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Karady, Victor

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## Elite Formation in the Other Europe (19th-20th Century).

### Editorial

This special issue of *Historical Social Research* offers a selection of the papers presented at the international conference on “Elite Formation, Modernization and Nation Building”, which took place on 4-6 May 2007 in Budapest. The venue was in the Central European University (CEU) and the gathering was cosponsored by the European Science Foundation (Strasbourg) and Pasts Inc., Center for Historical Research at the History Department of the CEU, the author of these lines having served as the convener.

Recent research in various European countries has completely reshaped and renewed our views of the conditions and the scope of trends of social mobility towards elite positions and the reproduction of social elites observable in the period following the collapse of feudal regimes in Europe.

The reasons are of three sorts. On the one hand new theoretical reflections on social stratification and social reproduction due to scholars like Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Jürgen Habermas and others have remodelled earlier perceptions of the ‘circulation of elites’ – due initially to such classical authors as Pareto or Mosca. On the other hand, and most importantly, new survey methodologies have been introduced and generalized in historical scholarship concerning elite groups thanks to advanced computer technologies. Lastly, the democratic transition in Eastern Europe have done away with Marxist dogmatism and stereotypes in the study of ruling classes and allowed the implementation of contemporary socio-historical insights and methods in this field, leading to the radical revision of hitherto consensually accepted and often ‘romantic’ or enchantedly nationalist representations of the nation building process in the Eastern and Central European periphery.

Indeed, a difference must be made here between Western Europe, including the Scandinavian and several Mediterranean countries and the new democracies, most of which (notably the Baltic and the Balkan states, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Slovakia) have been historically late coming nation states with new ‘national’ elites emerging after the collapse of feudalism or imperial-federal bondage either some time in the late 19th century or even only after World War I.

The workshop was an attempt to bring together scholars from both parts of Europe, the West and the East (in the broad sense of both designations), to discuss problem areas, methodological schemes and research results in concrete terms related to post feudal elites, their social, ethnic, denominational and

regional recruitment, education, power position, internal professional set-up as well as political-ideological orientation and strategies in a possibly comparative perspective. The main topical focus of the conference – as demonstrated by the citizenship of the speakers – rested on small nation states of East-Central and Northern Europe, with the involvement of experts of Western countries as well.

Comparisons here have been called for both in the geo-political sense between Eastern and Western European societies as well as between peripheral nation states (like in the Balkan or the Baltic area), but also inside ‘national’ societies. For the latter the questions raised intended to point out internal inequalities in entry chances into various elite groups (whether political, intellectual, economic, religious, professional, military or status based – as those of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ nobility). Elite careers could, indeed, be accomplished – though very differently from one country to another – in often utterly divergent conditions, if at all, by members of various macro-social clusters following their ‘origins’ or ‘background’ which defined, in fact, their initial assets liable of mobilization to achieve elite positions. Majority brackets as against minorities, ethnically ‘titular’ groups as against ethnic outsiders (who occasionally could, like in pre-1919 Hungary, form a demographic majority!), Christians as against Jews or Muslims, those of urban residence as against rural clusters, those of noble extraction or association as against commoners, autochthonous as against immigrants or otherwise designed ‘aliens’, etc. appeared with dissimilar frequencies and career expectations in various elite clusters. The formation process of elites in modern nation states has often been undermined by conflicts, *numerus clausus* laws, professional interdictions, exclusivist collective self-definitions, the setting of group boundaries in defense of external ‘intruders’, violent ‘changes of the guard’ as well as more gradual but not always less controversial patterns of development, whereby collective deficiencies or special endowments for mobility could antagonistically oppose groups in competition for elite positions.

These issues made up the thematic canvas of our experimental workshop to which scholars from all Europe were invited. This also gives cues about the main new research areas upon which the convener preferentially expected contributions.

