

Leon Sapieha – a Prince and a Railroad Entrepreneur

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Big landowners, representatives of the upper circles of nobility were among those who were dealing with the problems of the economy development on the territory of Eastern Europe. It was characteristic for Hungarian, Polish, Moldovo-Valasian nobility etc. It was this progressively oriented part of nobility that initiated a number of industrial and agricultural innovations. For such activities they had necessary money and possibilities, which was of great importance under the conditions of the agrarian state of these lands' economy, absence of the developed crediting and banking systems, corresponding concentration of the capital. The motifs which urged, for example Galician nobility, majority of which was Polish big landowners, to deal with entrepreneurship were of different origin, but they had never been just mercenary. Their outlook was influenced not only by the Enlightenment ideas, which were still alive in their society, but also the fact that they were direct descendants of the generation which had lost Polish statehood. The idea of resurrection of their statehood constantly existed in their minds. The ways which were being chosen to achieve this goal were different. Some of them chose the way of open political fight; others considered this way premature and were waiting for the proper moment. This waiting was not, however, passive; it was particularly displayed in the active entrepreneurship. Prince Sapieha, who was from the ancient Lithuanian family, belonged to such princes-entrepreneurs.

Lev (Leo, Leon) Sapieha was born in September 18th 1802 in Warsaw as a son of the Prince Alexander Sapieha and his wife, whose maiden name was the Countess Anna Zamoyska. After his studies in Paris and Edinburgh he began to work in public service in 1825. He showed his worth, was noticed by Nikolai the 1st and was predicted to have a great career. But his active participation in the events of November 1830 has cardinally changed Sapieha's life. After the defeat of uprising he had to emigrate from the Russian part of Poland and settle in

Galicia. Since his settling in Galicia Sapieha, whose family had lost almost everything devoted himself to household. For the short period of time the Prince made his family country estate in Krasiczyn, which he bought in 1836, a model for the whole Galicia. He was also developing wood-processing, plough production, brick scorching, brewery and distillation, sheep-breeding. As the goal of the Prince's activity was not only his private interest, but also public one he made a lot of efforts for founding a number of institutions, which had to promote economy development of Galicia. Among them there were Galician crediting society, Galician saving bank, High agricultural school in Dublany, Galician agricultural society, English-Austrian bank and its branch in L'viv. The Prince took part in their activity both financially and functionally¹⁴.

But, as it was mentioned by Stefan Kieniewics, "the most important for him was a railroad" („Na pierwszy plan jego robót wysuwała się sprawa kolei żelaznych")¹⁵. As we mentioned above the activity not only of Sapieha, but of the majority of the Polish noble families of Galicia as well as, by the way, Russian Poland (here A. Zamoyski should be mentioned at least) concentrated on the economic development of the land as a precondition of the Polish state resurrection. In those times railroads were considered to be a main precondition of both economic and cultural flourishing, that's why nobility of those nations that were deprived of their own statehood expected much from railroads. Absolutely, we don't want to assert that just patriotism with altruism were in the basis of their striving to build railroads. And, of course, in entrepreneurship it is very difficult to single out where private interest ends and public one starts. But nevertheless we shall be bold to assert that there was a combination of these two components especially in the times when railroads began to turn up on the European continent. For example, when in the 40s of the 19th century in Vienna Sapieha was fighting for the idea of building Galician railroad, the fact we will discuss later, such a famous Hungarian contemporary of his as I. Scéchényj

¹⁴ Keiniewicz S. Adam Sapieha (1828 - 1903). – Lwow, 1939. – S. 5; Österreichisches biographisches Lexicon 1815-1950. – Wien, 1988. – XI. Bd. – S. 421; Wurzbach C., von. Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich. – Wien, 1874. – 28. TI. – S. 232-233.

