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The Common Good as the Central Element of the Political in the Writings of István Gorove[1]

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Abstract. In the current case study, I examine a key feature of the political thinking of István Gorove (1818–1881), one of the well-known and respected politicians and political thinkers of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Aspects of the common good in Gorove's political thought cover a broad scope of social phenomena, among which the current study will focus on the analysis of the British society and political culture together with its implications on the common good of Gorove's own Hungarian political community, based on Gorove's two-volume book *Nyugot: Utazás külföldön* [West: A Journey Abroad].

Keywords: common good, the political, Kingdom of Hungary, Great Britain, classical liberalism

Introduction

The concept of the common good has been used as a key reference point of both theoretical and practical political thinking in modern and contemporary political discourse; however, in most of the recent cases, the relevant literature does not bother itself with the exact meaning and definition of this concept, presuming that everyone knows what it means. Those who attempt to give a definition, like American legal scholar Adrian Vermeule in his 2022 volume *Common Good Constitutionalism: Recovering the Classical Legal Tradition* (Cambridge), follow the Aristotelian and Scholastic traditions by understanding the common good

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as the unification of individual and community goods that leads to personal and social flourishing: "it represents the highest felicity or happiness of the whole political community, which is also the highest good of the individuals comprising that community" (Vermeule 2022: 7). There are manifold interpretations of the common good based on different religious and secular principles. A shared characteristic of common-good-centred approaches to politics can be defined, though, as the aim to find political action that benefits all members of society. The question regarding how to achieve the common good remains debated. From a historical viewpoint, it cannot be denied that no political community (city, nation, or empire) has ever been able to realize the common good to its full extent. Therefore, as German-American Philosopher Hans Sluga puts it:

> […] politics is not the implementation of a fixed common good; it is, rather, an ongoing search in which various conceptions of the good will be proposed and dismissed. That we engage in this search does not mean that there is a determinate good to be found. […] The search for the common good carries us forward even when there is no fixed terminal point to it. We are left thus with the history of the search which is the history of politics, the history of our existence as political beings. (Sluga 2014: 4)

With the current study, my aim is to reconstruct a historical stage of this search, based on the reflections of a 19th-century Hungarian classical liberal political thinker from the Reform Era, the "golden age" of Hungarian political thinking: István Gorove's *Nyugot. Utazás külföldön*, in which he recollected the experiences of his journey to Western Europe in 1842–43. István Gorove was born into a Hungarian noble family of Armenian origin. He started his career in politics in the 1840s, became an MP in 1848; he stayed loyal to Kossuth in 1849 and played a part in the conceptualization of the Declaration of Independence. After Hungary's defeat in the 1848–49 War of Independence, Gorove was forced into exile. In his absence, the Habsburg neo-absolutism sentenced him to death. He was symbolically hanged, but he was allowed to return to Hungary in 1857. He was elected MP again in 1861. After the 1867 Settlement with Austria, he became Minister of Agriculture, Industry, and Trade (1867–1870) and later Minister of Public Works and Transport (1870–1871). After the fusion of the governing Deák Party with the Left Centre Party, when the leader of the latter, Kálmán Tisza, became Prime Minister, Gorove became the president of the new governing Liberal Party, a position he held until his death.[2]

Gorove's aforementioned travelogue, which was published in 1844, does not deal with the political from an explicitly theoretical viewpoint but clearly reflects on its various manifestations he experienced during his journey to Western

2 Cf. Szinnyei 1890–1909, vol. 3: 1297–1302.

Europe. As I aim to demonstrate, the main reference point of his reflections was the concept of the common good, focusing on the political consequences of social and economic phenomena of industrial modernity that Hungary should implement or try to avoid when unavoidable modernization would reach it in the upcoming decades. In my study, due to space constraints, I will only focus on the chapters describing Gorove's visit to England and analyse his experiences and reflections on the social problems of industrial society, on the questions of political participation, on the necessity of democratic reforms regarding political representation, and on free trade.

Problems of the Industrial Society

Based on the preface of his book (Gorove 1844, vol. 1: vii–x), we may assume that Gorove had the concept of the common good in mind when he visited the industrial cities of England. He attributed the greatness of England largely to its factories, and especially the textile industry (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 26). In his description of the life and working circumstances in these industrial cities, he emphasizes the sharp contrast he observed between the living standards of the factory owners and those of the workers. The former live in the countryside near the town, in a beautiful manor, where the air is clear and fresh, while the latter live in extreme poverty, under appalling circumstances unfit for human beings. Gorove finds this contrast highly unjust, as those who contribute the most towards the wealth of the nation are almost completely excluded from its benefits. It is harmful for the realization of the common good, as the intellect, treasures, power, and freedom cannot help overcome the poverty of the working class. Even education does not help much, as the people do not have enough money to buy food, let alone books (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 29).

