Csurgó, while also sponsoring publication of the fictitious letters of Kelemen Mikes (1690–1761), an act that preserved for posterity the events of the exile of emblematic revolutionary leader Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676–1735).[34] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that his name crops up in relation to numerous other initiatives. With the aid of a man of letters, József Kármán (1769–1795), the physician Gáspár Pajor (1766–1840), and University of Pest aesthetics professor Lajos Schedius (1768–1847), Festetics lent his support to the publication of the periodical *Uránia*, a project intended by its authors to stir public discussion in matters of the Hungarian language in literature and science, offer a measure of practical knowledge, and promote the moral values necessary for social progress. From the relevant correspondence, it is clear that Festetics was also the 'anonymous patriot' behind the publication of its first volume, a result achieved via the director of his estates, János Nagyváthy (1755–1819), and his connections with the Freemasons.[35] At the same time, as regards the long-term plans now taking shape, including those related to the founding of a vocational institution of farming that would open at the end of the decade, there can be no doubt of a private motive either, as the practical need to run his estates on a daily basis had exposed a decided want of trained agricultural advisors and officers.[36]

The most outstanding of the count's life achievements, the agricultural school, founded in 1797 and opened following a lengthy period of preparation. He proceeded with due circumspection as regards its character, the content and structure of its curriculum, and the selection of instructors. Festetics understood the value of assessing the experiences of other institutions and, where suitable, adapting their teaching and organizational practices. Of decisive significance in this regard were the proposals of Viennese university professor and former Göttingen student Peter Jordan (1751–1817) concerning an array of potential subjects (e.g. agrochemistry) and the usefulness of each. Regarding the subjects Festetics himself wished to include in the curriculum, a brief hand-written compilation entitled *Entwurf eines Planes für den oekonomischen Unterricht*, presumably dating to 1794, is particularly revealing.[37] As the document is unsigned, the identity of its author can be surmised only indirectly. The handwriting

34 Kurucz, "Adósság, hitel, törlesztés," 545–46; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Központi Birtokigazgatás [Central Estate Management] P 274 Box 245 fol. 13; Kostyál, "Kultsár István levele Festetics Györgyhöz," 475–76.

35 Kókay, "Kármán József és az Uránia," 224–25; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 6. fol. 371–72.

36 Csoma, "A »Közönséges Instructio…« szerepe," 34–49; Lukács, "Nagyváthy János keszthelyi munkássága," 55–70.

37 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 5 fol. 259–268.

suggests it was neither Nagyváthy, author of the first Hungarian-language agricultural textbook, nor Evangelical pastor and elementary farming school founder Sámuel Tessedik (1742–1820); rather, by comparison to the penmanship of a letter to Festetics dated 1 January 1799, its authorship can attributed to Austrian agricultural expert Peter Jordan.[38] In terms of structure, *Entwurf* introduces each subject area by defining concepts and posing questions, then offering a brief exposition as to why a grasp of the material in question is important. Topics covered include, among other things, tillage, phytobiology, fertilization, soil typology, soil quality, and stock breeding. Fundamentally, however, *Entwurf* puts forward not a detailed syllabus with material organized into sequenced blocks, but a set of insights into the significance of each subject area—what specifically is to be gained from the study of, say, edaphology.

At the conceptual level, the project was shaped by the consultations of the director of his estates, János Nagyváthy, and later by the count himself, albeit via correspondence, with Sámuel Tessedik, the Lutheran pastor of Szarvas, who in 1791 had founded an elementary farming school for youth of common parentage.[39] In a letter dated 3 June 1795, Tessedik appended a description of the school in Szarvas, likely in response to a desire on Festetics's part to use the pastor's experiences as a point of departure for his own endeavors. Such a view would explain Festetics's known sponsorship of the studies of two young men at Tessedik's institution, though neither of the individuals in question, of whom Tessedik wrote in disparaging terms, would later play any part in events at Keszthely.[40]

That Festetics exercised circumspection in his quest for models, however, there can be no doubt—a conclusion for which his correspondence with the Prague-born Viennese newspaper editor Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld (1750–1821) stands as compelling evidence. It can be no coincidence, for example, that in 1796 Schönfeld, who did not speak Hungarian, launched in Vienna an agricultural journal written entirely in the Hungarian language, and indeed, the editor's correspondence with Festetics permits the conclusion that the count himself was behind its publication.[41] In a letter dated 13 March 1797, Schönfeld recommended Ferenc Pethe (1762–1832) as a person whose "accumulated knowledge and national pride" made him unequivocally suited to a teaching position.[42] Such incidents serve to demonstrate that when

38 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 15 fol. 1–1v, 11–11v.

