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**TITLE: CIRCULATION OR REPRODUCTION OF ELITES
DURING POST-COMMUNIST TRANSFORMATION
IN RUSSIA AND EASTERN EUROPE**

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NCSEER NOTE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY²

In this paper we focus our attention on an issue exciting intense theoretical controversy in Eastern Europe and the successor states of the former Soviet Union — what has happened at the very top of the social hierarchy? Who were the elites under state socialism? How were these people affected by post-communist transformation? Were they able to retain their power and privilege or were they replaced by other people who were not previously in elite positions? If there was a change in the personnel of key decision making positions, where are the new elites coming from?

There are two competing answers to these questions. The first - we call this the reproduction of elite theory - suggests that the system change did not effect the personnel of the elite: those who were privileged in the past remain privileged in the present. The old communist nomenklatura is now becoming a new propertied bourgeoisie. The second - we call this the circulation of elites theory - argues that post-communist transformation represents a revolutionary change and as a result, at least at the very top of the social hierarchy, new people, recruited on the basis of new principles, occupy the major command positions. This question of elite recruitment is not merely of academic interest: polemics around the subject also inform political struggles in post-communist Eastern Europe.

During 1993-1994 we conducted personal interviews with about 40,000 people in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia. In each country we interviewed 2,000 elite members: (i) 1,000 people who were in nomenklatura positions in 1988; (ii) 600 people who were economic elite members in 1993; (iii) and 400 members of the 1993 political and cultural elite. Finally, since we needed a base-line model to compare our results, in each country we also interviewed 5,000 randomly selected adults.

With all these people we conducted life-history interviews: we asked them to give us a full account of their educational, activity and party-membership histories. We also asked about their parents and grandparents; who were they, what was their highest level of education, main occupation, how much property they owned.

To foreshadow the main findings:

(a) There is limited outflow from the old nomenklatura, from this perspective the elite was reproduced - at the same time there is substantial inflow into the new elites, thus in this respect there is substantial circulation, though most of those who are upwardly mobile do not come from the bottom, but typically they arrive from the upper-middle.

²Compiled and edited by the staff of NCSEER.

(b) In Russia there is a much greater nomenklatura retention of its power and privileges than in Poland and Hungary; but contrary to our expectations in Hungary the circulation of the elite was faster than in Poland.

(c) Finally the greater Hungarian elite circulation is particularly true for the old and new economic elites, though it also seems to hold for the outflow from the old cultural nomenklatura.

Our over-all conclusion is that change during post-communism is path-dependent, and involutory, rather than revolutionary or evolutionary. Where greater turbulence took place, as in Hungary or in the political sphere, a "trajectory correction" seems to be taking place as early as 1993-94, as is evident from the parliamentary elections culminating in socialist victories. As a result of these political changes -- while communism is far from being restored -- social structure is most likely to shift backwards toward an involutory path of transformation.

When we began to formulate the hypotheses for our elite study we considered that the post 1989 developments in Eastern Europe may have been uneven: economic change is possibly path-dependent and involutory, while political transformation is more likely to be revolutionary. The difference between the transition from capitalism to socialism and the transition from socialism to capitalism is that, while in the first case the smashing of the capitalist economy requires the smashing of the capitalist state; in the second case the smashing of the socialist state and its replacement with a democratic polity prevents the possibility of a revolutionary break in the economy. Shock therapy, even if it were economically rational, would be politically misguided, since it did not take into consideration the shortness of the political cycle, and it miscalculated how much time it would take to implement a radical economic transformation. The political elite which attempts shock therapy is unlikely to have enough time to complete it: before the shock could produce the desired beneficial results new elections would come, and they would be voted out of office. The democratic polity therefore necessarily slows down the speed of economic change. Such a hypothesis about political revolution and path-dependent economic transformation are consistent with the data we collected during the Summer of 1993 in Poland and Hungary.

The political events since the Summer of 1993, and the unanticipated results of our Hungarian survey, are leading us to the conclusion that even in politics the revolution was more apparent than real. Just after one cycle we see a major correction in the political trajectory of post-communists societies.

1989-90 may be more radical and more revolutionary in the rhetoric of the new political

elite which came to power with the disintegration of state socialism. This new political elite had a vested interest in presenting changes in a revolutionary light. Public opinion probably never accepted much of this radicalism, and even if accepted for a while it did not take too long to correct itself.

The discrepancy between the rhetoric of the new political elite and the value system of the society became apparent early. By 1990, public opinion polls showed strong support for egalitarian values, and a widely shared belief that the government has an obligation to guarantee employment, and provide free education and health-care. The new political elite, which was also more "reformer" than "revolutionary" during the 1970's and 1980's when in opposition, was fast radicalized. They began to push hard for a free market, individual responsibility, privatization and the elimination of the welfare state only fairly recently. For a while they assumed that public opinion was "backward", but would eventually "catch up" with the views of the elite. Far from it: as the public saw the disintegration of welfare state institutions it began to turn even against privatization, which initially was supported by public opinion. Instead of learning a lesson from its elite, the Polish and Hungarian electorate gave its new political leaders a lesson in 1993-94: it sacked them for their imprudent radicalism.

In 1989-90 modernization theory was returning with a vengeance. It appeared that the fall of communism meant the end of history, all societies would begin to converge on the models of liberal capitalism. By the fall of 1994 the direction of the post-Soviet and East European states was much less clear.

Post-communist societies even under socialist governments are undoubtedly in the process of capitalist transformation. The victories of socialists in Poland and in Hungary do not mean in any sense of the term a return to the state socialist model. As the first socialist prime minister of post-communist Hungary, Gyula Horn, told an Austrian journalist shortly after his party's electoral victory: in Hungary now socialists will "build capitalism". These socialist parties are fundamentally different from the communists, and in terms of Western politics they are on the right wing of social democratic movements. Still, the path dependent nature or involutory character of change is apparent. What the character of the new societies will be after transformation is consolidated is less clear today than it appeared in 1989-90. Arguably strong forces operate which point in the direction of continuity both with their communist and even with pre-communist past. Where does this path-dependent, involutory character of post-communist transformation leave us?