He also criticizes the ruling classes for dismissing the calls for help in this situation and for writing the outcries off as rebellion caused by demagoguery, a threat against private property, or simply nonsense (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 29–30).

Gorove's assessment of the situation of the English working class largely matches the issues that were raised in a rare debate on the "discontent among the working classes" in the British House of Commons on 4 February 1840, launched by Robert Aglionby Slaney (1791–1862), a Whig politician noted for his efforts to improve the living conditions of the lower classes in industrial towns (Escott 2009). It is noteworthy that Slaney had to start his speech with a long-winded apology and justification for bringing up the topic at all. He gave a fairly detailed overview of the numerous riots and disturbances that were caused by the deep poverty of the working classes in the course of the past half-century. He also described the appalling living conditions unfit for human beings, witnessed by

Gorove as well, and urged the Government to remedy the "reasonable grounds of complaint" of the working classes in order to "strengthen the attachment of the people to the institutions of the country". Slaney's proposal to appoint a committee to inquire into the causes of discontent was met with disapproval from the conservative members of parliament, some of whom put the blame on the workers themselves for their poverty, accusing them of bad moral habits, intemperance, and lack of education and attributed the causes of rebellion to the incitement of demagogue writers. Other speakers blamed excessive taxation for the discontent among the people. Eventually, the motion was withdrawn without any consequences, indicating the inability and unwillingness of the political elite to tackle this issue (Hansard 1840: 1222–1247).

That he devotes two whole chapters (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 31–44) to provide a brief overview of the existing theoretical solutions to remedy this evil is a clear indicator that Gorove examined the situation of Great Britain from the viewpoint of the common good, the key element of the political in his thinking. When comparing the distribution of wealth in free-market capitalist England to the situation in the still feudal Hungary, he finds that the situation of the working class in England is no better (or even worse) than the situation of the peasants in East-Central Europe. Based on objective data of McCulloch's *A Statistical Account of the British Empire* (1839, vol. 2: 693), he concludes:

> The result: 1 factory and 949 workers, i.e. one man decides over the fate of 949 people, and I ask in what does this differ from the feudal state? There one landlord conducts the fate of so and so many serfs; here one industrialist of so and so many hired labour; there the lord of the castle and palace forces his serfs to work and demands for himself tithe and the one-seventh portion of their harvest; here the factory owner distributes a few shillings among hundreds and hundreds; the serf working on the fields under blue skies is engaged in hundreds of different activities, his perspiration is dried by the evening breeze, he finds rest under the shadow of a tree, he finds joy listening to the sounds of the forest and seeing the flowers of the meadow, the fresh, clean air gives him health and vigour; here workers of the factory spend their lives beside a vat, a cauldron, a loom, a spindle – the only music they hear is the dull rumble of the spindles, they smell the odour of wool and cotton and the fumes of the clothing dyes, they find rest on a hard pallet. I am not saying this to defend the feudal system that must perish where it is still in existence, but when comparing the two systems, I found the fate of these working people harder and more difficult to improve than the fate of the peasants in Hungary or somewhere else.[3] (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 34)

3 The quotations from Gorove's works in the main text are my own English translations (Kálmán Tóth).

Gorove first considers some solutions that would seem obvious at first glance but on closer examination prove to be impracticable. He goes over the most popular ways of solutions suggested by various British newspapers. According to *The Times*, factory owners should be obliged to pay a decent wage to all their workers and keep them on even when the demand for their products declines. In Gorove's view, this would only be a makeshift solution, which in the long run would only increase extreme poverty. *The Morning Chronicle* advised the increase of commerce by finding new markets. For Gorove, this would also only help for a few years or decades but in the long term would result in greater problems when the resources are exhausted. *The Standard* wanted to ease extreme poverty through religion, but, according to Gorove, this is based on a complete misunderstanding of the situation and would not help at all. He also considers the Chartist movement, which many believed in, as insufficient since rights alone would not give bread to the masses (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 31–32). He sums up his overview by concluding that as of yet no actual political solution is available (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 34). Therefore, he takes into consideration what theory could offer, as, according to his belief, this serious illness of the British society can only be cured by a "medicine" developed in the field of social sciences (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 34–35).