made a project of the railroad system for Hungary. Budapest was supposed to be a central junction from which it would be 4 lines to Vienna, Fiume, Kashau and Eastern Hungary. By these means he wanted to achieve his main goal – economy freedom of Hungary, as the first step to its political freedom, for according to his words: “First we must be economically free, and then political freedom will come itself” („wir müssen zuerst wirtschaftlich frei sein, die politische Freiheit kommt nachher von selbst“)¹⁶. Another example can be given from another region of the Eastern Europe – Danube Principalities. In 1846 the Austrian agent in Jassy von Eisenbach informed his government that many local big boyars “as well as Moldavians and landowners regarded building of railroads in Moldova as a big commercial profit for themselves and their Motherland” („welche als Moldauer und Güterbesitzer aus den Bauten von Eisenbahnen in der Moldau sich und ihrem Vaterlande größere kommerzielle Vorteile versprechen“)¹⁷. We should pay attention to the accents Eisenbach has put: not just landowner, but Moldavians as well, not just for themselves, but also for their Motherland it was of great value railroads building.

Leon Sapieha’s first strivings for railroads building in Galicia are referred to 1839. This year the prince Leon Sapieha and the count Alexander Fredro, a famous dramatist, presented a project of the railroad Bochnia-L’viv-Berezhany. This railroad was expected to connect salt mines in the Tatras with the rye Podillya. But the government didn’t support Galicians’ plan¹⁸. Perhaps, the failure of this project must have urged Sapieha and Fredro to choose another way, that is to obtain a wide support of Galician districts and act with the help of their power bodies. Consequently, the question of railroads was included to the agenda of the sitting of Galician diet on October 12th 1840. At this sitting the

¹⁵ Kieniewicz S. Adam Sapieha (1828 – 1903). – S. 406.

¹⁶ Lorenc A. Die Eisenbahnpolitik Ungarns. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde.- Heidelberg, 1909. – S. 8.

¹⁷ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Verkehrsarchiv / Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (weiter. – ÖSA, VA / AVA), II B, Ktn. 18, Z. 888 / 46.

¹⁸ Лазечко П., Сьомочкін І. На шляху до галицьких колій // Львівська залізниця. Історія і сучасність. – Львів: Центр Європи, 1996. – С. 11; Köster B. Militär und Eisenbahn in der Habsburgermonarchie 1825-1859. – S. 77.

commission was formed with Leon Sapieha as a head of it and it was supposed to give answers to a number of questions such as: till what place and where the railroad would be built in Galicia; if it would be horse-drawn or steam; how much money building of the railroad would require; how busy it would be; what net profit it would bring and at last what necessary means were available to fulfill this project¹⁹.

By September 1842 the work of commission had been finished and its results were submitted for discussion of Galician Landtag where L. Sapieha was the first to take a floor. The extract from the Galician diet sitting was sent to Vienna with the request to build Galician railroad at the expense of the state and with the aid of domestic fund, established especially for this purpose. Vienna, however, didn't hurry to adopt a positive decision. And though Court Office (Hofkanzlei) supported this project, Court House (Hofkammer) in the person of its President Karl Friedrich Kübeck von Kübau was definitely opposed to it. Sapieha didn't give up and already in spring 1844 he and his allies Count Henrick Dzieduszycki, Count Alexander Fredro, Tadeus Vasilevski forwarded a petition of giving the preliminary concession for the railroad from Bochnia to L'viv and Dniester. Realizing that adoption of this petition and effective support of the future enterprise mostly depended on Kübeck, L. Sapieha and A. Fredro on the behalf of the Galician committee addressed Kübeck directly on the 5th of July 1844. And though they failed to persuade Kübeck, they achieved their first success – on December 18th 1844 the King adopted a principle decision about state construction of Galician railroad. During 40s its construction wasn't started though Galicians asked about it both in 1846 and 1847²⁰. Only the events of the Crimean war and threat of the military confrontation with Russia made Austrian government sacrifice much to build railroads urgently in Galicia. However, the state finance was in so bad condition that it was impossible to think of keeping

¹⁹ ÖSA, AVA, II A, Ktn. 7, VIII 1. Galizische Eisenbahnen. 1841-1845; Sprawozdanie Komissji wyznaczonej przez sejm do wypracowania projectu kolej żelaznej w Galicji, złożone przeświłnym sejmującym stanom w miesiącu wrześniu roku 1842. – Lwów, 1842. – S. 2.