Michael Burawoy -- in assessing the prospects of post-communism and the value of modernization theory -- arrives at the somewhat bleak prognosis that the laws of post-

communist societies "will not be the laws of modern capitalism, but more likely, of a merchant capitalism or some might say of a feudal capitalism -- ploughing a third road to the Third World....[M]odernization theory conspires in obscuring the ever widening gap between ideology and reality. It fosters a false optimism about the future.."

One does not have to share the gloom of Burawoy's diagnosis to appreciate some of his theoretical insights. Burawoy's desperation is motivated by his disappointment that Eastern Europe abandoned the socialist path, and by his desire to sustain hope in the possibility of democratic socialism. In light of what we learned about social change over the past five years of post-communism one does not have to share Burawoy's political agenda in order to share his doubts about the inevitability of historical convergence around the model of "First World" liberal capitalism, and appreciate how powerful are the forces which keep societies on developmental trajectories both in terms of the economic institutions or of the logic of stratification systems.

Burawoy is undoubtedly right: there is no guarantee that Eastern Europe or the post-Soviet states are sailing smoothly towards modern capitalism, they can move into the Third World instead. There is no guarantee that their social structure is being "modernized". Instead of socialist counter-selection being replaced by a merit system of selection, one may see the functioning of post-communist patronage, or counter-selection, be it of the nationalist-christian type or the post-communist socialist version.

CIRCULATION OR REPRODUCTION OF ELITES DURING POST-COMMUNIST TRANSFORMATION IN RUSSIA and EASTERN EUROPE

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The Research Puzzle: Theoretical and Political Controversies.

Circulation versus reproduction.

In this paper we focus our attention on an issue exciting intense theoretical controversy in Eastern Europe and the successor states of the former Soviet Union — what has happened at the very top of the social hierarchy? Who were the people who climbed into the command posts where national decisions were made during the communist epoch? In other words, who were the elites under state socialism? How were these people affected by post-communist transformation? Were they able to retain their power and privilege or were they replaced by other people who were not previously in elite positions? If there was a change in the personnel of key decision making positions, where are the new elites coming from?

There are two competing answers to these questions. The first -- we call this the reproduction of elites theory -- suggests that the system change did not effect the personnel of the elite: those who were privileged in the past remain privileged in the present. The old communist nomenklatura is now becoming a new propertied bourgeoisie. The second -- we call this the circulation of elites theory -- argues that post-communist transformation represents a revolutionary change and as a result, at least at the very top of the social hierarchy, new people, recruited on the basis of new principles, occupy the major command positions.

This question of elite recruitment is not merely of academic interest: polemics around the subject also inform political struggles in post-communist Eastern Europe. The political right generally advocates the reproduction of elite theory: it claims that there was not sufficient change in elite personnel. The political left claims that there was excessive elite circulation and calls for a slower pace of social change.

Lech Walesa, for instance, in his successful presidential campaign against Mazowiecki in the Fall of 1991, accused the former Prime Minister of Poland of being "too soft" on communists because he had allowed them to become proprietors. The emergent East European

New Right also focuses its fire on the former communists who have supposedly converted their old political privileges into new economic ones. In exactly these terms, ideologues of the Hungarian (in particular Istvan Csurka) and Polish New Right call for a "second revolution", arguing that ruling conservative parties have "betrayed the revolution". They contend that the "velvet revolution" has not led to radical enough change. Several countries have considered legislation that would restrict the access of former nomenklatura to privatization.

The political left is likely to take the opposite position. Former orthodox communists, reform communists and some liberals warn against too rapid changes in general and particularly in elite personnel. They express anxieties about "witch-hunts", a new wave of "counter-selection" in which now careerist anti-communists will squeeze out competent people, just because they were party members.

Both the New Right and the Old, or Reformed Left touches sympathetic cords in certain circles of the citizenry. The Polish electorate during the Fall of 1993 responded to the calmer voice of the former reform communists and gave an absolute majority in the parliamentary elections to parties of the left. In Hungary the reform-minded successor to the Communist party, the Hungarian Socialist Party, gained popularity over two-three years and it won an absolute majority in the May 1994 parliamentary elections.

In Russia, the December 1993 elections indicated that both programs can mobilize people. While in Poland and Hungary since 1990 we see primarily a shift towards the Left with little evidence of support for the increasingly radicalized political right, in Russia the ultra Right-wing Zhirinovskiy did extremely well, and the former communists also received surprisingly strong electoral support.

Thus we distinguish between two theories of elite recruitment:³ reproduction of elite, and circulation of elite. The dominant view of elites in Eastern Europe is one of "reproduction". Elemer Hankiss and Jadwiga Staniszkis have offered similar versions of this approach. Hankiss as early as 1989 suggested that the old nomenklatura would become the new "grand bourgeoisie"⁴. Around the same time, Staniszkis wrote about the emergent "political capitalism" of post-communist Eastern Europe.⁵ The former nomenklatura, according to the

³ Ivan Szelenyi and Szonja Szelenyi: "Az elite cirkulacioja?" (The Circulation of elites?), in *Kritika*, 1991 September. See also Ivan Szelenyi & Donald Treiman: "Vyvoj socialni stratifikacije a rekrutace elite ve vychodni Evrope po roce 1989" (Social Stratification and Elite Recruitment in Eastern Europe after 1989), in *Sociologicky Casopis*, 1991, No.3, pp.276-298.

⁴ Elemer Hankiss: "Reforms and Conversion of Power," Paper read at the conference "Ost-Mittel Europa, Die Herausforderungen der Reformen" organized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Bonn, May 29-31, 1989.

⁵ Jadwiga Staniszkis: "The Dynamics of Breakthrough in Eastern Europe." Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

theory of political capitalism, uses its political power to gain private wealth. Staniszkis and Hankiss both agreed that the process of privatization would benefit the communist political class, which, without many constraints, could retain its position on the top of the emergent capitalist society, this time as propertied bourgeoisie.