39 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 8 fol. 381–382v.

40 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 6 fol. 67; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 8 fol. 131–132v; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 9 fol. 79.

41 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 10 fol. 156.

42 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 10 fol. 316.

it came to his intentions as founder, considerations of quality, professional standard, and personal commitment were regarded as of inseparable value. The choice of Pethe, however, merits particular attention in that Pethe came to Keszthely following several years' study in Western Europe that included, among other things, personal experience with agricultural practices in England. Incidentally, the first executive professor of the newly opened college in Keszthely was the Bohemian Karl Bulla (?–?), upon whose recommendation Festetics was to christen his institution 'the *Georgicon*' in reflection of both its patronage, and its academic character of farming.[43]

Also of conceptual relevance is a letter dated 17 October 1799 from Festetics to Archduke Joseph (1776–1847), Palatine of Hungary and President of the Council of the Governor-General, in which Festetics refers to England's agricultural achievements as exemplary and exceeding those of any other European country; clear indication that Pethe's engagement in the project was, in fact, no arbitrary matter. As regards the documentation and dissemination of results achieved on the practical side of institutional operations, the count held the labors of Secretary Arthur Young (1741–1820) and Chairman Sir John Sinclair (1754–1835) of the Board of Agriculture as instructive, as he did the role played by the German agriculturist Albrecht Thaer (1752–1828), in ensuring a proper reception for Britain's achievements on the continent.[44] Thaer, incidentally, would later express admiration for the ten-course crop rotation system used on the *Georgicon*'s experimental farm, an innovation developed by Pethe from experiences gleaned in England and The Netherlands.[45] In assessing the readiness with which Hungary absorbed and adapted the latest developments in agricultural science, this point is not insignificant.

The development of a curriculum, on the other hand, took considerably more time, although, thanks to the labors of Karl Bulla and Ferenc Pethe, the contours of an initial '*oeconomicalis institutum*' had been drawn as early as 1797–98.[46] In it,

43 OSZK Kézirattár [Department of Manuscripts], Quart. Germ. 1240 fol. 2–3. Of Festetics's character traits several stories survived. Theresa Pulszky, *née* Walter (1819–1866), wrote in her memoirs as follows: "He was not only learned, but also very clever; of a powerfully satirical turn, directed against all the world, which he disguised under the mask of politeness, united with the semblance of such perfect humility, as to appear at times awkward. It was never to be made out whether he spoke in joke or in earnest." Pulszky, *Memoirs*, 133.

44 OSZK Kézirattár, Quart. Germ. 1240 fol. 79–84v. For more on the work of Young and Sinclair, see: Brunt, "Rehabilitating Arthur Young," 265–99; Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John*. For Thaer's contribution to disseminating rational farming techniques, see: Körte, *Albrecht Thaer*; Klemm-Meyer, *Albrecht Daniel Thaer*.

45 Albrecht Thaer's letter to Festetics is dated 25 January 1801. MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 23 fol. 183–183v.

46 Karl Bulla's report to the *Directio* is dated 6 September 1797. MNL OL Festetics Lt, Georgicon alapításával kapcsolatos iratok [Documents on the Founding of the Georgicon], P 283 Box 13 fol. 82–86.

subjects were divided into three basic groups: general agriculture *(rustica)*, mathematics and technology, and veterinary medicine.[47] First-year students were to begin with the study of horticulture, gardening, wildlands management, viticulture, and forestry. In the second year, they examined related "crafts and trades and the internal management of the same," and in the third, estate management and law. Subjects included under the final year's thematic headings included: 1. "Decrees of His Highness as pertain to farming"; 2. "Localities management"; and 3. "Guidelines for His Lordship's officers." In the study of practical matters, students received in-depth training in both architecture and the technical side of farm-building construction, with particular emphasis on arithmetic, accounting, and geometry. Interns, that is, full-time students, were additionally expected to gain an adequate mastery of drafting, a requirement to which a number of surviving examination drawings attest.[48]