His own personal experiences in the industrial towns of England made Gorove less enthusiastic about the free-market theory than, for instance, his elder contemporary, Count István Széchenyi, the author of *Hitel* [Credit], *Világ* [Light], and *Stadium* [Stage], the most influential Hungarian political thinker of the early Reform Era. Széchenyi considered England the best example for Hungary to follow on the road towards necessary modernization but (most likely because he only frequented bourgeois and aristocratic circles when he visited Britain in the 1820s) failed to realize the negative aspects of English industrial capitalism, and his Anglophilia blurred the significant differences between imperial Great Britain and Habsburg provincial Hungary. Unlike Széchenyi, Gorove managed to develop a more complex view of liberal free-market capitalism, as he differentiated between the industrial and political success of a state and the common good of its people. As a result of his first-hand experiences, Gorove realized the limits of the free-market liberalism of Adam Smith as the means of achieving the common good. On the one hand, free-market capitalism had undoubtedly made England the leading world power in the early 1800s, but, on the other hand, it failed to produce its theoretically promised positive effect for the entire society, which is, according to Gorove's viewpoint, a serious deviation from the ultimate goal of realizing the common good of an entire nation and, through it, the whole of humanity (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 35–36).

According to Gorove, technological innovation and economic growth do not necessarily lead to a more just distribution of goods, and so he warned against the

danger of all the wealth and capital accumulating in the hands of a few, leaving the masses impoverished.

He considers all existing theoretical solutions insufficient, as "palliative treatment" for the "disease" of English society (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 37). He only briefly mentions the opinion of Thomas Malthus, who wanted to restrict the birth rate of the poor population in order to prevent the perpetuation of poverty. Gorove considers this view as inhuman and a blind alley, as it goes against basic needs of human nature (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 37). He also examines the views of Jean Charles Léonard de Sismondi (1773–1842), who saw the source of the evil in rapid technological growth with which most participants of the economy cannot keep pace. Sismondi suggested that innovation should be limited and owners of large capitals should pay higher taxes than small businesses. Gorove points out that even Sismondi himself did not consider these as final solutions to the problems of modern industrial societies (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 38).

Gorove closes his overview of possible solutions with a short presentation of the thoughts of French writer and political economist Eugène Buret (1810–1842), who analysed the causes of pauperism in the context of contemporary England and France and also suggested ways to remedy this evil. Buret summed up his ideas in a two-volume book titled *De la misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre et en France* [On the Misery of the Working Classes in England and in France]. By Gorove's own admission, among all existing solutions up to that time, Buret's thoughts were closest to his own. The same as Gorove, Buret also considered uncontrolled free-market capitalism irreconcilable with the common good but rejected economic protectionism as well. According to Buret, the only way to reconcile capital and labour is to give the workers as much say in the decision-making regarding production, wages, and contracts as industrialists have. He also suggested economic planning on regional and national levels by the forming of councils from representatives of both industrialists and workers that would supervise industry and constantly monitor the changes in world economy in order to be able to react in time and prevent economic crises (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 41–44).

Gorove was fully aware that these would be the most radical solutions that could be implemented within the framework of the existing social order. More radical reforms would lead to the emergence of a completely new social order such as socialism and communism, ideologies that Gorove, by his own admission, could not identify himself with (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 44). His rejection of such revolutionary ideas can most likely be traced back to the fact that these do not take into account the common good of every strata of the society. It should be mentioned here that Gorove's text was originally written in the first half of the 1840s, so his class-centred view of society cannot be traced back to the influence of Engels's famous work (1845), which appeared a year later than Gorove's.

After taking stock of these existing proposals, Gorove abruptly ends these theoretical reflections and returns to the diagnostic practice of assessing his personal experiences. It must have been clear for him that there was no obvious solution to these serious economic and social problems of capitalism. And we should add here that it is still the case today. Unless we believe in utopia, the common good always remains an ongoing process of searching for better solutions, as also suggested by the theoretical framework of Hans Sluga (Sluga 2014: 11–40).

The purpose of Gorove's deliberations is clearly underlined by the following citation, as it becomes clear what the real stake of his diagnostic evaluations is. He underlines the significance of the contemporary situation in England from a Hungarian perspective:

> We must know how the direction of human spirit would develop when viewing this situation, to foresee where it would go in the near future, as our own future also lies in this, and although we are one full period behind some other nations, we are not outside the impact of the directions of our times, and intellectual movements reach us, too. Also it is prudent to learn from the mistakes of others, that is why we should be aware what to avoid when our lawmaking and public spirit start to promote industrialization, in order not to bring about misery where it not yet exists and to avoid making millions, who are yet to be born, miserable. (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 39–40)

As a result of this diagnosis-based forecast, Gorove issued a clear warning to the political elites of the Habsburg Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary to learn from the situation in England, as, from the perspective of the common good, he found it necessary to do everything possible to prevent mass poverty when industrial capitalism would inevitably reach this region in the upcoming decades.