Erzsebet Szalai offered a similar, though not identical analysis. In her research conducted in large firms, she noticed that a new technocratic stratum was emerging in the early 1980s, and that it gradually was beginning to appropriate some key property rights. In early 1989, Szalai published an important paper on the "new elite" that she eventually renamed the "new technocracy⁶." Szalai explained the dynamics of political change in Hungary during the 1980s in terms of increasing struggle between the "old elite" and the "new technocracy". The "old elite" was composed of those members of the nomenklatura that had typically come to power after the revolution of 1956, they were usually not particularly highly qualified, and most of them had a firm ideological commitment to the cause of communism. In contrast the "new elite" was younger, better educated, technocratic in skills and orientation, increasingly disliked the way the old elite ruled, and was attracted to a radical transformation of the institutions of state socialism. Eventually, the "new technocracy" lost its faith in socialism altogether and became attracted to the project of capitalist transformation of the economy. It was as part of this process that it gradually began to appropriate property rights and embarked on the path to becoming a group of private proprietors.⁷

After a long struggle, finally the "new technocracy" defeated the old elite — in Hungary as late as February 1989. Szalai noticed quickly that the "new technocracy" was not successful politically. Its victory, at least in political terms, was a short lived one, and it was soon replaced in political power by a "new ruling estate" whose members came from non-communist circles.⁸

Hankiss, Staniszkis and Szalai offer a similar diagnosis: while the socio-economic system changes radically, people on the top may remain the same. In other words, the personnel does

⁶ Erzsebet Szalai: "Az új elite" (The New Elite) [1989], in Szalai, *Gazdaság és hatalom* (Economy and Power), Budapest: Aula Kiadó, 1990, pp.169-177. For the concept of "new technocracy" see Erzsebet Szalai: "A hatalom metamorfózisa?" (The Transformation of Power) [1991], in Szalai, *Utélagazás* (Cross-roads), Budapest: Pesti Szalon Könyvkiadó, 1994, pp.61-114.

⁷ Erzsebet Szalai: "A hatalom metamorfózisa" op.cit. pp.84-85.

⁸ In Erzsebet Szalai: "Ismét az új elitrol" (Once Again on the New Elite), [1989] Szalai calls this the "New Elite", p.184. In Szalai: *Gazdaság és Hatalom*. Budapest: Aula Kiadó, 1990, pp. 181-186. In her "A hatalom metamorfózisa" op.cit. she uses the "new ruling estate" term, p.101. We will interchangeably call this as the new political estate or the new political elite.

not change, only the principles by which they legitimate their authority, power and privilege is altered.

Szalai, however, draws an important distinction between the "new technocracy" and the "old elite"; the latter can be downwardly mobile when a system is changed. She also points to the struggle between the ex-communist "new technocracy" and the anti-communist "new political elite". By extending Szalai's argument we proposed a "circulation of elites" hypothesis, that assumed that while former elite members will attempt to maintain their privileged positions, there will be political limits determining the extent to which they will be successful. Some members of the old elite will be downwardly mobile,⁹ some will stay in the social space they occupied before, and some will be upwardly mobile into the ranks of the elite.

With the conceptual apparatus of Pierre Bourdieu¹⁰ one may interpret Hankiss and Staniszki as offering a theory which assumes no limits to the convertibility of political capital to economic capital. Szalai's hypothesis is more complex, however. Following her, we may suggest that those who relied exclusively or overwhelmingly on political capital for their power and privilege -- the "old elite" -- are likely to be downwardly mobile, while those who combined cultural and political capital -- the new technocracy -- are better positioned to achieve positive privileges in terms of economic capital today. The "new political elite" is likely to come from the ranks of people who were low in political capital in the past, but were high in cultural capital. It remains to be seen if the "new political elite" will occupy positions of mere political authority or whether they will be successful in achieving economic privileges as well.

Hypotheses: Variations Among Countries.

In three countries -- Russia, Poland and Hungary -- we expect different trends in terms of elite circulation. Since in Hungary the economic and social reforms of the last two decades have been much more successful than in Russia, or even in Poland, the reproduction of elites promises to be strongest. Specifically, because of the existence of at least a partially meritocratic system of recruitment under the Kádár regime, many of those in possession of cultural capital already in 1989 occupied positions concomitant with their skills.

⁹ Erzsebet Szalai: "A hatalom metamorfozisa", op.cit., p.98.

¹⁰ Bourdieu, Pierre: "The Forms of Capital," in Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education, ed. by J.G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.

In Poland, by contrast, there may be a greater amount of elite circulation, because, while several attempts were made to copy the "Kádár" model i.e. to reach some compromise with the technical intelligentsia, or at least to coopt the technocrats, the attempts were fundamentally unsuccessful. The Polish bureaucracy tried to bring the technocracy into positions of authority during the so called "second industrialization of Poland" and again during the Jaruzelski regime. The response the Polish regime received was not favorable. The Polish intelligentsia stayed out of power and was organized into a counter elite, ready to take power, as they have since done.

Russia may be more similar to Hungary, but for very different reasons. Common wisdom suggests that Russia may not have allowed the technical intelligentsia into positions of power to the same degree as Hungary did. Therefore the Russian nomenklatura may have been more similar, in 1989 and 1990, to the Polish nomenklatura than to the Hungarian. Still, there is *prima facie* evidence of a high degree of elite reproduction in Russia. This, in part, can be attributed to the fact that as of the Fall of 1993, when our field work took place, Russia may have changed the least in the post-communist direction, and thus the circulation of elites may not have begun. However, there may be another reason as well.

In order to explain this three-way comparison we have to introduce another idea, namely the strength of counter elites. While the nomenklatura may have had similar characteristics in Poland and Russia, the circulation of the elite was facilitated in Poland by the existence of a large and well established counter elite. In Russia the counter elite was less well developed, and in the absence of alternative cadres, the old nomenklatura may be taking the new command positions. The continued domination by former cadres is also facilitated by general social instability that is particularly evident in Russia. Since the character of the emergent new society is still rather unclear, and because the new democratic institutions do not work in a predictable way, there are fewer "political entrepreneurs" who are ready to try the new games. For these reasons, the old cadre is likely to remain unchallenged in Russia.