²⁰ ÖSA, VA / AVA, II A, Ktn. 7, VIII 1. Galizische Eisenbahnen. 1841-1845; II B, Ktn. 9, Z. 839 / 44.

king's promise of 1844. The government turned to the policy of private railroads again and at the end of 1855 initiated talks with Rothschild's society of the North railroad of his railroads construction in Galicia. And it was L. Sapieha's time again. On April 1st 1856 on the behalf of quickly assembled committee of Haly-cian landowners he asked Austrian government to give concession for railroad construction from Przemysl till L'viv, Brody and Chernivtsi. Sapieha used all available key factors to get the concession – from private contacts in the governmental circles and around Vienna Court to direct appeals to the king. At last after long, persistent, sometimes severe confrontation he got desired satisfaction – Vienna allowed him to build and run railroads. It was Leon Sapieha's finest hour – his authority stood incredibly high in Galicia. The railroads construction was going on at a high speed and as early as November the 4th 1861 L'viv inhabitants greeted the locomotive "Jaroslaw", a symbol of city's entering European railroad system. Despite of O. Bach's, a Minister of home affairs opposition Sapieha recruited mostly Poles to work at the railroad, in such a way striving to shape own technical intelligentsia and experts. But actions he had to make to get desired concession influenced further events. German shareholders made up a majority in Karl Ludwig's railroad society and the enterprise which was thought by Sapieha and Galicians to be of public use turned into gambling one. High tariffs of Karl Ludwig's railroad, which share-holders didn't agree to reduce troubling of their profits reduction became a byword. It did a lot of harm to the agrarian land of Galicia. Moreover, because of German shareholders' unwillingness to lose dividends further construction of Krakow – L'viv railroad to the east – to Russian and Moldavian borders was constantly being delayed. To save the situation at the beginning of 60s Sapieha became a head of two new committees, which appealed to the government to give them concessions for railroad construction to Brody and Chernivtsi. Owing to his efforts he managed to win over share-holders of Karl Ludwig's railroad and in spring 1867 to start railroads construction L'viv - Brody, and Zolochiv – Ternopil – Pidvolochys'k.

In 60s Sapieha's activity in railroad sphere overstepped the mark of Austrian empire – in 1868 British-Austrian consortium headed by him got a concession

from Romanian government for construction and running the lines of Suceava-Jassy with branches to Botoşani and Roman. Sapieha showed his wish to build the railroad on the territory of Moldova principality to the Black sea ports of Galatz and Brail as early as the middle of 50s²¹. And only at the end of 60s he embodied them, though not at a full length.

As well as Strousberg the authorities of L'viv – Chernivtsi – Jassy railroad had to face considerable difficulties, not always of technical character, while building the railroad on the territory of Moldova: corruption, low material and cultural levels of country's development, some xenophobic spirits. Moreover some evolution of their views on the role and importance of railroads happened in the boyars' minds – now they were worrying about losing of their exclusive position in the country. For example, the newspaper "Bukowina", who regularly informed its readers about neighbors' railroad affairs, expressed their spirits in such a way: "These (that is, right-wingers – I. Zhaloba) resist the progress of new time by all their forces, because every progress, especially material one, has a tendency to make benefit of good deeds, which originate from the state union, for everybody, not only a privilege of one special class" („Diese [that is, right-wingers – I. Zhaloba] stemmen sich mit aller Gewalt gegen die Fortschritte der Neuzeit, weil in jedem und namentlich in den materialen Fortschritten die Tendenz liegt, die aus der Staatsverbindung hervorgehenden Wohltaten zu einem gemeinsamen Gute, und nicht zum Privilegium einer bevorrechteten Klasse zu machen. So fürchten auch die Bojaren, dass durch die Eisenbahn und in weiterer Folge durch die angeregte und gehobene Industrie und den aufblühenden Handel sich ein einflußreicher Bürgerstand entwickeln wird, der die Bojaren aus ihrer ausschliesslich privilegierten Stellung verdrängen muß, weil dem wahren Verdienste der Lohn für die Dauer nicht fehlen kann“)²².

²¹ Jaloba I.V. Atitudinea guvernului austriac privind construirea cailor ferate in Moldova in anii 40-50 ai secolului al XIX-lea (dupa materialele inedite din Arhivele Statului de la Viena) // Codrul Cosminului. Analele stiintifice de istorie ale Universitatii «Stefan cel Mare», serie noua, V. - Suceava, 1999. - Nr. 5. – P. 312-313; Kieniewicz S. Adam Sapieha (1828 – 1903). – S. 408-409.

