

Societies and their ruling elites located in the Carpathian Basin, in the Baltic region and a few other parts of East Central Europe can be historically typified by both their multi-ethnic and multi-confessional composition as well as a number of violent - verging on the cataclysmic - transformations they endured in the first half of the 20th century. The culturally composite set-up as sources of collective agency and the historical alterations in the making of their elite groups under evolutionary or revolutionary conditions from post-feudal times till Communism – a development probably unique in the annals of mankind -, this is the target of my project. The regional societies concerned have given rise during the period under scrutiny to for a while independent then subdued or totalitarian nation states like Estonia and Latvia in the Baltics, Hungary and Slovakia in the Carpathian Basin, or integrated into such, like Transylvania, Partium and Eastern Banat (as North-Western Romania) or Voivodina and Western Banat (as Northern Yugoslavia). The Baltic nations emerged from Russian colonial rule after World War I only to fall back in the state of Soviet satellites temporarily in 1940, and – after a short transition under occupation by Nazi Germany - for long decades (till 1989) after 1944. Slovakia, Transylvania and Voivodina with adjacent regions had been part of Hungary till 1918 and changed sovereignty afterwards with the transitory resumption of Hungarian rule at least on some of their territories (Southern Slovakia and Northern Transylvania) in 1940-1944, only to fall under Communist rule afterwards.

Thus, societies and their elite groups in question were marked in the first half of the 20th century by a dual transformation. On the one hand, via industrialisation, embourgeoisement, urbanization and political nation-building they emerged from conditions of the old (feudal or post-feudal) regimes to implement successively various options of societal modernity. On the other hand all these societies and their social, political and intellectual leadership passed through several (three or more) major internal upheavals in a matter of three decades (from 1918 to the late 1940s), often combined with dramatic shifts of statehood.

The consequences affected elite groups in a number of ways – usually under duress : dismissal of civil servants and those holding power (whether legislative, executive or judicial), expropriation of the landowning classes due to land reforms (affecting all these societies after WW I except the Hungarian rump state), the persecution and extermination of Jews (by Nazi Germany) and some other sectors of the educated elites (by Soviet invaders, their local allies and accomplices), the expulsion or the flight of Germans and other minorities after WW 2, the degradation of the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie both under Nazism (Jews) and Communism, different trends of emigration, immigration and 'population exchanges' (a euphemism for ethnic cleansing), the endowment of new clusters with the functional entitlements of titular elites - accompanied by the downgrading of formerly ruling brackets into the state of oppressed or second rate citizenry. This implied each times not only the 'change of the guard' of the political leadership, but also the partial or global disruption, erosion or shift of all other settled social hierarchies together with the principles governing their constitution. Narratives of these spectacular crisis situations represent a staple target of received historical scholarship.

Our project, while not ignoring its achievements, will break with this rather traditional path of historical wisdom and lay the stress on hitherto largely (in most societies observed, indeed completely) neglected in-depth developments within the given regional-national elite brackets. The focus will be put on the substantial modifications of the standards commanding professional mobility (together with various trends of forced downward and sponsored upward mobility), the reorganisation (notably 'renationalisation' or ideological reorientation) of the educational provision, the renegotiation of social allegiances and the redistribution of authority, income and prestige among sectors of the ruling class and the educated clusters, the general reallocation of intellectual, economic and social capital (in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu) together with their promotional efficiency. The project should particularly address the problem of ethnic and confessional inequalities as to chances to acquire such capital, since they were concomitantly transformed and collective identities and loyalties redefined – especially among those invested with roles of leadership or ascendancy on the strength of their social assets – that is the elite : those with educational credentials, wealth, symbolic distinction and patrimony – like noblemen -, recognized professional competences, prestigious or powerful kinship and mutual support

networks, influential political positions, or otherwise acquired fame (by gift, talent or chance). Our focus will extend over the fact that at each upheaval some (if not all) criteria of access to and justification of elite status were called into question and/or brutally replaced.

Societies under scrutiny have been chosen as targets of this experimental research because of their exceptionally multi-ethnic and multi-confessional set-up.

The Carpathian Basin, occupied till 1918 by historic Hungary, illustrated an exceptional pattern of cohabitation of a big number of sub-cultural brackets marked by ethnic diversity (with Croats, Germans, Jews, Romanians, Serbians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Armenians, religious multiplicity (with Roman and Greek Catholics, Oriental Orthodox, Calvinists, Lutherans, Unitarians as well as 'rabbinical' Askenazi, Hassidic /and in Voivodina even some Sephardi/ Israelites as the main religious communities) and a set of firm regional loyalties – sometimes predicated upon historic institutions (like the *Universitas Saxoniensis* of Germans in Transylvania). Pre-1919 Hungary was the only European state in modern times *without* an ethnic or a religious majority in its population. Still, the Magyar ruling class of noble descent acted ere 1918 as a nation building titular elite, and pursued a policy of more or less forceful assimilation of the minorities. Some of the latter experienced this domination as a colonial rule, others responded with a voluntary or strategic investment in power sharing and participation. The school system served the needs of the Magyarization of such minority elites. Hence the then would-be national society was torn apart by centrifugal forces. Following the revolutionary crises and the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918-1919 this led to a new configuration of nation state formations in the Carpathian Basin under new elites with different national identities, agendas and claims. This was exemplified by the immediate Romanisation of the University in Cluj/Kolozsvár and the Slovakisation of the University in Bratislava/Pozsony (becoming Comenius University) following their detachment from Hungary in 1918.