Summarized in general terms then, our theory suggests that one may expect a high degree of elite reproduction when either the technocracy was coopted by the nomenklatura, or when this did not happen, and there was no counter elite to replace the nomenklatura at the time of system breakdown. Circulation can take place when the cooptation of technocracy did not take place and when a counter elite was already formed.

Our three countries can be compared with each other in the following way:

	Cooptation	Counter-elite	Circulation or reproduction
Hungary	<i>yes</i>	<i>little</i>	<i>some reproduction</i>
Poland	<i>little</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>some circulation</i>
Russia	<i>none</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>reproduction</i>

To test these hypotheses, and to find answers to questions which have far reaching theoretical and political implications, a number of us initiated an empirical study in 1990. By mid 1994 the study was completed in six countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia.¹¹

During 1993-1994 we conducted personal interviews with about 40,000 people in these countries, with a rather complex research design, interviewing people from different random samples:

(A) In each country we interviewed 2,000 elite members: (i) 1,000 who were in nomenklatura positions in 1988; (ii) 600 who were economic elite members in 1993; and (iii) 400 members of the 1993 political and cultural elite.

(B) Finally, since our intention was to find out if patterns of elite recruitment are at all unique, we needed a base-line model to compare our results. Thus in each country we also interviewed 5,000 randomly selected adults.

With all these people we conducted life-history interviews: we asked them to give us a full account of their educational, activity, and party membership histories. We also asked our respondents to talk about their parents and grandparent, who were they, what was their highest level of education, main occupation, how much property they owned.

By the end of 1993 data on the elite part of the study was available for statistical analysis from three countries, Russia, Poland and Hungary. A group of us from the United States and

¹¹ At the 1990 World Congress of Sociology a group of scholars from the United States and several East European countries met to design a survey. The project was designed by Ivan Szelenyi, Szonja Szelenyi and Donald Treiman. We received funding for an international comparative study from the National Science Foundation, from the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, and from the Dutch National Science Foundation. Our Polish team received substantial funding from the Polish Committee of Scientific Research and two Hungarian teams that cooperated with our project were funded by the Hungarian National Science Foundation.

from the three countries met for ten days in Europe and wrote a preliminary analysis of the results.¹² This paper presents the most general conclusions of this work.

2. Preliminary Empirical Results: Elite Circulation and Reproduction in Russia, Poland and Hungary.

The distinction between "circulation" and "reproduction" is a relative one. Five years is long enough to expect some change in the personnel of incumbents of key command positions under any circumstances, although a complete turnover of personnel in such a short time is unimaginable even under the most revolutionary conditions, particularly in such a short period of time. Thus, when we try to assess "how much" circulation or reproduction took place in a country, at a certain point in time or in a certain fraction of the elite we always have to phrase it as: "relative to what?"

In the following analysis we make a number of comparisons: we show differences between the destination of the nomenklatura and the origins of the new elites; I analyze cross-country variations; and finally we demonstrate the differences between the economic, cultural and political elites.

To foreshadow the main findings:

1. There is limited outflow from the old nomenklatura, and from that perspective the elite was reproduced. At the same time there is substantial inflow into the new elites, thus in this respect there is substantial circulation, although most of those who are upwardly mobile do not come from the bottom, but typically from the upper-middle.
2. In Russia there is a much greater likelihood for the nomenklatura to retain its power and privileges than in Poland and Hungary, but contrary to our expectations in Hungary the circulation of the elite was faster than in Poland.
3. Finally, the greater Hungarian elite circulation is particularly true for the old and new economic elites, though it also seems to hold for the outflow from the old cultural nomenklatura.

Our over-all conclusion is that change during post-communism is path-dependent, involutory, rather than revolutionary or evolutionary. Where greater turbulences took place, as in Hungary or in the political sphere, a "trajectory correction" seems to be taking place as

¹² These papers are being published as a special issue of *Theory and Society*, with Ivan Szelenyi, Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski and Donald Treiman acting as guest editors. Authors of individual papers of this forthcoming special issue are: Richard Anderson, Jozsef Borocz, Gil Eyal, Eva Fodor, Imre Kovach, Akor Rona-Tas, Ivan Szelenyi, Szonja Szelenyi, Jacek Wasilewski, Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski, Natasha Yershova.

early as 1993-94, as evident from the parliamentary elections culminating in socialist victories. As a result of these political changes -- while communism is far from being restored -- social structure is most likely to shift backwards toward an involutory path of transformation.

Destination of nomenklatura and origins of new elites.

If we assess the extent of circulation/reproduction of elites by contrasting destinations of the nomenklatura (Tables 1-4, pages 21-22) with the origins of the new elites (Tables 5-8, pages 22-23) we get two different stories.

The first one is more about reproduction: those who were in elite positions in 1988 were more likely to remain in command posts than leave such positions by 1993. The "old guard" is rarely in trouble, it is doing just fine. Doing well, however, does not necessarily mean they were unharmed. Many were squeezed out of their national command position, though most survived this reasonably well. Most of these individuals retired, some took early retirement, few had to accept inferior jobs.

The second one is more about circulation: the majority of those who were in elite positions in 1993 were not members of the nomenklatura in 1988. Thus there are many "new faces" at the top. These new faces, however, are not necessarily all that new: they often come from those who were "next in line" anyway, and would have been promoted into elite positions -- probably a few years later -- with no change of regime.

Let us elaborate on these two themes:

In terms of *destinations* of the nomenklatura (Tables 1-4, pages 21-22) while reproduction is the dominant trend in all three countries, there are major inter-country differences: in Russia the rate of "reproduction" is almost 80 percent, in Poland and Hungary it is barely over 50 percent, 57 and 51 percent respectively. The "outflow" from the old elite, however, is more likely to be "sideways" rather than "downward," even in the countries with low reproduction rates. Those who left elite positions in Poland and Hungary are much more likely to be retired by 1993 than working in rank-and-file jobs.¹³ About a third took retirement (thus moved "sideways"), only one-sixth was "demoted" to rank-and-file jobs (thus downwardly mobile). Some of those in retirement may be doing quite well. Former economic nomenklatura, for instance, may be working as "consultants" during their retirement. Some of them may earn respectable incomes and may even have substantial informal power. On the whole there is no reason to be particularly concerned about the fate of the old communist elite.