Questions of Political Participation

During his visit to England, Gorove had the opportunity to witness a political meeting in the town of Bolton thanks to Sir John Bowring (1792–1872), writer and diplomat, member of various learned societies, translator of Hungarian poems into English.[4] Bowring served as Member of Parliament (1835–1837, 1841–1849). He had already become acquainted with Gorove and his travelling companion

4 He published the first English-language anthology of Hungarian poetry under the title *Poetry of the Magyars, Preceded by a Sketch of the Language and Literature of Hungary and Transylvania* (London: Heward, Hunter, Wigand, 1830) and later published a selection of Sándor Petőfi's poems in his own translation under the title *Translations from Alexander Petöfi, the Magyar Poet* (London: Trübner & Co., 1866).

Lőrinc Tóth (1814–1903), writer, jurist, and politician, when he visited Hungary in 1838.

Gorove gives an inside look into the practical functioning of English political culture, based on his first-hand experiences, when he describes an informal discussion of the city's magistrates where Bowring had taken him and Tóth before the public meeting:

> Bowring introduced us to the gathering of the town's magistrates – about 15-20 men, both young and old, sitting together at a tea table, the leaders of the city, honourable and serious gentlemen discussed the topic of the day, the situation of the factories in a silent and calm manner. I clearly witnessed the rhetorical talent of the English, as fluency and clearness, richness in ideas, maturity, and cohesion characterized their speeches. (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 19)

The key feature Gorove praises in this quotation is the culture of moderate political discussion based on rational argumentation and the "rhetorical talent of the English". What is more, it was not the sole property of the urban elite, as members of the working class, though less educated, also had the rhetorical skills to get into disputes with members of the political elite on practical issues regarding the common good of the nation, as Gorove experienced at the political meeting he visited in Bolton. In his description of this meeting, it is easy to notice his responsiveness to the democratic features of British political culture:

> The meeting started. From the podium, the mayor of the town was proposed as chairman. Applause, cheers, and groans followed this proposal; those who agreed were asked to raise their hands. […] After this, a hard voice from the crowd proposed someone else, the noise renewed […] someone else from the gallery was proposed in a hard voice […] as, finally, N was proposed from the tribune as chairman; then a dirty young lad, most likely an apprentice blacksmith, invaded the tribune and cried out loudly: "Whoever wants N should raise their hands." Many hands were raised, and this mass of hands were in the majority, which was not overwhelming, but no one could deny it, and N occupied the chair, and the meeting began. (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 19–20)

On a local level, analogies with the original Greek notion of politics are fairly obvious from the citation. Based on the Aristotelian concept of the political, the handling of common affairs in order to achieve the common good of the political community can be observed as the basic framework of this mid-19th-century English urban political meeting. The discussion here was significantly more

heated than at the city magistrates' informal meeting, as clashing interests of different social groups came to the fore:

> When we came to England, sour vibrations from the factory revolt were still going on. Bolton is an industrial city of 60 000, neighbouring Manchester, the centre of the rebellion, within which sour feelings were still outpouring over the unfortunate situation. The meeting was open, the emotions were swelling, Bowring found himself in a very difficult situation. Could any other delegate but him, a man of complete freedom, handle this situation without either falling to the strikes of excitement, or swimming with the tide of this great movement towards a direction that is disliked by the state power and is very close to being persecuted by the full force of penal law. Bowring managed to avoid both. "I was the one, he spoke, who presented the great People's Charter to our Queen", and the audience burst out in loud applause, as it was the Charter they hoped their salvation from, ointment to the wound that they carried into the meeting as well with a painful feeling of their miserable state. (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 20–21)

The quotation makes it clear that Gorove by no means idealized the political situation of contemporary Britain. It was also clear for him that there was a huge abyss between the political elite of the British Empire and the vast majority of the population. The governance at the state level was not democratic and not even socially sensitive. Gorove perceived the state as oppressive even to the justified demands of the workers as he hinted at the retaliatory measures that threatened the supporters of their movement. He praised Bowring for his prudence and moderation that enabled him to avoid saying anything offensive to the state system and gain the approval of many supporters of the Chartist movement at the same time. However, when listening to Bowring, Gorove also noticed a characteristic feature of Anglo-Saxon political culture:

> The purpose of Bowring's public meeting was the following: to give account to his Bolton voters of his actions in Parliament in the previous year. I knew that every candidate, together with giving a political creed, makes a heap of promises and praises himself as much as possible. I knew that and thought it was a national custom, like a slanting branch of a proudly verdant oak-tree, that during a career or at its finish the frequent mentioning of their own person cannot be missing, and always in a favourable context; I noted this among my experiences today. (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 21)

The metaphor used by him, "slanting branch", makes it clear that Gorove perceived this feature of excessive British individualism as a strange and morally

questionable character trait. We can conclude from this that the political culture of the Hungarian Reform Era, the milieu of Gorove's political socialization must have been different from English political culture in this regard as well. The Hungarian classical liberal movement of the Reform Era certainly put a stronger emphasis on the service of the common good as the duty of a politician, instead of self-proclaimed excellence.

At the aforementioned political meeting, every strata of the urban society seems to have been represented, and members of the working class were in majority. It was the only forum where they could speak up for themselves, as they had no right to vote. The fact that Bowring still found it important to justify his actions as Member of Parliament in front of them clearly shows the level of mass dissatisfaction with the capitalist order of British society that had to be defended by armed forces against uprisings of the working class. Being a believer in classical liberal ideas, Bowring supported the demands of the Chartists in the House of Commons. He also found it necessary to refer to his personal role in presenting the People's Charter to Queen Victoria, as the majority of attendees at the meeting were Chartists.[5]

Political Aspects of Free Trade

The political meeting in Bolton was the scene of a heated but civilized debate on what political measures would solve the problems of the working class. As Gorove accounts, Bowring also considered this question eminently political when he spoke about his proposal to solve it:

> Bowring also went into the discussion of this situation; his principle, woven together like a textile by his knowledge and experience, was the principle of free trade. He was no friend of military operations that were undertaken at the Indies and in China at the cost of the sacrifice of millions […] according to him, the task of England was to bring her commerce everywhere in a peaceful way. (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 21–22)

Bowring also stressed the positive effects of free trade on the common good of the participating countries and cited the example of the Kingdom of Hungary, where his guests came from:

> See, he said, here are my two young friends, two Hungarian noblemen; I was in their homeland on the shores of the Danube, and I saw it with my own eyes how the grain gets mouldy in their granaries because they

5 For a standard overview of the history of the Chartist movement, see Thompson (1984).

> cannot export it. I want, therefore, that when a quarter of the grain costs 20 shillings there, it should not be 60 here, as the people here struggle with starvation and misery because it is very expensive – and they also face misery there because the grain is too cheap. (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 22)

Bowring's suggestion was perceived by Gorove as a way to promote the common good beyond national politics that would guarantee harmony between nations. Although he was aware of the one-sided imperialistic nature of how the British implemented free trade in practice, as a classical liberal he accepted the benefits of the principle that it would promote mutual acceptance of rights between nations on a global scale. While he accepted the principle of free trade, he was not naive about the practical political issues regarding its implementation:

> I was thinking a lot about Bowring's words, as they were related to our homeland, how it would be possible to make our grain appear on the English market, and to the benefit of a large population, depress the price there and raise it here. However, I stayed with the doctrine that commerce can only be mutual, to buy and to sell. I have no doubt that a commercial contract with England, regulated according to our interests, would bring us many benefits – but this commerce is all about customs relations for both sides, for the Hungarian and for the English alike; for example, the Corn Laws in England and the import of industrial products here. (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 23)

The Corn Laws Gorove refers to were protectionist measures that imposed high duties on the import of grain in order to serve the interest of the landed aristocracy. Because of the grain shortage in the first half of the 19th century, food prices rose sharply, causing famine among the lower classes.[6] These regulations were also a thorn in the side of wealthy middle-class industrialists who saw them as economically damaging. Led by Richard Cobden, an organization called Anti-Corn Law League was founded in 1839, which mobilized the industrial middle classes against the landlords. The Corn Laws were eventually repealed in 1846 (4 years after Gorove's visit to England); this, however, has brought only a slight improvement in the living conditions of the working classes.[7]

Gorove realized the political nature of economic issues but did not go into detail regarding the institutional framework behind the realization of such a bilateral free-trade agreement, as he carefully avoided any mentioning of the obvious

6 Cf. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. „Corn Law". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 March 2019. https://www.britannica.com/event/Corn-Law-British-history.