According to an examination plan dated 28 August 1803, several years into the school's operation, students gave account of their understanding of each subject over a period of two days. At 7:30 a.m. on the first day, the Count's three scholarship recipients were tested in '*oeconomia*'; in the hour to follow, the rest of the school's external interns, that is, students who were supported by other patrons or covered their studies on their own. At 9:30 a.m. the three students then sat for an hour-long examination in geometry. A short break proceeded the examination in botany, which lasted from 10:45 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. The final examinations for Day 1 were in "hydroengineering" at 2:00 p.m. and technology at 3:00 p.m. On Day 2, interns were tested in mathematics and business accounting, followed by practical questions as per an instruction by Nagyváthy.[49] It is important to note that the original version of the published hand-written document specifying all basic study requirements was personally read and countersigned by the count himself.[50]

As regards the stock-breeding courses taught at the *Georgicon*, the sense is of a desire to impart practical principles and methods in a manner that was both rational and thorough, an approach that would have students delving into such topics as stabling and the use of crop rotation in producing quality fodder Typifying this spirit was the production during the tenure of Ferenc Pethe of both perennial ryegrass (or "ray grass"), and white clover on the school's experimental farm. A report on the ongoing development of the farm dated 4 February 1800 states for its planned

47 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Georgicon alapításával kapcsolatos iratok [Documents on the Founding of the Georgicon], P 283 Box 13 fol. 89–91.

48 Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja*, 212; OSZK Kézirattár Fol. Germ. 1460 fol. 2–3; MMgM Adattár. II. 1077.

49 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 35 fol. 601–602v.

50 OSZK Kézirattár, Quart. Hung. 3714, 8708.

thirty-two acres of pasture "a necessity of 130 measures each of red, white, and yellow clover seed, and an equal quantity of Ray gras [sic] seed."[51] Considerable time was also dedicated to such pursuits as the fattening of cows, milk production, and for sheep, the study of wool as a raw material. Key in this regard was the participation in instruction of Moravian-born Gyula Liebbald (1780–1846), chief veterinary surgeon for the Festetics estates and author of a specialist book on protecting sheep against sheep pox, which had garnered national attention.[52] In evidence of both Festetics's respect for Liebbald's professionalism and the latter's success as a veterinarian, Liebbald filled the position of director of the *Georgicon* at various times over the course of the school's operation. As an instructor, he took advantage of his duties inoculating Count Festetics's herds in order to provide a learning opportunity for his students.[53]

Following Pethe's departure in 1801, academic life at Keszthely continued to be shaped by professors educated at Western European Protestant institutions. Two key figures in particular, János Asbóth (1768–1823) and Károly György Rumy (1780–1847), had acquired their knowledge of farming from the lectures of Professor Johann Beckmann (1739–1811) at the University of Göttingen, an institution founded by the King of England and Elector of Hannover, George II (1727–1760).[54] Indeed, every applicant for Pethe's vacated position listed a Göttingen education among his qualifications.[55] In 1806, Festetics instructed Asbóth to prepare a new curriculum, as a result of which the three initially defined categories—"Agricultural Subjects," "Subjects Belonging to Mathematics," and "Natural History and Veterinary Medicine"—were expanded to include hydraulics and hydroengineering under the second heading and chemistry under the third. Lectures lasted one hour per day for each subject, yielding a total of 18 hours of theoretical study per week.[56] In witness to the specifics of Asbóth's lectures is an extant set of notes by full-time intern student Károly Zimányi (?–?), taken in Latin and dated 1805. The lecture in question

51 *Lolium perenne*, *L*. MNL OL Festetics Lt, Georgicon alapításával kapcsolatos iratok [Documents on the Founding of the Georgicon], P 283 Box 13 fol. 137; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 19 fol. 314–315.

52 Liebbald, Über *die zweckgemässste Methode*.

53 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Georgicon alapításával kapcsolatos iratok [Documents on the Founding of the Georgicon], P 283 Box 12 fol. 7.

54 For Hungary's intellectual relations with the *Georgia Augusta*, see: Futaky, *Göttinga*. For Beckmann's activities and oeuvre, see: Bayerl and Beckmann, *Johann Beckmann (1739–1811)*.; For Asbóth's education and career, see: Kurucz, "Göttingentől Keszthelyig," 1031–60.

55 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 22 fol. 384–385.