¹³ This is consistent with Szalai's observation: "Members of the 'old ruling class' mainly opted for retirement", in "A hatalom metamorfózisa?", p.98.

not even in Poland and Hungary, where the outflow from top jobs was twice the Russian rate (40-50 percent versus 20 percent). This big difference, however, between the rate of reproduction in Russia and in the two East European countries alerts us not to exaggerate the degree of reproduction in Poland and Hungary. In these countries the turbulence which took place at the top of the social hierarchy is obviously non-trivial and we will see more evidence of this later in this paper.

In terms of *origins* of the new elites (Table 5, p.22) there are much smaller inter-country differences. In all countries circulation seems to be stronger. We see the least change in Russia - where 51 percent of the 1993 elite were in nomenklatura position in 1988. Poland shows a weaker trend of circulation than Hungary: the proportion of new elites coming from nomenklatura is 41 percent in Poland and only 33 percent in Hungary. The big story, though, is the relatively modest inflow from the rank-and-file into the new elites: only one fifth or less of the new power holders was "non-elite" in 1988. The real pool from which the new incumbents of key command positions were recruited is "mid-management," the new bosses were people who already had at least some authority during communist times;¹⁴ about half of the "new bosses" were already "bosses", though with lesser responsibilities before the fall of communism). The process of upward mobility during post-communism seems to be rather orderly. There are few "jumps", the major manner of progression is "climbing the ladder". Looking at the inflow into the new elites one cannot miss that an impressive circulation took place at the top. But it would be a mistake to overestimate its extent and radicalism. The new "top" does not come from the "bottom," it comes from the upper layers of the "middle."

Our two stories, *reproduction in outflow* from, or destinations of the old elite; and *circulation in inflow* into, or origins of the new elites; do not contradict each other. It is conceivable that most former nomenklatura members can stay in the elite even when most new elite members were not nomenklatura in the past. This is not a zero-sum-game. The political and economic institutions of post-communist societies changed: while the size of some fractions shrank, others increased. On the whole, the number of elite positions increased. One therefore does not have to kick one person out of power in order to get one other person into power-position. This is particularly true in the economic sphere. While for 1988 we defined the economic nomenklatura as the top managers of the largest 200 firms, for 1993 the CEO's of the 3,000 largest enterprises constituted our new economic elite. It may have been somewhat arbitrary to draw the line at 200 in 1988 and at 3,000 in 1993, but distribution of economic

¹⁴ Szalai is right on target again: "Among those new technocrats, who retain their power position an important group comes from the 'former deputy department heads'...", in "A hatalom metamorfózisa?", p.102.

power changed, indeed, in this direction. We redefined the economic elite this way since our belief was that in 1993, CEO's of smaller private firms may have had at least as much clout as general managers of very large public firms had in 1988. Economic power is constituted in different ways under state socialism and in the emergent market economy of post-communism.

Our most general conclusion is that the first five years of post-communist transformation can be characterized by relative stability in personnel and a rather significant change in institutional structure. The dominant trend in the transformation of political, and in particular economic, institutions points towards a decentralization of decision making power resulting in the growth of the number of elite positions.¹⁵ Continuity in personnel and path-dependent transformation in economic and political institutions describes the realities of post-communism.

Inter-Country Variations: Differences between Economic, Cultural and Political Elites.

While in these general terms there are similarities among the three countries, data on the 1993 destination of the 1988 nomenklatura incumbents is sufficiently different to conclude that our hypothesis concerning the difference between Russia and Eastern Europe is supported. Indeed in Russia the former nomenklatura was in a much better position to retain its positions of power and privilege than was the case in Eastern Europe.

A comparison of Poland and Hungary, however, offers us counter-intuitive, unexpected findings. Indeed our first data cast substantial doubt on our theory-driven hypotheses concerning inter-country variations, and forces us to re-think some of our initial theoretical assumptions.

While we expected greater circulation in Poland and greater reproduction in Hungary, our data point in the opposite direction. 57 percent of those who, in 1988 were in nomenklatura positions in Poland remained in elite positions in 1993. In Hungary the proportion of nomenklatura "survivors" is -- while not dramatically -- significantly lower at 51 percent.

It is particularly interesting how much higher the proportion of retirees is in Hungary than in the two other countries. In Hungary 33 percent of the nomenklatura retired, which is significantly more than the 27 percent retirement in Poland, and the 10 percent in Russia. This difference cannot be attributed to the differences in age composition of the three nomenklatura. The Hungarian old elite's average age was comparable to that of Poles and Russians. Following 1989, many people in elite positions took "early retirement". It is indicative that in

¹⁵ This hypothesis needs further scrutiny. The fact is that our definition of elite is changed and we need to explore to what extent the change of definition reflects a real change in the way power is being exercised.

Hungary in 1993 a quarter of the retired former nomenklatura were under age 60 and more than 80% of them were not 70 years old yet. At least in Hungary, therefore, the change of personnel in elite positions seem to have been greater than we expected in our theory-driven hypotheses.

The more detailed comparison of different strata of the nomenklatura in Poland and Hungary offers further interesting and unanticipated results. The different dynamics of the "outflow" from the economic nomenklatura in Hungary and Poland is particularly counter-intuitive (see Table 2, page 21). Among those who were in economic top management in 1988 in Hungary only 48% remained in elite positions and a similar proportion took retirement. Like all retired former nomenklatura, the retired economic nomenklatura was quite "young" in 1993: more than one-fourth of them was not 60 years of age yet in 1993. In Poland, by contrast, almost 70 percent of the 1988 top economic managers were still in elite positions in 1993, only 24 percent of them went into retirement. The better survival capacity of the former Polish economic nomenklatura is supported by "inflow" data as well (Table 7, page 22) While exactly half of the new Polish economic elite was of the nomenklatura in 1988, in Hungary only one third of the new CEO's came from such a background¹⁶. These results are particularly surprising since, during the epoch of late state socialism, it was generally assumed that the Hungarian economic management was better trained, more competent, and that political criteria played a lesser role in their selection than was true in Poland. It is also surprising that the Polish economy, where the nomenklatura was more successful in preserving its positions after 1989, produced better results than the Hungarian economy.