7 Cf. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. „Anti-Corn Law League". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 March 2018. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anti-Corn-Law-League.

fact that, unlike Great Britain, the Kingdom of Hungary was not an independent country, and as part of the Habsburg Empire there existed a customs border within the Empire between the country and the Hereditary Lands. As Hungary did not have any independent foreign and economic policy, any free-trade agreement with Great Britain would only have been possible if the Vienna Court had wanted it. In spite of these difficulties, Gorove considered the implementation of such a treaty a vital step towards promoting the common good on both a national and a supranational scale. In not discussing this topic any further, Gorove could well have been aware of Habsburg censorship, and his cautiousness was clearly justified by the fact that a considerable part of his book describing his visit to France was not allowed to be published by the censors. The missing chapters were only published after his death, in 1882 (Gorove 1882: 58–135). But let us return to Gorove's assessment of his travel experiences in England.

The Need for Democratic Reforms

At the previously discussed political meeting in Bolton, members of the working class were allowed to respond to the speech of Bowring:

> The speech of Bowring was followed by great applause; then came the speakers from the people, from the working class, with uncombed hair, unwashed faces and hands, in vests with sleeves, as if they had just left the loom, the paint tub, or furnace. The oratorical talent I experienced from these ordinary men is truly amazing – what a preparedness with every argument in favour of their cause, what a mature thoughtfulness carrying the principle through all the proofs of experience and life! (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 24)

Here Gorove once again praises the political competence, rational thinking, and rhetorical skills of these working men who spoke up for a more inclusive system of political representation and also demanded changes to the economic system of industrial capitalism. Their opinions differed in the evaluation of some key economic factors: the Luddites blamed the emergence of machines for the poverty of the masses, while the Chartists argued that only the expansion of political rights would help improve the situation of the working classes. Bowring responded to every speaker, and the meeting gave him a vote of confidence and then dissolved peacefully.

In Gorove's view, no movement had any realistic chance without the support of the middle class in their struggle for a democratic reform of the political system, even though it would have served the common good, as it was in the interest of the whole nation to find a solution to the problems of the working

classes. Gorove cited the names of Joseph Sturge (1793–1859), William Sharman Crawford (1780–1861), and Bowring as middle-class intellectuals who embraced the cause of "complete suffrage" in the interest of the common good, and he felt that they had a better chance to succeed because "when a cause is starting to be bolstered by intellect, it is more difficult to make it fail than if it is supported by brute strength" (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 84).

Gorove's political thinking is based on the idea of the common good of an entire nation. He also points out an important element of a well-functioning society that is an essential element of common-good-based political thinking: shared basic pre-political values (Gorove 1844: vol. 2: 89). Gorove is by no means alone when he considers Christian religion as the most crucial source of these, and by claiming that with the decline of religion, moral values also decline.[8] According to his evaluation, also shared by many of his contemporaries, France was the best example for this historical process. He predicted further revolutionary turmoil in that country for the near future, and the events of 1848 and 1871 certainly proved him right. His evaluation of the situation in Great Britain has also been correct as he diagnosed a calmer and moderate political culture on the British Isles, where even though radical ideologies appear, these would never receive the same public support and would not be pushed to such extremes as in France. Nonetheless, we should not forget that Great Britain had the advantage of getting rid of its excess population by mass migration to Anglo-Saxon dominated North America, Australia, and New Zealand, where English-speaking people had many opportunities to start a new life.

Gorove's Views in the Context of Other Hungarian Travelogues from the Epoch

Gorove's book is not a unique phenomenon in the Hungarian literature of his epoch; it is organically connected to the genre of travelogues describing foreign journeys that became popular in the 1840s. Undertaking a journey abroad had become almost compulsory for young intellectuals of noble background, and many of them wrote down and published their experiences. Similarly to Gorove's, these works not only recollect the events encountered during the journey but also contain economic, social, and political reflections. We can gain a more nuanced view of Gorove's political thinking by comparing the parts of his work that describe British capitalism to the picture of England presented in other notable travelogues of the Reform Era. In the following, I will attempt a brief overview through the analysis of relevant texts by Sándor Bölöni Farkas, Ferenc

8 For a recent assessment of the importance of education for maintaining a political culture based on shared traditional values, see Hörcher (2020: 138–147).

Pulszky, Bertalan Szemere, and Lőrinc Tóth, who all visited Great Britain in the 1830s–40s.