56 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Georgicon alapításával kapcsolatos iratok [Documents on the Founding of the Georgicon], P 283 Box 4 (no foliation).

centered on the properties and uses of various vegetable oils, food processing and preservation, the uses of industrial plants, and basic minerology. The information presented relies largely on Beckmann's *Anleitung zur Technologie*, a work whose 1802 edition—one of several pre-dating the curriculum—featured in Festetics's own specialist library.[57] It may in any case be observed that both theoretical studies and practical training at Keszthely were combined and organized according to the principles applied at Göttingen, a conclusion Asbóth's own thematically differentiated examination tables plainly support.[58]

Additions to the Keszthely library dating to the last decades of the eighteenth century and the specific acquisition of works published at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries allow for two important conclusions: that the collection was deliberately shaped along vocational lines; and that its development was closely related both to the official and conceptual reasons behind the *Georgicon*'s founding, and to the school's eventual operations. Supporting this supposition is the observation that acquisitions of the period included all works on natural science, medicine, agriculture, and technology written by the teachers at the *Georgia Augusta* in Göttingen. Accordingly, the orders submitted to Viennese book shops regularly featured the works of Johann Beckmann, and indeed, according to a "roster of Books procured from Vienna and placed in the Library" on 24 July 1800, it was at this time that both Volume 4 of Beckmann's *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Erfindungen*, published in Leipzig in 1799, and Volume 20 of *Physikalische* ökonomische *Bibliothek*, edited by Beckmann and released in Göttingen the same year, were acquired.[59] Naturally, by itself, the employment of instructors with qualifications from Western European educational hubs or, as seen previously, personal experience from a country on the cutting edge of Western agriculture would not have been sufficient to achieve any broader implementation of much-needed agricultural management principles, methods of cultivation, or technological best practices. To provide the necessary knowledge base and flow of information for an educational program of this scope and duration obviously required a comprehensive library of vocational literature; and given both the imperative nature of assembling one and what is known of the resulting collection of contemporary English agricultural literature within the Festetics library, it may be gathered both that the founder's efforts were highly targeted and that his mention in the letter to

57 OSZK Kézirattár Quart. Lat. 3916/1–2. Beckmann, *Anleitung zur Technologie*.

58 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 31 fol. 345; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 65 fol. 167–170.

59 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 21 fol. 346. Krász, "Bibliofil főurak," 425–34.

the Palatine of two persons, Young and Sinclair, distinctly important to the communication of England's achievements, was by no means an accident. [60]

The works of English specialist literature included in the Festetics library to serve as a model for the Hungarian adaptation of modern agricultural practices not only covered every conceivable field, but also served as a sort of survey of England's outstanding farming regions. Of particular note in this regard were the county surveys of the English Board of Agriculture, a series of volumes that—though not dealing with the peculiarities of local agricultural production in terms of thematic chapters—did include in each published volume explicit mention of the general editorial principles applied.[61] Additionally, the Board wished to evaluate both its statistics, and the phenomena and processes its survey had identified according to criteria having to do with the general national economy; essentially, the idea was to illuminate the potential for "community growth and development." The Board even undertook to compare recent scientific and practical findings to additional control experiments, an approach fully in line with that taken by other, similar European agricultural bodies.[62]

In laying the groundwork for an institution of higher education Festetics grasped the need for looking beyond teachers with Western European experience and a solid professional library to the matter of travel abroad for the purposes of study and consultation. Though not mentioned in his letter to Palatine Joseph, it is clear that he viewed the notion of sending professors and students on academic tour as a key means of gathering experience. That the count never expressed this in explicit terms can be explained in part by his employment of individuals—Pethe and, later, Asbóth and Rumy—for whom this was already a reality, and in part with reference to his being banished from entering the imperial capital of Vienna in 1797 as a result of his open statement against the royal decree calling for an overall insurrection against Napoleon's troops. In this same vein, from the complications surrounding his founding of the Hungarian Reformed Secondary School in Csurgó, he may rightly have suspected that he was being watched.[63] If true, this would explain why Festetics's stewards and employees were known to have conducted major travels within the territory of the Monarchy for the purposes of business and study only after 1801, the year of Palatine Joseph's visit to Keszthely. The observation pertains, for

60 Kurucz, "Az »új mezőgazdaság« irodalma," 32–44. For an analysis of how contemporary agricultural literature made its impact, see: Horn, "The Contribution of the Propagandist," 313–29. For a brief biography of English writers on agriculture, see: Donaldson, *Agricultural Biography*.