The first target was the collection of empirical studies on the recruitment, collective profile, accomplishments and activities of elites during the process of nation-building in various parts of Europe, with a special but not exclusive stress on smaller or late emerging nation states in the Southern, Eastern and Northern European periphery. References to East-West, South-North and otherwise inter-societal comparisons have been particularly sought for. Long term studies (extending over several decades or covering dissimilar political regimes) and those comparing similar elite segments in different countries or regions as well as of contrasted social, ethnic, denominational or regional background and with diverging professional careers or destinies were also welcome.

A major focal point could concern the opposition between traditional and ‘titular’ national elite groups (of noble, patrician background or long established local stock) on the one hand, immigrants, ‘parvenue’ newcomers, aliens, women or those defined as ‘minorities’ on the other hand.

If the gathering was above all dedicated to Eastern and Central European topics, it did not exclude studies of other regions for comparative reasons. It certainly addressed one of the crucial issues in the social history of societies concerned over close to a century since the decline or the fall of feudalism in the second half of the 19th century up to the aftermaths of the Second World War, entailing the Sovietization of East-Central Europe. This was I believe for the first times that an appeal was launched to all scholars in or outside the region, involved in the study of local elites mostly in this geo-politically intermediary sector of the European continent, to contribute to the available topical wisdom on the problem area. ‘Intermediary’ would refer here primarily to European societies establishing themselves lately, since the last quarter of the 19th century, mostly after the World War I in varying patterns of independent statehood between Russia and the West on the one hand, between the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean, on the other hand. Obviously enough, the involvement of other societies with interesting parallel developments proved to be highly relevant too, wherever significant research results on elites were available.

Beyond its not strictly delimited territorial scope our scholarly agenda included nevertheless another type of limitation, or rather, preferential option. We tried to win the participation of social scientists – independently of their disciplinary specialisation as historians, sociologists, political scientists or even demographers – who would propose experimental studies based on the exploitation of prosopographical data banks (collection of standardised biographies) on elite groups. The convener was particularly satisfied by the fact that the gathering attracted such outstanding Western scholars in the field like Christophe Charle from Paris or Heinrich Best from Jena, together with a distinguished quorum of mostly East Central European researchers, among them some promising young ones.

Our success or failure can be measured by the fact that the workshop could mobilize students doing prosopographically grounded elite studies in most large territorial units of the region – with the notable and regrettable exception of Poland among major would-be nation states with in part new elites in post-feudal times, but comprising Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Lands, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Slovakia. Moreover it also attracted in the perspective of problematic but heuristically always revealing comparisons Dutch, French and German colleagues, together with two other scholars engaged in research on elite change in colonial or post-colonial countries of the Third World (Algeria and Brazil). In the present special issue of *Historical Social Research* I tried, originally, to collect all the

papers presented at the workshop, but the authors of some of them could not comply with the deadline. Hence, even if the volume contains a selection only of our discussions, in my introduction I will do my best to evoke all the relevant topics dealt with during the gathering in Budapest.

The emergence and transformations of new elite clusters was, obviously enough, strongly determined by local-territorial circumstances. One can identify though a number of more general and in part common features – rather variables or factors – operating in the formation of modern elites.

One is certainly linked to the different nature of the three multicultural Empires – the Russian, Habsburg and Ottoman states – dominating the whole intermediary region of Europe during most or part of the long 19th century. A second relevant aspect had to do with the position and the capacity of reconversion of traditional power elites (the nobility) within their given system of economic stratification and political rule. Thirdly the ethnic and confessional set-up of the population (and the institutional relations of influence, prestige and authority among the Churches, attached to it) was exceptionally important, since ethnicity and religion provided a peculiar source of symbolic capital giving rise in the age of ‘nationalisation’ to often conflicting movements of nation-building as well as implementing dispositions and forms of collective agency liable to promote or to hinder modernization and mobility towards elite positions. Fourthly, new and old elites appeared always as stratified social clusters with historically changing internal power relations between their constituents, be it nobles or commoners, free professionals and civil servants, privately employed or independent intellectuals, brackets with more or less income, wealth, political leverage, symbolic authority or prestige convertible into social standing (such as Western Christianity as against Eastern Christianity, let alone Jewry) etc. Moreover, the relatively autonomous functions of the educational provision must be taken into account, since this was a direct instrument of modernisation via alphabetisation and the general expansion of instruction as well as a leverage in support of processes of assimilation of alien or non dominant minorities via ‘national education’. Finally all these emergent societies under scrutiny were united by their geo-political status as backward and economically underdeveloped – as compared to their earlier established Western counterparts –, generating in their ruling elites an effort to catch up with the West, to adopt Western ways and follow Western models of modernity.