Latvia (and to some extent Estonia) appear to be the closest in Europe to the Carpathian Basin in terms of multi-ethnicity and multi-confessionalism – with Germans, Jews, Russians, Bielorrussians, Swedes, Lithuanians and Poles besides the majority ethnic stocks on the one hand, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox (Pravoslaves) and Israelites on the other hand. The University of Dorpat/Tartu (refounded in 1802 as a German university) as well as the Riga Polytechnics (since 1862) performed essential functions in local elite formation for both regional societies ere 1918, though their area of student recruitment exceeded largely the Baltic region. Both were Russified as of the 1890s and became national training institutions only after independence, following World War 1 and the ensuing civil war. After 1919 the Latvian state founded a national university in its capital city which continued to operate with a mixed ethnic and confessional recruitment.

Given this historical starting point in various culturally composite regional-social formations, our project will focus both upon highly specific developments rooted in local social and political history as well as upon some pre-defined general problems. It will concern a number of both long term and short term changes in the constitution and the functions fulfilled by elites.

Long term developments regard the growth, structural transformations, inclusiveness and intake (clientèle) of the school system, together with its ideological implications (like ethno-nationalism) and institutional practices (like segregationist, discriminationist or otherwise preferential admission policies), the extraction, selection or recruitment of elite groups by social class, regional origins, ethnicity and denomination, shifts in the composition of educated and ruling elites by branches of activity (professional set-up), the selective appearance of women in markets of elite education and self-assertion, alterations of the definition, perception and social qualification of elite groups (gentlemanly middle class, ruling stratum, titular-national elite, intelligentsia, *nomenklatura*) as well as, obviously enough, changes in their ideological references and loyalties.

Short term developments include changes of sovereignty and geo-political allegiances, the direct consequences of foreign occupation, turbulence due to war or invasion, outbursts of persecution and mass violence, alterations of socio-political regime or state policies related to elite reproduction (like radical land reforms after WW I, authoritarian or dictatorial policy turns (as in Latvia in 1934, in post-1919 Hungary – academic *numerus clausus* – and after 1938 with the anti-Jewish legislation, in Romania during the 1930s following ethnic-nationalist protectionism instituted by the *lex vallachicus*, etc.). But political issues proper will be dealt with in the project only as far as they had impact on the state of elites in concrete terms.

Contrary to most (almost all) historical studies of regime change in the societies under scrutiny, the project will deliberately avoid the trappings of narratives and interpretations of controversial political events. The focal topics will point at the socio-professional, ethnic, religious, regional and gender related inequalities and disparities observable in the transformations of elites which are, in part, highly specific of some of the societies observed and, in part, comparable among them.

The main antecedents and references of our project can be rooted in the foundation works of the fathers of political sociology in the late 19th and early 20th century (like Vilfredo Pareto, Roberto Michels or Gaetano Mosca), but more concretely in contemporary and empirically based elite research inspired by distinguished authors of the French *Annales* school (F. Furet, D. Richet, 1969) and sociology of education (P. Bourdieu, J.-C. Passeron, 1970), giving rise to substantial prosopographical studies on large elite strata not only in France but in most Western societies, including Britain, Germany, the United States and – more recently – Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Austria. The team leader of the present project has been since its foundation member of the research center founded by the late P. Bourdieu. The project is largely inspired by his work as well as the French and to some extent German (Bielefeld school) renovation of social history, exemplified in the last three odd decades in works of J. Kocka, C. Charle, H. Best, J. Schriewer, K. Jarausch, H. Siegrist, H. Kaelble, F. Ringer and others.