Altough Sándor Bölöni Farkas focused mostly on culture, on technological innovations, and on the constitutional political system, he too noticed the harsh social inequality in Great Britain. According to him, large masses were excluded from the benefits of constitutionalism. Nonetheless, instead of the capitalist system, Bölöni put the blame for the misery of the people on the aristocracy and on the unjust system of taxation. He also perceived the significant contradiction between constitutional freedom rights and mass pauperism, the causes of which he traced back to the unequal distribution of material goods (Bölöni 2008: 233–234). But unlike Gorove, Bölöni stopped there and did not deal with proposals on how this problem could be remedied; moreover, he did not even connect the experienced phenomenon to industrial development.

Ferenc Pulszky published his travelogue about his journey to Great Britain in an anonymous German-language book, titled *Aus dem Tagebuche eines in Grossbritannien reisenden Ungarn* [From the Diary of a Hungarian Travelling in Great Britain]. In accordance with his personal interests, he focused on the description of landscapes, artefacts, and cultural monuments. He described, however, the bleakness of industrial cities like Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester (Pulszky 1837: 120–121) and also realized the symptoms of industrial capitalism by noticing the large number of women and children working in the factories visited by him (Pulszky 1837: 100–101). He pointed out the alienating effect of industrialization, emphasizing that a soulless industrial product, regardless how perfect it was, could never become a work of art. He feared industrialization would degrade workers to machines, depriving them of all creativity.[9] He predicted radical changes in European social conditions due to the spreading of industrialization, as, according to him, the conquering of distance by railways carried in itself the threat of shallowness and empty cosmopolitanism (Pulszky 1837: 121–122). While Gorove perceived the deep poverty and vulnerability of the

9 In contrast to Pulszky's view, this degrading effect of industrial capitalism on the human soul was presented in a desirable light by British apologetics of liberal capitalism. A notable example is Andrew Ure (1778–1857), a Scottish physician, science writer, and business theorist, who was an enthusiastic defender of the factory system. Ure showed absolutely no understanding towards workers' movements and trade unions, accusing them of demanding "high wages", and, instead of showing "thankfulness", wanting to "exercise control over their masters" (Ure 1835: 364). His stance is clearly reflected in the passages of his work *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835), where he praised the invention of the "Iron Man", a spinning automaton, "a machine apparently instinct with the thought, feeling, and tact of the experienced workman, […] – a creation destined to restore order among the industrious classes". According to Ure, science and technology should play a disciplinary role by crushing labour resistance: "It is to be hoped that the manufacturers who received this guardian power from mechanical science will strengthen with grateful patronage the arm which brought them deliverance in the day of their distress. […] This invention confirms the great doctrine already propounded that when capital enlists science in her service, the refractory hand of labour will always be taught docility" (Ure 1835: 367–368).

working class and considered industrialization itself an inevitable and basically beneficial trend, Pulszky rejected technological development itself in fear of the mechanization of mankind. He conducted cultural criticism but did not go into any deeper analysis of socio-economic processes.

Bertalan Szemere, who visited England in 1837, published his book *Utazás külföldön* [A Journey Abroad] in 1840. He praised the virtues of industrial capitalism, highlighted the productivity of factories, and wrote about the improving living conditions of the people (Szemere 1845, vol. 2: 139–141). He fully identified with the views of Adam Smith about the promotion of self-interest being the most effective tool of promoting public interest (Szemere 1845, vol. 2: 51). He completely ignored the situation of factory workers and claimed that poverty only extended to beggars (Szemere 1845, vol. 2: 94–95). He only seemed to notice poverty when he visited Dublin, Ireland (Szemere 1845, vol. 2: 158–161). He traced back the reasons for this to overpopulation, following the views of Malthus, but with no actual reference to him (Szemere 1845, vol. 2: 162). It is worth mentioning that Szemere only travelled through industrial towns and only visited homes of factory owners outside the towns, hardly paying any attention to the living conditions of the working class, which he considered a milieu entirely alien to him (Szemere 1845, vol. 2: 168). In regard to the conditions of England, Szemere's viewpoint is predominantly apologetic and, in contrast to Gorove's work, he often phrased stereotypical opinions reflecting a high level of subjectivity. Subjectivity was not completely alien from Gorove either, but he clearly distinguished the subjective passages of his book from those that dealt with the description of economic, social, and political conditions. Where he clearly intended to present an objective assessment, Gorove often underscored his line of reasoning by references to and quotations from scientific sources. These differences between Szemere and Gorove can mostly be attributed to their different personalities and partly to their different fields of interest. Gorove knew the work of Szemere; he even referred to it in one place in his work where he discussed the changes made to the oversight system at Coldbath Fields Prison, also visited by Szemere a few years before (Gorove 1844, vol. 2: 153–161).

