



Károly Keleti

(period of presidency: 1867–1892)

He was born on 18th July 1833 in Bratislava; he spent his childhood in Buda and began his studies in the Piarist Secondary School. In 1848, he joined the Hungarian Army as an artilleryman. After the battle in Világos, he was held in captivity in Transylvania, where he escaped from and returned to his parental home. In order to avoid enlistment, with the help of the patrons of his family, he became a trainee in the manor of the inheritors of Archduke Joseph, Palatine of Hungary in Alcsút, where he also studied the theory and the literature of agriculture. As a private student, he completed his studies interrupted by the war of independence, as well as he graduated in law in Pozsony (Bratislava).

He dedicated the last twenty-five years of his life to statistics. The independent Hungarian cabinet hardly had been formed, when he edited a memorandum in March 1867 urging to raise statistics to national rank. On the basis of this, he was appointed the head of the statistical section of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce. (For half a year he provided home for the section consisting of six people in his own flat.) As an educational mission he prepared five hundred experts in two courses for studying statistics by saying that: *“No state or society, government or nation could do without the knowledge of statistics. So in the dim prehistoric age as in the age of civilization at present, one must know the bases on which the society rests.”*

At the turn of 1869 and 1870, he took part in planning and conducting the first census of the country, and was in at the birth of the first act of statistics adopted four years later. Furthermore, since he set as an aim to integrate statistics in the international circulation in order to keep up with the “most advanced foreign countries”, he participated already in the International Statistical Congress in the Hague in 1869, and seven years later he greeted the members of the international community in Budapest as a host.

As a result of his persistence, the independent statistical office was established on 18th April 1871, and he became the head of the office. At the same time, the special library of the office was founded as well. The extraordinary talent of Károly Keleti in organization is shown by the execution of the census in 1870.

He was elected as a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on 18th March 1868, then as a full member on 26th May 1876 and as a member of the board of directors on 8th May 1890.

In addition to his administrative and organizational skills, he excelled in his analysing ability as well. Already in the year of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, he wrote a study about the agriculture in Hungary, and then gave an overall picture of the country in his work *Hazánk és népe a közgazdaság és társadalmi statisztika szempontjából* (*Hungary and its nation from administrative and social statistical aspects*). In this work, in addition to the necessity of improving agriculture, he argued for establishing industry as well. His last work was especially interesting with the title *Magyarország népességének élelmezési statisztikája fiziológiai alapon* (*Food statistics of the Population of Hungary on the basis of physiology*). The objective of the study was formulated as: to examine “. . . which crops are mainly eaten by the people (e.g. whether they eat rather bread of wheat, barley or rye, corn pone, or they eat mainly potato, whether they drink rather wine or spirits)”. This study can be considered a pioneer work in the fields of nutrition research, household statistics and regional statistics at the same time.

Károly Keleti died on 30th May 1892 in Budapest. The founder of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office was awarded with the Order “*Literis et artibus*”, the Russian *Sanislo Order* and *Order of the Crown* and the Portuguese Order *M. de la Villa Viciosa*.

Works of Károly Keleti:

A magyar mezőgazdaság. Pest, 1867. (Értekezések a társad. tud. köréből I. 2.) (*Agriculture in Hungary*)

A statisztika hivatalos és tudományos mívelése. U. ott, 1868. (Értek. a társad. tudom. köréből I. 6.) (*Official and scientific study of statistics*)

Hazánk és népe a közgazdaság és társadalmi statisztika szempontjából. U. ott, 1871. (Graphikai rajzokkal: 2. kiadás. U. ott, 1873. Graphikai rajzok nélkül, M. nemzet családi Könyvtára.) (*Hungary and its nation from administrative and social statistical aspects*)

Az új kormány kezdetén. Pest, U. ott, 1873. (Névtelenül) (*At the beginning of the new government*)

A gyakorlati statisztika kézikönyve. U. ott, 1875. (*Handbook of statistics in practice*)

Magyarország népesedési mozgalma 1864-1873. és a cholera. U. ott. 1875. (Értek. a társad. tud. kör. III. 3.) (*Vital events in Hungary and the cholera*)

Magyarország népesedési mozgalma. U. ott. 1878. (*Vital events in Hungary*)

A nemzetiségi viszonyok Magyarországon. U. ott, 1881. (Értek. a társad. tudom. kör. VII. 2.) (*Ethnic conditions in Hungary*)

Magyarország közgazdasági és művelődési állapotai 1885-ben. U. ott, 1886. (*Economic and cultural conditions in Hungary*)

A népszámlálás. U. ott, 1869. (*The census*)

A mezőgazdasági termelés. U. ott, 1869. (*Agricultural production*)

A szent István korona országainak népessége, a területek, a lakviszonyok és házi állatok kimutatásával. U. ott, 1871. (Population of the lands of the crown of Saint Stephen by presenting the areas, housing conditions and domestic animals)

Magyarország hivatalos statisztikája és továbbfejlesztésének szüksége. Bpest, 1873. (Official statistics of Hungary and the need for their improvement)

Magyarország statisztikája. zsebkönyv. U. ott, 1876. (Beöthy Leóval együtt.) (Statistics of Hungary, pocketbook)

Magyarország szőlőszeti statisztikája 1860-1873. U. ott, 1875. (Viticulture statistics of Hungary)

A szent István korona országainak népessége. U. ott, 1882. (Dr. Jekelfalussy Józseffel együtt.) (Population of the lands of the crown of Saint Stephen)

Emlékirat az 1884-ben megindított iparstatisztikai adatgyűjtés ügyében. U. ott, 1883. (Memoirs about data collection of industrial statistics launched in 1884)

Magyarország népességének élelmezési statisztikája. U. ott, 1887. (Food statistics of the Population of Hungary)

http://konyvtar.ksh.hu/digitalizalt_anyagok/nagy_magyar_statistikusok/NMStat_03_Keleti_Karoly.PDF