The change of cultural elite in Hungary was also greater than in Poland. Only 56% of the 1988 cultural nomenklatura kept its position in Hungary, while in Poland it was 61% (Table 5, p.22).¹⁷ This is also unanticipated. It was generally believed that, by 1988, Hungary was ruled with rather liberal policies in science, higher education and the media. Hungarian radio, television and printed media impressed observers as quite free and objective, high level

¹⁶ This may be - at least in part - the result of the differences of sampling procedures. Though our aim was to have identical sampling procedures in different countries there was some difference in the way our respondents were selected. In the current economic elite sample in Poland for instance more than one individual was interviewed in large firms; in Hungary only CEO's were interviewed. The Polish current economic elite sample is therefore biased towards high officials in large firms, and they are more likely to be of nomenklatura background than the CEO's of small, private enterprises.

¹⁷ The difference between Hungary and Poland in the composition of cultural elites is less clear-cut than the difference in the fate and origins of economic elites. In terms of their 1988 position the 1993 Hungarian and Polish cultural elite is strikingly similar.

university administrators were appointed from among the best experts, and the best scholars were typically elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

In Poland, however, the printed media tended to be less free, the much larger Polish samizdat activity reflected heavier censorship of the press, and so called "flying universities" compensated for the conservatism and political control of official academic institutions. How to account for these unanticipated differences between Poland and Hungary?

In terms of the fate of the political nomenklatura, and origins of the new political elite, Poland and Hungary are similar (Tables 3 and 6, pp. 21-22). The downward movement from the political nomenklatura was significantly greater than that from other components of the old elite. This is understandable. After all, 1989 was primarily a change in the political system. Furthermore the political is the only element of the new elite which received people from the rank-and-file in substantial numbers, from "below," rather than the "upper-middle" (Table 6, page 22). In both countries about 40 percent of the new political elite was in non-elite positions in 1988. This turnover is particularly clear in the case of those who occupied elected office in 1993. Among civil servants reproduction is much more pronounced.

"Administered Mobility" in Post-Communist Elite Recruitment

The faster circulation of Hungarian economic and cultural elite may suggest that our hypotheses concerning the effects of the existence of a "counter-elite" may not stand up to critical scrutiny. Initially we hypothesized that the larger and better organized Polish counter-elite would be more inclined to take over positions of decision making power, because during the years of underground activities it gained political expertise and would be better prepared to act as a power elite. In light of the data this may have been a somewhat naive assumption.

Those who aspire for elite positions and fill power vacuums at times of system breakdowns don't necessarily have to be particularly competent, it is enough if they are ambitious. In retrospect we are inclined to believe that the greater circulation of elites in Hungary can be explained by the relative administrative and political inexperience of the new political elite, which came to power in 1990. The less experience the new political office holders had, the more likely it was that they did not trust holdover subordinates from the communist regime. They wanted to work with people whom they knew and whose loyalty they felt assured of. Under such circumstances post-communist elites -- particularly in Hungary -- were tempted to think in terms of communist conspiracies, to suspect that survivors of the ancien regime would try to sabotage reform policies. Ironically, not unlike their communist predecessors during the late 1940's, the new post-communist political elites were inclined to cast doubt on what some of them believed to be a mythology of competence, of expertise. It

was argued that anti-communists did not have a chance to gain expertise during the communist epoch and it is unfair to hold against them that they are less qualified. Excessive emphasis on experience would only serve the reproduction of the old communist elite and likely block revolutionary transformation of the society. During the late 1940's, when there was a conflict between "red" and "expert" the then-new communist elites favored those who were "red." Analogously, the post-communist elites favored the good "patriots" or committed anti-communists. In staff appointments and replacements they occasionally attributed more value to a proper world view than to technical competence. Former subordinate employees, even if they had the appropriate credentials for their jobs, tended to be replaced by clients, by relatives, school-mates, neighbors who were promoted to jobs primarily on the basis of their loyalty. A counter-selective process also took place with the old nomenklatura, with old communist party members. Among former communist officials those had better survival chances who were ready to compensate for their communist past with unconditional loyalty towards the new power holders. Former communists who had integrity, who were reluctant to turn into anti-communists, to subscribe to the new dominant National-Christian ideology, had less chance to keep their positions.

The greater degree of circulation of Hungarian cultural elite is particularly instructive. We are inclined to explain this by the social characteristics of the new Hungarian political elite. The new political elite in Hungary is quite different from the Russian and Polish in terms of its social background, educational and occupational history.

In Russia there was a clear trend towards the evolution of a "bureaucratic caste", which was likely to reproduce itself across generations. The children of the nomenklatura in Russia were much more likely to become nomenklatura themselves than was true in Poland or in Hungary; and this tendency seems to continue during post-communist transformation. The new elites in Russia also come, to a significant degree, from the former nomenklatura caste. In the Russian elite, during the whole period of state socialism, the proportion of people with worker and peasant origin was more modest than in Poland or in Hungary.

In Poland and Hungary the nomenklatura was, and remained until the end of state socialism, socially quite open to people from lower social strata. This was particularly striking during the first period of socialism. After 1970 in Hungary children of professionals began to enter nomenklatura positions in greater numbers. Even during the last two decades of Hungarian socialism cadre children usually were not attracted to the occupational career of their parents, which opened up recruitment from the whole class of professionals. In Poland the recruitment of upwardly mobile people from the working class, and in particular from the peasantry, remained very important until the very end of the socialist period.

