

THE FIRST RAILWAY FROM BANAT. THE HISTORY OF THE ORAVICA/ORAVIȚA–BÁZIÁS/BAZIAȘ RAILWAY

(Summary)

It all started with a lucky event that happened to a forest worker Matthias Hammer who found in the Pigmans' Valley (Valea Porcarului) near Anina some burning stones. Inspired by this, he informed the mining authorities from Oravița who stated that those "stones" were coal. The experts who researched the area found rich layers of anthracite and coal stone of very good quality. The state sold/concessioned to a few private organizations more mining surfaces and established more and more mining pits. Because there was no railway, the sale of coal at a reasonable price faced great difficulties. Because of this, the Mining Engineering Department initiated the building of a railway for the cheap and efficient transport of coal to the Danube. After several attempts, a hypo mining railway was built between Anina and Oravica/Oravița, but the establishment of a steam locomotive traction railway remained a major concern of the Mining Engineering Department. After several breaks, in 1854 the state through the Mining Engineering Department finished the mechanical traction railway from Oravica/Oravița to Băziás/Baziaș. But this was an industrial railway, called „Kohleisenbahn" (coal railway), not a public one.

In the meantime the state bought most of the mining concessions from the owners and opened more pits. In 1854 the absolutist government in Vienna after defeating the revolutions in 1848 and the independence war of Hungary, the financial crisis pushed the country to the edge of economic ruin. In order to get funds, the centralized and totalitarian Austrian state (parliamentarism and the autonomy of the countries belonging to the Austrian monarchy was stopped until 1860) sold the railways and other goods of state to some multinational enterprises. In order to invest the accumulated funds, large investors from France established StEG (Kaiserlich-Koeniglich-Privilegirte Oesterreichische Staats-Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft) which bought a major part of railways, large areas, mines and factories. StEG acquired the most profitable railways in Hungary and Austria.

Although it was very significant for the transport of coal, in the first years Oravica/Oravița–Băziás/Baziaș railway was only locally important. In that period in Austria

there already existed an significant railway network, and in Hungary before 1856 several railway lines were put into use as follows Pest–Vác 1846.07.15., Pest–Cegléd–Szolnok 1847.09.01., Marchegg (Austrian-Hungarian border)–Pozsony (azi Bratislava) 1848.08.20., Vác–Párkányána 1850.12.16. 1850.10.15., Párkányána–Pozsony 1851.09.06. 1850.12.16., Cegléd–Félegyháza 1853.09.03., Félegyháza–Szeged, 1854.03.04., Bruck (Austrian-Hungarian border)–Győr 1855.12.24., Győr–Újszőny 1856.08.10.

In Banat StEG bought huge areas, mines and factories in the Anina–Bogsa/Bocşa–Resica/Reşiţa–Oravica/Oraviţa area including the Oraviţa–Bazias railway which they finished and on November 10 1856 opened it for public use (Jancsó 2013, Jancsó 2016). After completing the Temesvár/Timişoara–Jaszenova/Iasenovo railway, the Jaszenova/Iasenovo–Báziás/Bazias became part of the main first rank Bécs/Viena–Marchegg–Pojon (Pozsony, Bratislava today)–Budapest/Budapesta–Szeged–Temesvár/Timişoara–Báziás/Bazias railway. On this route were travelling all those who were going towards Giurgiu, Bucureşti, Constanţa, Ruse, Varna, Istanbul. The Jaszenova/Iasenovo–Oravica/Oraviţa section was built as a main railway of the second rank.

This book presents an overview of the history of the Oravica/Oraviţa–Anina railway with a lot of aspects previously ignored. It is based on the research of primary documents which can be mainly found in the Hungarian Railway (MÁV) archives in Budapest. The volume is richly illustrated by facsimiles of the documents existing in the archives unedited until now and presents tens of unpublished plans of the projects of this railway. After the detailed presentation of this railway construction the author reviews the significant events of its history, up to its abolition. The measures for the construction of the railway are treated separately, the establishment of StEG, the concession contract, expropriations, the railway route, the line in the plan, the longitudinal and transversal profile of the railway, infrastructure, superstructure, art works (the viaduct in Oravica/Oraviţa, the bridge over Nera), stations, buildings serving the railway (buildings for passengers, engine-houses, store-houses, watch-boxes), the first engines which ensured tracking, the safety of transport, nationalization by purchase, the transfer from the property of the Hungarian state into the property of the Romanian state and SHS (Kingdom of Serbians, Croats and Slovenians becoming Yugoslavia), situation of the railway between the two world wars and after buying the whole shares of the society made by the Romanian state in 1942, until the present-day situation. The social and health problems of the workers who worked on the construction of this railway are also examined, the doctors who fought hard against the cholera epidemics which decimated builders. A quite lengthy chapter presents Báziás/Bazias, the terminus station of the line, from its building to its decay and the total abolition.