The exposés presented in our workshop do not cover systematically all these major socio-historical issues, but each of the latter has been in one way or another touched upon in our discussions, so that they can serve as convenient topical themes for an overview of our achievements.

The position and the legacy of empires, as well as the relationship with the imperial powers that be in new nation states belonged to quasi-permanent implications and topical accompaniments of the analytical schemes applied in

several if not all studies offered. Christophe Charle, as one of the first speakers at the conference, started by drafting an illuminating comparison of elite formation in the three dominant European powers France, Germany and Great Britain during the long 19th century, the very period when they achieved their imperial stature. Peter Dhondt's essay openly broaches the subject of 'ambiguous loyalties to the Tsar' when analysing the social functions performed by the two universities of Dorpat/Tartu and Helsinki in the Eastern Baltics under Russian rule. Part and parcel of an imperial academic network, they could accomplish with ups and downs in some historical junctures significant contributions to the training of local elite groups. A very close problem was raised in Lea Leppik's study on career patterns of Estonian intellectuals in the Russian Empire, which – may be paradoxically – could develop more dynamically outside than inside Estonia proper, because of the quasi monopoly of regional elite positions maintained by the traditional local Germanic ruling class as well as the relative indifference of the Russian imperial bureaucracy as to ethnic selection, at least when Christian candidates to elite posts were concerned. The recruitment of the Hungarian officer corps of the national Honvéd Army, as opposed to the 'Common' imperial Army in the Dual Habsburg Monarchy following the 1867 Compromise (*Ausgleich*), owes a lot, in Tibor Hajdu's analysis, to the fact that the latter was conceived as a supra-national institution of a liberal imperial confederation of sorts where, contrary to the Russian Empire – inventing and more and more enforcing its Russian national nature since the outgoing years of the 19th century –, could remain open to ethnic and social outsiders (even to Jews) and reject pressures for nationalisation (like in Hungary), except for the technically indispensable use of German, as the language of command. Fanny Colonna's study tackles a similar but quite different situation, the slow and difficult process of autonomisation of a national elite in Algeria under French colonial domination.

The problem of what happened to feudal elites in modern times, essentially the nobility, should have been a central issue in elite change of the three national societies – Croatia, Hungary, Poland – with the largest proportions of the gentry within the population in a European country. The topic was indirectly addressed in the workshop under various disguises, due also directly in at least two exposés centred, one, on the new political role assumed by the nobility in the building of the nation state, the other, the internal transformation of the cluster as to its exclusivist reproduction. The first issue is the target of Milos Reznik's study on the reemergence of sectors of the nobility in the Czech Lands as a nation-building cluster in the 19th century, split though between imperial loyalties and political brackets of Czech nationalism. This was a historic resumption of political agency, making to forget the consequences of the traumatic experience of Counter-Reformation in the early 17th century. Jaap Dronkers' essay is a richly documented piece of empirical survey on the declining homogamy – that is partial opening up – of an erstwhile strictly closed

social caste in three large national environment: the Netherlands, Austria and Germany. Other papers also referred but more indirectly to the problems of the landowning nobility, like Afranio Garcia's study on Brasil, especially as concerned the inter-war years, Julia Disson's on the privileged educational provision of the Russian gentry in the 19th century or Tibor Hajdu's presentation of the transformations of the officer corps of Hungarian background, due among other things to the progressive withdrawal of noblemen from the armed services.