1989 saw quite an abrupt change in the social origins of the new Hungarian political elite. Both in Hungary and in Poland the proportion of children of professionals recruited into the new political elite increases, although in Poland quite a few members of the new political elite are of working class origin. This may be a consequence of the role Solidarity played in the Polish transformations of 1989-90. In Hungary, however, during the past five years the new political elite has been recruited almost exclusively from professional families. This was particularly true in 1990-94 for the MP's of the Center-right parties. The political cadres of the ruling Hungarian Christian-nationalist party typically came from multi-generation professional families, descendants of the so called Hungarian genteel middle class (*magyar kereszteny uri kozeposztaly*). The new Hungarian political elite, and in particular the members of the first ruling Hungarian coalition, were humanistic intellectuals (historians, novelists, poets etc), while in the old nomenklatura and also among the new socialist politicians the technical intelligentsia was better represented.

We are inclined to attribute the greater degree of circulation of cultural elite in Hungary to the fact that this new political elite was particularly likely to believe in the importance of culture, and in particular of the media, precisely because they were humanistic intellectuals. They were likely to have more clients, former colleagues, who aspired to get command positions in the area of culture, science and media. In all post-communist societies the new political elite made an attempt to capture the media, particularly radio and television. This "media-war" was, however, particularly vigorous and bloody in Hungary. The "media-war" became so central in Hungary, because the new political elite misunderstood the role the media plays in forming political opinions. Frequent participants on TV or radio programs themselves, they naively believed these had a greater effect than they actually had. They persuaded themselves that those who control the media will win elections, and therefore the replacement of personnel in the media became for some the almost sacred first act of the revolutionary transformation of the society.

Between 1988 and 1993, therefore, Hungary, and possibly Poland too if to a lesser degree, may have experienced an "administered" mobility, or circulation. The new Hungarian political elite - being insecure in its own competence - may have pushed for a faster than "functional" change in personnel. We understand "administered circulation" as a process by which personnel in elite positions are changed by administrative action, guided by considerations of personal or political loyalty rather than merit. This may have triggered a specifically post-communist process of counter-selection: some people appointed to positions were probably selected on the basis of patronage and not on the basis of competence.

The dynamics of electoral campaigns in 1993-94, and the eventual outcomes of parliamentary elections both in Poland and Hungary, are consistent with the hypothesis of "administered circulation". In May 1994, during the second free Hungarian election, the Hungarian electorate gave an absolute majority of parliamentary seats to the successor of the communist party, to the Hungarian Socialists. It is notable that the key slogan of this election was "competence". The socialists won the confidence of the electorate by presenting themselves as competent experts, who are knowledgeable about politics and who know how to run the country. They also discredited the former ruling party as a bunch of arrogant amateurs. In May 1994 the Hungarian electorate -- in a way -- also cast a vote on circulation versus reproduction of elites. If people took campaign rhetoric seriously, then the results can be interpreted as a vote against what was perceived as "administered", or "excessive" circulation in key decision making positions. One may read the meaning of the September 1993 Polish elections in analogous ways. In September 1993, the two successor parties of the former CP won an absolute majority, and formed a coalition government in Poland. And while the issue of "competence" was not as prominent in the campaign rhetoric of the successor parties in Poland as it was in Hungary, arguably it did play a crucial role in the Polish elections as well.

It is another question how competent the new socialist elite will be. In Hungary the newly formed government hardly can be called a "government of experts". Most new ministers and their deputies are people who are rewarded now for their political loyalty to the Socialist Party, or to the Liberal Party which governs in coalition with the socialists. The new government does not waste much time in firing people who were put in positions of authority by the former government, and it rapidly builds in its own clientele. It is possible that only the colors of the government change, but the old logic of patronage keeps operating, and prevents the merit system of selection from becoming standard practice. It is possible that the "correction of the Right-wing post-communist counter-selection" now also happens in a counter-selective way. It may be that most of the competent technocrats of the ancien regime are already in business and are not available for government jobs. The "experts" the Socialist Party promised to put into decision making positions may not be so expert either.

We completed our data collection in the three countries by the Summer of 1993. The elections in Poland in September 1993, in Russia in December 1993, and in Hungary in May 1994 represented an important change in all three countries. It is reasonable to hypothesize that our data from Summer 1993 overestimates how much circulation of elites has taken place. In Poland and Hungary particularly the elections of 1993-94 "corrected" what was "administered circulation," and moved back into positions of authority people who were at least temporarily in "parking orbits" after 1990. This is especially likely to be the case for the political elite.

During the Summer of 1993 the new political elite was the only stratum into which there was a substantial upward mobility from rank-and-file positions. I assume if we would generate new data on those who are incumbents of such political positions by the Summer of 1995 we would see many of those who were upwardly mobile in 1990, moving back down to where they were earlier, and at least some "losers" from 1990 moving back into earlier, higher positions.

Meta-Theoretical Implications

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989-90 was usually perceived as a revolutionary break in East European social and economic development.

It did not take much time, however, before one began to notice continuities at least in the workings of economic institutions. David Stark as early as 1992 wrote about path-dependent change of economic institutions, as distinct from transition from redistribution to market economies -- emphasizing in this way the strong involutory trends both in economic management and in property relations. As Stark put it, to change was from "plan" to "clan"; what was presented as "privatization" may be more accurately described as a more gradual reshuffling of property rights within public ownership;¹⁸ what was presented as transition from redistribution to market may be more an involution of redistributive institutions, often probably just a decentralization of redistribution.¹⁹

When we began to formulate the hypotheses for our elite study we considered that the post 1989 developments in Eastern Europe may have been uneven: economic change is possibly path-dependent and involutory, while political transformation is more likely to be revolutionary. The difference between the transition from capitalism to socialism and the transition from socialism to capitalism is that, while in the first case the smashing of the capitalist economy requires the smashing of the capitalist state; in the second case the smashing of the socialist state and its replacement with a democratic polity prevents the possibility of a revolutionary break in the economy. One could have argued that such path-dependent re-adjustments in the economy are necessary within democratic polity. Shock therapy even if it were economically rational, would be politically misguided, since it did not take into

¹⁸ Philip Huang makes this point about the transformation of Chinese agriculture after Mao -- but his analysis may hold for at least some of the East European and post Soviet states.