61 Kent: *General View*, IV.

62 For a comprehensive survey of European agricultural bodies, with particular emphasis on the development of agricultural science in the German territories, see: Müller, *Akademie und Wirtschaft im 18. Jahrhundert*; Bödeker, "Economic Societies in Germany, 1760–1820," 182–211.

63 Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja*, 175–79.

example, to Asbóth's extended trips in Hungary, Lower Austria, and Moravia in 1802 and 1806, and intern student Károly Fleckel's (?–?) circuit of multiple German states and Philipp Emanuel von Fellenberg's (1771–1844) school in Switzerland in 1810.[64]

In many instances, Festetics's plans for the development of a network of professional connections—his educational and communicational aims interpreted in their broadest sense—seem integrally linked to his experiences at the *Theresianum* in Vienna. In 1795, for example, Festetics's former professor Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732–1817) authored a proposal for the Habsburg Monarchy's newly instituted Studien-Revisions-Hofkommission, listing a number of fundamental principles and practical items for action toward the reform of the Habsburg education system. Citing several persons with significant scientific achievements to their names, as well the impressive results attained by Germany and England, the proposal in question sought to point out the sociocultural significance of the influence exerted by scientific institutions and personalities salutary to state and society. In the proposal, Sonnenfels underscored the idea of foreign study tours as a means of obtaining the sort of direct experience that would allow for the control and analysis of prior art, and even the elimination of attendant prejudices.[65]

Beyond the questions of practical experience and literature, however, was the matter of international recognition and publicity, to which Festetics also gave due consideration. It speaks for itself, for example, that on 8 November 1801, János Asbóth, employed after Pethe, was elected corresponding member of the Göttingen Scientific Society in the wake of a petition submitted by one of his own former professors, Heinrich August Wrisberg (1739–1808).[66] This high-level recognition of the former Göttingen student likely served to strengthen Festetics, who consciously built on his connections with the school to promote the *Georgicon*'s reputation. Asbóth sent the school a detailed description of the Keszthely institution under the title *Beschreibung des Georgikons, oder der Gräflich-Georg-Festetitschischen Schule der Oeconomie zu Keszthely am Balaton im Szalader Comitate in Ungarn*, which professor Christian Gottlieb Heyne (1729–1812) subsequently published in the eminent review journal *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, an act that greatly raised the Georgicon's profile abroad.[67] Festetics was subsequently granted the title of honorary

64 Kurucz, *Keszthely grófja*, 234–35; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 66 fol. 362–363.

65 "Reisen sind zur weiteren Ausbildung des jungen Mannes eben so nothwendig als nützlich. Sie erweitern die einmal gefaßten Begriffe, bereichen mit Kentnissen, tilgen manches Vorurtheil, stärken die Kraft und Richtigkeit im Vergleichen und Prüfen, und üben und bewähren die Urtheilskraft." ÖStA AVA SRHA Kart. 1. No. 1.

66 Göttingen, Archiv der Academie der Wissenschaften Pers. 12 Nr. 38.

67 *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* (1803) I. 745–49. At Festetics's instruction, copies of Asbóth's

member of the Society via a vote taken 1 August 1802 and notified by Professor Heyne in a letter dated the nineteenth of the same month.[68] Additional acknowledgements of the esteem in which Festetics was held within the Habsburg Monarchy included his elections to membership in the Imperial and Royal Agricultural Society in 1808 and to honorary membership in the Bavarian Agricultural Society in 1812.[69]

Conclusions

In the contemporary Hungarian-language press, Festetics's aim of creating the foundation for a national higher education in agricultural science was repeatedly portrayed as the best means for raising the level of affluence of the Hungarian countryside to compare with that of England. The author of an article in the 14 September 1798 edition of *Magyar Hírmondó*, for example, concluded his own assessment of the character of rural England with the note: "Applying his kind industries to achieve for our rural areas that rare happiness that is enjoyed in England we have—György Festetics." It was for this precise reason, the article remarked, that while "the *Georgicon* was developed for the training of the count's stewards, others [might] also enter."[70]

An undoubtedly unbiassed description of the *Georgicon* and its founder, implying that Festetics could not be castigated for lacking vision ignorant or being "uncultured, barren of ideas" was given by English traveller Richard Bright (1789–1858). Born in Bristol, Bright was a highly educated physician who had traveled extensively in numerous European countries and whose arrival in Keszthely in the mid-1810s came with a letter of presentation from Count László Festetics (1785–1846), György Festetics's son in Vienna. Four years later, his travel experiences were published in

missive to Göttingen were made for the purposes of the Directio. MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 35 fol. 38v.