In recent years relevant elite research has also been initiated in all the regions concerned by our project. I shortly refer herewith to some of the most important among them connected to our project. This is the case of Maria M. Kovács' book on the growing illiberalism of the main professions in Hungary (1994), our partner V. Scerbanski's prosopography of Latvian lawyers (2007), Latvian diplomats (2003), Latvian army officers (1998) and politicians (2006). Comparable studies are available for Estonian elite groups too, among them those published by our Estonian partner Lea Leppik. Works by T. Karjahärm and V. Sirk, T. are also important here. For Serbian Voivodina one can also cite the book by L. Trgovcevic on the 'planified elites' (2003). B. Simunovic-Beslin on educational policies in the region in inter-war Yugoslavia and on *Matica Srbska*, the Serbian cultural institute in Voivodina. For both Hungarian and Romanian Transylvania seminal studies by my long time partner L. Nastasa's has produced fundamental studies on academics (2004, 2007), just like another Romanian historian C. Sigmirean. Other partners in the project, M. Lazar (2002) and Z. Palfy (2005) have studied intellectually productive elite groups and the local university (2005). J. von Puttkamer's book on schooling policies in Slovakia and Transylvania relates closely to our project (2003), just like G. Cohen's study of Austrian universities (1997), M. Kulczykowski's on Jews in the Jagellonian University in Cracow (1995), or my own work on the modernization of the Napoleonic *Université* (2005). A standing international network, initiated by H. R. Peter and N. Tikhonov (2001, with my own contribution) has produced a number of studies on East European students in Western Universities before 1939. In this field L. Szögi and his team's publications are fundamental for pre-1919 Hungary. C. McClelland et al. *Professions in Modern Eastern Europe* (1995) is also directly relevant for the project, just like the quite recent *Le communisme et les élites en Europe Centrale* (2006) by N. Bauquet et al.

All these initiatives are lacking though the comparative scope both in the intra-societal and the inter-societal sense, as proposed in the present project.

In this sense the preliminary outcome of large scale prosopographic and statistical studies of educated and 'reputational' elites I have organised with my partner Peter Tibor Nagy over the last decades on Hungarian elite groups between 1867 and 1948 can be considered as the only substantial precedent to the present project, all the more because they cover concomitantly Slovakia, Transylvania and Voivodina for pre-1918 times – together, obviously, with territories of the later 'Trianon Hungary'. The size of the student population (1967-1948) in our computerized data banks exceeds 210 000, the sample of secondary school pupils (1867-1918) 34 000 and the survey of 'reputational elites' (those having entries in national encyclopedias between 1895 and 2005) some 26 000. Our project will draw direct benefits from scholarly, methodological and technical insights gained from these all but exhaustive, country-wide elite surveys. It is the target of ongoing publications. (See especially [www.wesley.extra](http://www.wesley.extra), Peter Tibor Nagy's and my own homepage.) These prosopographical surveys have been completed by the computerization of basic social and educational statistics available.

The present project would thus extend and complete the previous operations on Hungary and give it a new comparative dimension by the inclusion of relevant problem areas of elite formation in territories detached from Hungary after 1918 as well as in two comparably multi-cultural Baltic countries.

The conception of the project had to be governed among other things by pragmatic considerations. One was to identify regional or national societies not only satisfying criteria of the above mentioned problem setting, but small enough for the feasibility of a global survey of their elite groups. The biggest of these is Hungary with a population close to 8 millions in the inter-war years, endowed with the quantitatively highest proportions of educated clusters, due to the fact that post-Trianon Hungary represented the economically most developed territories of the former historic kingdom. It is followed by Slovakia size (3,3 million) Transylvania (with a population of some 2,5 million) and Voivodina (1,9 million), the two Baltic states being even smaller – Latvia with 1,9 million and Estonia with a mere 1,1 million approximately. There were in all these regions national universities and in some even Polytechnics. The size of their elites groups, targets of our study, were of disproportional size, as compared to their population. That of Hungary and the Latvian societies were relatively larger, the others relatively smaller.

Beyond size, all these societies offered an essential supplementary advantage of exceptionally rich, well organised and accessible archival and printed documentation on their student populations and other elite clusters. All this has been duely explored in preliminary research.

As to the definition of elite groups to be studied, most social sectors performing essential 'elite functions' will be involved in the project. These functions include social control (domination, management of societal institutions, administration, domestication of the lower classes), social reproduction via education (including self-reproduction and securing ways of educational mobility of lower class elements), creativity (whether intellectual, artistic, scientific or even economic – due to entrepreneurship), the definition of the ideological legitimation of the given political order, the representation of the whole society (vis-a-vis insiders and outsiders, in government and other representative bodies), the provision of specialised public or market oriented services (law, medicine, education, engineering, arts, etc.). Economic and other elite clusters will enter into consideration as parts of educated groups or in the framework of the special research on 'reputational elites'.