Ethnicity and religion have been permanent factors in nation building elites, often closely connected since the basic division of Western Christian Europe after the Peace of Westphalia into a Catholic and a Protestant geo-political zone with absolutely dominant religious majorities everywhere, except a few local societies (like Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands or the Swiss Confederation), but with very entangled ethnic-linguistic mixtures in several large regions of Eastern and Central Europe. Ethnicity as a nation-building force and reference for national legitimation was certainly a focal point in the exceptional success of Czech nation-building, facing the counter-power of the established German bourgeoisie in Bohemia, Moravia and (even more radically) in Silesia. The issue is essential in Milos Reznik's treatment of the Czech nobility, but also in Andrea Pokludová's meticulously grounded local survey on the transformation and modernization of the educated professional clusters in a number of Czech provincial towns confronted with the challenges and chances of industrialisation (Moravska Ostrava, Opava, Olomouc, Mistek, Vitkovice). One can find here a first reference to the extraordinary professional mobility of modernizing Jewry in Central Europe, one of the central topical areas of my own long term research as well as those of my close associate Peter Tibor Nagy on the alterations of elite recruitment in Hungary during the whole post-feudal and pre-socialist Old Regime. Peter Tibor Nagy offered to our workshop an overall presentation of his special research on 'reputational elites' in Hungary, based on a large biographical data bank of 26000 of those individuals having entries in one of the national encyclopaedias published since the outgoing 19th century (*Pallas Lexikon*) to the recently completed representative *Hungarian Great Encyclopaedia* (2005). He has expanded on some details of this study in his work focused more specifically here on students of the Faculties of Arts and Sciences of the second Hungarian university in Kolozsvár/Cluj 1872-1918). As to my own exposé, attempting an overview of our enormous survey of graduates and students of all institutions of higher education in Hungary, within its changing historical borders in the long period of 1867-1948 (probably the first ever attempt at a quasi-exhaustive prosopography of all educated elite groups in the framework of an entire nation state), its fundamental analytical tools related to selection processes consisted precisely of ethnicity (defined both by mother tongue and the national character of surnames) and religion, besides regional origins, gender, nobility, etc. Ethnicity (or 'nationality' as it

was alluded to in the 19th century) and confession were central categories for the classification of people in the only multi-cultural would-be national society in Europe (or elsewhere in the world, for that matter) typified by the absence of an ethnic or a confessional majority within the population during its formative period (before 1918).

The internal stratification and, occasionally, power relations between established elite groups is a topic touched upon in several papers. Jan Eivind Myhre dedicates his study on Norwegian elite formation on the particular strong and consensually accepted position of civil servants with university education in a national society in the making, which lacked a local aristocracy or otherwise constituted traditional ruling class. Peter Urbanitsch research on the high civil service in the multi-cultural Habsburg Empire with supra-national political commitment can be considered as the exploration of an unexpected parallel situation in obviously quite different socio-historical conditions. The same can apply with some qualifications to Franz Adlgasser's report (absent from the volume) on members of the federal type Parliament of the Austrian part of the post-1867 'Dual Monarchy'. Marius Lazar attempted an ambitious project to interpret the historically identifiable internal oppositions in the Romanian ruling elites during the first long phase of independent statehood by resorting to an ingenious theoretical construction related to two types of social capital capable to legitimate ruling positions in the state, a historical-symbolic and charismatic as well as confrontational type and another one with reference to compromise oriented bureaucratic rationalism. The paper is also absent from the volume, though it could serve as a probably resourceful guide for the interpretation of power relations in the romantic phase of 19th century nation-building in other East European societies as well. The scheme could have concerned aspects the analysis of Slovak national elites from Hungarian rule till the post 1945 temporary rebirth of the Czechoslovakian state, as presented by Roman Holec (absent from the volume). Afranio Garcia's study of Brazilian elites has also been focussed on aspects of internal fragmentation and alliances, notably via marriage strategies.