Comparing Lőrinc Tóth's travelogue *Uti tárcza* [Travel Feuilleton] to Gorove's is especially interesting since they travelled together, and, therefore, the material experience in the background of their works can be considered to have been almost identical. The differences arise from the different personalities and differing viewpoints of the two travellers. Lőrinc Tóth gave detailed descriptions of the history and notable landmarks of the places they visited and gave less space to theoretical reflections on socio-economic conditions. He may have been motivated by business aspects, as there was a significant demand in that age for travelogues which could be used as guide books, describing Western European countries. In spite of this, Lőrinc Tóth did not lack social sensitivity. Similarly to

Gorove, he noticed the poverty of the working class in industrial cities and the harsh contradiction between the living standards of factory owners and that of their workers (Tóth 1844: 183). He also assessed briefly the proposed solutions of various political streams, none of which he considered convincing, drawing the conclusion that despite there being no sufficient solution as of yet, the goal to improve the living conditions of the working classes cannot be abandoned (Tóth 1844: 190–191). He, too, did not deny the inevitability of industrial evolution and its positive effects on promoting the common good; however, he did not share Gorove's fears that the implementation of the capitalist system would also cause widespread poverty in Hungary unless an effective solution is found to avoid this unintended consequence of modernization. On the contrary, he traced back mass pauperism to overpopulation, thinking that it would not affect underpopulated Hungary for centuries to come (Tóth 1844: 192).

Summary

The subject of this scholarly analysis focusing on a unique manifestation of a common-good-centred classical liberal approach to the political was a 19th-century political thinker's text that focused on the practical elements of politics and did not elaborate a specific theory of the political. However, this does not make it any less relevant from the perspective of a historical research on political thought. We should not forget that the history of political thought is not a history of ideas or political theories, although it is connected to these, but only as far as these ideas and theories influenced the political thinking of individual political actors (Schlett 2018, vol. 1: 38).

As we have seen, in his political analyses, Gorove followed a method directed at the present state of particular historically developed social phenomena, and his approach to theory was always intertwined with its practical use. Although he believed in the classical liberal concept of universal development, his way of thinking was strongly shaped by an awareness for particular historical situations. He considered his Western European experiences as a diagnostic tool for a contribution towards the common good of the Hungarian nation, perceived as a unifying concept for all inhabitants of the historical Kingdom of Hungary within the Habsburg Monarchy. He never neglected the differences between the historical developments of the visited countries, and unlike Széchenyi, he did not believe there was one universal solution or model to follow for the development of every nation; not even Great Britain served for him as an ideal model of organizing society. In his opinion, every nation has its own historical way of development, even if some universal phenomena seem inevitable for their flourishing in the era where one lives. This assumption has clearly been proven

right by the course of historical development during the past two centuries, just like Gorove's thoughts about the different ways this necessary development can proceed along historically different national frameworks.

Gorove's approach to politics was a communitarian one, within the paradigm of classical liberalism. His political socialization made him an avid supporter of the classical liberal reform agenda in the late 1830s and 1840s. He perceived the concept of the common good within a national framework. As he states in the preface of his book, he regards a Western European journey as an important endeavour for Hungarian youth, where they have an opportunity to "learn from its peoples what made them great in order to aid the affairs of the nation with their experience when they would be called upon to conduct them" (Gorove 1844, vol. 1: ix).

The aim of Gorove with the recollections of his Western European travel experiences was not to create an abstract scientific theory of the political but to provide an analysis from a practical viewpoint of political phenomena in order to give guidelines to practical political action in Hungary. He did not consider it a precise scientific method and was conscious that what he wrote was also political action in order to show what Hungarian politicians need to adopt and what traps they should avoid.

Classical liberals believed in progress and science, but they did not pretend to have all the ingredients and possess all knowledge on how to realize an ideal human society and political system. Gorove's political assessment of Western European societies was also conscious of this uncertain nature of the political. That is why he was in favour of progress, which he considered inevitable, but cautious about radical social changes and thoughtless imitations of foreign political institutions. Prudence and moderation were, too, important elements of his political thinking, and these conservative features also prove that his common-good-centred concept of the political was deeply rooted in the Aristotelian tradition and was closely intertwined with practical political action.[10] Later in his life, he had the opportunity to contribute to the common good of his national community as a minister of the Andrássy government after the Settlement of 1867, but assessing his impact as a practical politician goes beyond the scope of this study.

10 On the origins and contexts of prudence-based conservative political action, see Hörcher (2020: 148–161).

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