Methodologically the project is dedicated to the overall empirical study of elite groups and their reproduction, exposed as they were to long term processes of economic and institutional modernization, nation building, industrialization, urbanization, etc. as well as cataclysmic regime changes. The focus of the study concerns the nature of elite groups at large, their alterations and transmutations as social clusters – size, professional composition, public standing and behaviour -, their recruitment or selection in social space (by criteria of regional, ethnic-national, denominational and social background, extraction or origin), their formation path in terms of schooling, advanced learning and careers, finally their public activities, especially the forms of creativity and performances they have displayed (be it intellectual, socio-political, scientific, artistic, journalistic or other). For this we will resort to the nominative identification of members of major elite groups – starting with those having gained certified reputation, academic titles or degrees of advanced secondary or/and higher education. This will be done by resorting to prosopographical data banks of vast dimensions, that is, as exhaustively as permitted by the sources for societies and historical junctures under scrutiny.

This is a multi-disciplinary venture based on survey methods, mobilizing methods and analytical schemes of comparative historical sociology of elites, the social history of new national societies sharing a common past, historical statistics, the intellectual history of particular professional or/and creative elite brackets, the institutional history of educational systems and markets, the social geography of emerging new regional societies and public policies via methods of political science.

The thematic organisation of the project is essentially guided by the local availability of sources. For each region under scrutiny our project should include some of the following investigations, strictly coordinated and conducted by the team leader in a comparative perspective.

1. Initial study of the schooling provision as well as confessional and ethnic aspects of societies concerned. This part of the project should be carried out in all the regions under scrutiny. It would focus on institutional transformations (the supply of schooling) since the 19th century, but more specifically on the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (for the demand of schooling), since schooling was the main institutional provision destined to the production of the educated strata. Besides schooling, the

initial report should extend in all regions over ethnic and confessional aspects of local societies, as demonstrated in social statistics and other historical evidence. This is related to demography, population movements, professional stratification, urbanisation, the distribution of wealth – especially of landed property – together with available relevant data on the evolution of levels of education in the particularistic (religious and ethnic) clusters under scrutiny.

2. Large scale surveys of graduates of secondary schooling as the basic pool of selection of the highly educated for the years 1900-1948. The focus should be on schools leading to universities, polytechnic institutes and vocational colleges of post-secondary education, like *gymnasiums* (with Latin) and *Realschulen* (without Latin) in Central Europe. This is going to be a central and a most voluminous piece of our project for Hungary, Slovakia and Voivodina, where archival and published sources are regularly available to this effect.

3. Large scale prosopographical survey of graduates and students of higher education, including alumni of universities and some other chosen institutions of higher learning, like Polytechnics. The historical boundaries are destined to cover periods for which identical or at least similar data sources can be counted upon. They are different for most regions, especially for Estonia and Latvia, where samples should be studied since the 1880s, to interpret the effects of Russification in the University of Tartu and the Polytechnics of Riga.

4. Serial monographic studies of intellectual professionals and the main clusters of the educated middle class : access conditions, career patterns and internal disparities of career chances and options, income hierarchies, regional and residential distribution, liability to achieve political power positions (1900-1956). These studies should be based on large professional samples. They would aim at doctors and lawyers for every society concerned and selected other, notably artistic professions in some of the latter, where comparable data sources are accessible.

5. Special study of power elites, especially following socio-political transitions (1900-1956). This should be a direct survey based on prosopographical sources of the decision making personnel appointed by or achieving high positions in changing political regimes (down to the level of city or district party *nomenklatura* under Communism). It should be accomplished in all the regions concerned thanks to publicly accessible lists of the political leadership (even if the useful recruitment data are unequally relevant), especially those identifiable among members of 'reputational elites' (to be dealt with in the next rubric).

6. Study of 'reputational elites' – the top echelons of a number of elite hierarchies ('elites of elite groups') in terms of reputation, certified influence and/or creativity. This may be the most risky part of our project and the less liable of standardisation. It will be based on the analysis of computerized prosopographical data related to persons having nominative entries in national biographical dictionaries and those who can prove a high level of creativity and public distinction certified in various ways : publications, contributions to scholarly journals, exhibitions, academic membership, prizes obtained, etc.

7. Finally all the established computerized data banks should be submitted to multiple checks to identify persons belonging to several of them and thus analyse various selection processes historically operating on different levels of educational achievement and social success. Correlations should be systematically studied here too between 'independent' background variables (ethnicity, religion, social and regional extraction), 'semi-independent' variables (like the educational path, ideological, political, artistic or scholarly options leading to intellectual status or positions of influence), and factors defining the achieved standing of leadership, power or authority (prestige) in respective intellectual, artistic or other clusters of elite groups.

The project should be completed in three years, but some partners – following their personal share, individually negotiated – may participate for periods of various duration (even less than one year), as demanded by the specific tasks of which they will take charge.

The final outcome will be a set of research reports to be published in English and other languages on separate aspects of the project, possibly divided into as many books (including each time a chapter of systematic regional comparisons as suggested in the thematic organisation of the project above).

This can reveal for interested Western and Eastern European publics hitherto all but completely hidden (or dissimulated) confessional and ethnic dimensions of processes of historical modernization of which contemporary post communist civilisations are the heirs.