The role played by the educational provision and its historical development was another central issue in the conference, but some papers dealt with it more explicitly. This was the case of Pieter Dhondt's study of the two would-be national universities of Helsinki in Finland and Tartu/Dorpat in Estonia and that of Jan Eivind Myhre focussed on alumni of the University of Oslo (since 1811). The autonomous effect exerted by a relatively over-developed secondary school and higher educational network in Hungary (with over 10 Academies of Law, besides two Legal Faculties around 1900) on the multiplication of educated men and women was a major issue in my project as well. This also applied to Fanny Colonna's study of the impact of French education on Algerian elites. But three papers tackled problems of the very institutional functions of educational agencies proper. Julia Disson, our only Russian participant,



offered an interesting study of a very special, socially selective educational track, reserved for the nobles in 19th century Russia, placed between gymnasia and universities – which were open to all rank and file candidates to advanced studies. Kees Mandemakers' paper (absent from the volume) has dealt with fundamental issues of the modernization process via education in the Netherlands by studying the promotional capacity of secondary schools in two historical cohorts (1880 and 1920) following their career achievements broken down by social background, religion and other 'independent' variables of the position of alumni in social space. Nenad Milenovic (with a paper absent from the volume) studied generations of alumni of the Belgrad *licej*, precursor of the local university, who graduated before the period of independence.

Finally, several papers touched upon one of the most important specificities of emerging East-Central European elites, their often submissive relationship to the West, remarkably objectified in the impact of francophone (French, Swiss, Belgian) and germanophone (Austrian, German and Swiss) universities in their training during and even beyond the long 19th century. The Balkan countries were specially concerned by the Western intellectual temptation, since they were the latest in Europe to found national universities which, for a long time, were poor partners to compete with their Western counterparts. Hence an overwhelming sector of their elites, often with outright state support, were educated in the West, especially in Germany and in France, reproducing in their cultural preferences and orientations the geo-political competition between the two powers. Lucian Nastasa's study explicitly deals with this question, showing in a short but brilliant analysis the quasi exclusive importance of graduation in the West for those aspiring to an academic career in Romania till the very end of the pre-socialist era. Alexander Kostov offered a parallel study on Bulgarian elites between independence and the First World War, whereby he compared alumni of the University of Sofia with a large selection of Bulgarian students trained in a number of Western countries. The paper of Georgeta Nazarska on Bulgarian women doctors completes the previous study on a number of specific points but goes much further in time (till the end of the Old Regime) and in thematic scope, since it includes in the investigation the future career of lady doctors for whom studies abroad represented often an essential factor of professional and social legitimacy.

As the convener of the workshop, I feel entitled to regard our enterprise as a first partially successful attempt to organize a network for the promotion of empirical socio-historical research on modern and modernizing elites in a number of developing societies, especially belonging to the Other Europe. Follow-up gatherings are being planned already as well as cooperative research projects are in the making with partners drawn from several territories of the Baltics, the

Balkans and the Carpathian Basin.<sup>1</sup> We can expect that the final outcome of our conference will be the fast development of historical studies of social mobility, stratification and various elite groups, especially in countries having recently joined or which negotiate their attachment to the European Union, its scholarly field included. This could be conducive to the multiplication of cooperative and comparative research projects with the participation of scholars from several national or regional societies sharing in many ways a common past and also, hopefully, a common future.

*Victor Karady, April 2008*

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<sup>1</sup> The SCOPES project, directed by Dr Natalia Tichonov and funded by the Swiss Foundation for Scientific Research, has supported since 2006 empirical studies on elite groups in Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Russia. I have made a recent application to the European Research Council with a project on culturally composite local elites in the first half of the 20th century (from post-feudalism till Communism) in the framework of their appeal to 'Advanced Team Leaders'. The project, if accepted for funding, would mobilize scholars from Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. Besides this, my personal research project, carried out with Peter Tibor Nagy, on elites in modern and pre-modern Hungary has also benefited from contributions of partners in Israel, Romania, Slovakia and Serbia, above all because it concerns some territories of pre-1919 Hungary now belonging to successor states or regions with a historical record of strong trends of elite emigration. See for preliminary quantified results [www.wesley.extra.hu](http://www.wesley.extra.hu).