²² Bukowina. – 1862. – 3. Mai.

At the beginning of 70s Sapieha was a head of the board of two railroad societies - Karl Ludwig's railroad society, the line of which were from Krakow through L'viv to Brody and Ternopil with branches to Wieliczka and Niepolomice (total length in 1873 – 593, 97 km) and railroad society L'viv – Chernivtsi – Jassy (356, 351 km), total length of which was almost one thousand kilometers, namely 950 km²³.

Sapieha predicted another direction of entrepreneurship in the railway sphere, namely the construction of local railroads. As early as the end of 60s, when it was clear that the main lines were built or their construction was about to be finished and the turn of local railroads was coming Sapieha appealed to the Ministry of Trade with promemoria concerning local railroads (Vicinal-Bahnen). It dealt with the need of the correspondent legislative basis elaboration for construction of railroads of such a type, narrow-gauge or of normal width, in particular. As it is known, the first ones were built at cheaper rates, but required more expenses while loading at the stations of main lines; the latter were more comfortable, but more expensive. Sapieha considered that taking into consideration elaborated and adopted laws entrepreneurs could decide themselves which lines were more profitable and then construct them. The Ministry considered Sapieha's promemoria preliminary and it had no corresponding practical consequences²⁴.

Prince's entrepreneurship in railway sphere resulted in his break with political and active economic activity, namely the events around sequestration of L'viv-Chernivtsi railroad in 1872, Ofenheim's process of 1875 and connected with it Prince's obstruction in press. The fact that it was L'viv-Chernivtsi railroad which was chosen for show public "whipping", though it wasn't the worst among Austrian railroads, is often explained by personal misunderstanding between its General Director Ofenheim and Minister of Trade Banhans. Perhaps, the fact

²³ Szuro S. Koleje żelazne w Galicji w latach 1847-1914 // Informator statystyczny do dziejów społeczno-gospodarczych Galicji / Red. H. Madurowicz-Urbańska. – Kraków, 1997. – S. 55, 66.

²⁴ ÖSA, VA / AVA, III E, Ktn. 10, Z. 585 / 68.

that it was Sapieha who was at the head of this railroad board, whose political reliability was always doubted in Vienna, was also of great influence. Sapieha himself deepened this mistrust, having said in 1870 that Halycians couldn't be sure they would stay with Austria, because "nobody knows what forthcoming future will bring" („denn, wer weiß, was schon die nächste Zukunft bringen wird“)²⁵.

However just embodiment of great project of Karl Ludwig's railroad allowed Ihnaz Konta to put Leon Sapieha near such personalities as F.A.v.Gerstner, S.M.v.Rothschild, M.Schönerer, K.Ghega, H.D.Lindheim, J.A.Schwarzenberg and others, names of which are inseparable from the dawn of Austrian railroad construction²⁶. But it wasn't a wish to get into the calendar of railroad history that urged Sapieha to deal with Galician railroads. That's why estimating the results of Prince's activity concerning railroads we can't but mention that he hasn't made a fortune on railroad entrepreneurship, vice versa he suffered from finance losses. Sapieha also failed to realize his idea to have only Polish railroad societies on Galician lands, Polish ones for Prince, which would facilitate economic development of the land. At the end of his life because of his railroad entrepreneurship he was compromised and deprived of all his principal positions. On the other hand we can't say that his activity was completely fruitless. Nevertheless all subjective difficulties the use of constructed lines was absolute. Sapieha also deserved a lot of praise for raising a generation of Polish railway workers, engineers. Besides, all attempts of his rivals to undermine his authority have failed.

²⁵ Wurzbach C., von. Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich. – S. 234.

²⁶ Konta I. Geschichte der Eisenbahnen Oesterreichs 1867-1897. Decennium 1867-1876 // Geschichte der Eisenbahnen der oesterreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie. – Bd. IV. – Wien-Teschen-Leipzig, 1898. [Reprint, Wien: Archiv Verlag, 1999]. – S.3.