68 Göttingen, Archiv der Academie der Wissenschaften Pers. 12 Nr. 41; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Directorátusi Ügyiratok [Files of the Directorate], P 279 Box 30 fol. 514–514v. For the ornate certificate dated 9 August 1802 certifying Festetics's membership, see: MNL OL Festetics Lt, Festetics I. György [Letters to György Festetics], P 246 Box 1 fol. 3. The news item published in the Göttingen scientific journal: G*öttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* (1802) II. 1909.

69 MNL OL Festetics Lt, Memorabilia, P 235 Box 120 p. 581; MNL OL Festetics Lt, Memorabilia, P 235 Box 121 p. 57.

70 "Angliának ily ritka boldogságára iparkodik szíves igyekezettel juttatni vidékünket Hazánk' méltó Fija, M. Gróf Festetits György […] Az említett Georgikon, különössen 's főképpenn, a' Gróf Úr tulajdon Tisztjeinek formáltatásokra állíttatott ugyan fel: mindazáltal, Hazánknak akármely részéből való más Ifjak is, kiknek a' Gazdaság fundamentomos megtanulásához kedvek 's hajlandóságjok vagyon, ingyen halgathatják abban a Gazdasági tanításokat folyvást, és egyéb tudományokban való magok tökél létesítésének rövidsége nélkül." Magyar Hírmondó II. no. 22 (1798) 338.

a volume of more than six hundred pages, occasionally offering a rather bleak picture of the state of the peasantry. Nevertheless, Bright unequivocally recalled the *Georgicon*'s founding aim as the advancement of Hungarian agriculture through the production of estate management experts and workers within the framework of higher and secondary education, respectively.[71] Naturally, in the course of his visit, Bright had the occasion to speak at length not only with Festetics, but also with the school's various professors. Not surprisingly, his experiences coincide fully with the thoughts expressed several years earlier by János Asbóth, the former Göttingen student turned Keszthely professor who had done so much to promote the school's good name. As Asbóth had stated in his German-language description, the *Georgicon* hoped by its cultivation of experts to serve the economic interests of the country as a whole.[72]

Bright's personal impressions of Festetics also seem to give a different picture to the common concept of the 'ignorant' Hungarian aristocrats, when recalling one of their conversations:

> "This afternoon was likewise spent in conversation with the Graf, whose stores of information are unbounded, and who was better acquainted with the modern politics of our island then I was. I particularly remember his expressions of surprise, that in a country advanced in civilization as England is represented to be, so many capital punishments should be necessary, and that mere boys should frequently become victims of the law."[73]

Given the above, there can be little doubt that Berzsenyi's phrasing, as indicated in the introduction to this study, was not born of empty flattery—that is, that the comparison to Weimar was a sincere one. To imagine the poet was motivated by petty calculations would be inconsistent with the sense of self-respect one discerns in his letters. Much more likely, therefore, is that he judged the count's activities as institutional founder and private patron, particularly with reference to the circumstances in Hungary during the period in question, as serving the process of strengthening and disseminating intellectual values, and, consequently, the count

71 "The object of this institution for promoting the theory and practice of agriculture, is to form useful and well instructed officers and accountants for the management of estates, from young men of superior class; and common workmen and overseers of particular branches, from the sons of the peasantry; and likewise to allow those who possess farm-lands an opportunity of obtaining such knowledge as may enable them to improve the agricultural interests of the country. Hence the students of the *Georgicon* (for so the institution is called) are divided into the pensioners of the Graf and the independent scholars." Bright, *Travels,* 361–62. For a biography, see: Bright, *Dr. Richard Bright*.

72 OSZK, Kézirattár, Fol. Germ. 1460 fol. 1.

73 Bright, *Travels*, 449.

himself as interpreting the cause of progress for Hungary exclusively within the broader European context.

In Berzsenyi's view, by operating his school in Keszthely according to the latest models and instituting a system of study tours, scholarships, and relationships with scientific societies, Festetics was working to incorporate the *Georgicon* into an immediate network of Western European connections. It was with reference to these things that the poet's otherwise somewhat dramatic remark gained deeper meaning, as in Berzsenyi's own words, the count in Keszthely had "laid the foundation stones of a glorious edifice, such as only the crumbling ruins of the Homeland might bury."[74]

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74 Merényi, *Berzsenyi Dániel*, 60.

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