¹⁹ This point is made by Andrew Walder in the case of China, but it may be quite applicable for Eastern Europe as well. See, for an analysis suggesting the survival of redistributive mechanisms in Hungary, Erzsebet Szalai: "Perpetuum mobile?" [1992], in Utelagazas. op.cit. pp.115-169. See in particular references here to the works of Eva Voszka, such as "A privatizacio es szervezeti decentralizacio" (Privatization and Organizational Decentralization). Budapest: Penzugykatato Intezet, 1991 and Tulajdonreform (Property reform) Budapest: Penzugykatato, 1991.

consideration the shortness of the political cycle and it miscalculated how much time it would take to implement a radical economic transformation. The political elite which attempts shock therapy is unlikely to have enough time to complete it: before such a policy could produce results new elections would come and they would be voted out of office. The democratic polity therefore necessarily slows down the speed of economic change. Such a hypothesis about political revolution and path-dependent economic transformation are consistent with the data we collected during the Summer of 1993 in Poland and Hungary.

The political events since the Summer of 1993, and the unanticipated results of the Hungarian survey, are leading me to the conclusion that even in politics the revolution was more apparent than real. Just after one cycle we see a major correction in the political trajectory of post-communists societies.

1989-90 may be more radical and more revolutionary in the rhetoric of the new political elite which came to power with the disintegration of state socialism. This new political elite had a vested interest in presenting changes in a revolutionary light. Public opinion probably never accepted much of this radicalism, and even if accepted for a while it did not take too long to correct itself.

The discrepancy between the rhetoric of the new political elite and the value system of the society became apparent early in the game. By 1990, public opinion polls showed strong support for egalitarian values, and a widely shared belief that the government has an obligation to guarantee employment, and provide free education and health-care. The new political elite, which was also more "reformer" than "revolutionary" during the 1970's and 1980's when in opposition, was fast radicalized. They began to push hard for a free market, individual responsibility, privatization and the elimination of the welfare state only fairly recently. For a while they assumed that public opinion was "backward", but would eventually "catch up" with the views of the elite. Far from it: as the public saw the disintegration of welfare state institutions it began to turn even against privatization, which initially was supported by public opinion. Instead of learning a lesson from its elite, the Polish and Hungarian electorate gave an instruction to its new political leaders in 1993-94: it sacked them for their imprudent radicalism.

In 1989-90 modernization theory was returning with a vengeance.²⁰ It appeared that the fall of communism meant the end of history, all societies would begin to converge on the

²⁰ See Michael Burawoy: "The End of Sovietology and the Renaissance of Modernization Theory," *Contemporary Sociology*, 1992, pp.774-785.

models of liberal capitalism. By the fall of 1994 the direction of the post-Soviet and East European states was much less clear.

Post-communists societies even under socialist governments are undoubtedly in the process of capitalist transformation. The victories of socialists in Poland and in Hungary does not mean in any sense of the term a return to the state socialist model. As the first socialist prime minister of post-communist Hungary, Gyula Horn, told an Austrian journalist shortly after his party's electoral victory: in Hungary now socialists will "build capitalism". These socialist parties are fundamentally different from the communists, and in terms of Western politics they are on the right wing of social democratic movements. Still, the path dependent nature or involutory character of change is apparent. What the character of the new societies will be after transformation is consolidated is less clear today than it appeared in 1989-90. Arguably strong forces operate which point in the direction of continuity both with its communist and even with pre-communists past. Where does this path-dependent, involutory character of post-communist transformation leave us?

Michael Burawoy -- in assessing the prospects of post-communism and the value of modernization theory -- arrives at the somewhat bleak prognosis that the laws of post-communist societies "will not be the laws of modern capitalism, but more likely, of a merchant capitalism or some might say of a feudal capitalism - ploughing a third road to the Third World....[M]odernization theory conspires in obscuring the ever widening gap between ideology and reality. It fosters a false optimism about the future."²¹

One does not have to share the gloom of Burawoy's diagnosis to appreciate some of his theoretical insights. Burawoy's desperation is motivated by his disappointment that Eastern Europe abandoned the socialist path, and by his desire to sustain hope in the possibility of democratic socialism.²² In light of what we learned about social change over the past five years of post-communism one does not have to share Burawoy's political agenda in order to share his doubts about the inevitability of historical convergence around the model of "First World" liberal capitalism, and appreciate how powerful are the forces which keep societies on developmental trajectories both in terms of the economic institutions or of the logic of stratification systems.

Burawoy is undoubtedly right: there us no guarantee that Eastern Europe or the post-Soviet states are sailing smoothly towards modern capitalism, they can move into the Third World instead. There is no guarantee that their social structure is being "modernized". Instead

²¹ Burawoy, op.cit. p.784.

²² Op.cit, p. 785.

of socialist counter-selection being replaced a by merit system of selection one may see the functioning of post-communist patronage, or counter-selection, be it of the nationalist-christian type or the post-communist socialist version.

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Table 1.
Destination of people who were in nomenklatura positions in 1988
Nomenklatura altogether

Position in 1993	Russia	Poland	Hungary
Elite	64.2	38.2	20.0
Non-elites with subordinates	15.5	18.4	31.5
Non-elite without subordinates	10.6	16.6	15.7
Retired	9.7	26.8	32.8
	(N=854)	(N=888)	(N=662)

Table 2.
Destination of people who were in nomenklatura positions in 1988
Economic nomenklatura in 1988

Position in 1993	Russia	Poland	Hungary
Elite	81.8	56.6	29.2
Non-elite with subordinates	13.2	12.6	18.3
Non-elite without subordinates	1.7	7.2	4.9
Retired	3.3	23.6	47.6
	(N=60)	(N=263)	(N=82)

Table 3.
Destination of people who were in nomenklatura positions in 1988
Political nomenklatura in 1988

Position in 1993	Russia	Poland	Hungary
Elite	67.7	27.5	21.9
Non-elite with subordinates	13.7	15.1	23.0
Non-elite without subordinates	7.6	29.3	23.9
Retired	11.0	28.1	31.2
	(N=582)	(N=502)	(N=426)

Table 4.
Destination of people who were in nomenklatura positions in 1988
Cultural nomenklatura

Position in 1993	Russia	Poland	Hungary
Elite	49.4	43.9	9.0
Non-elite with subordinates	20.8	17.1	47.5
Non-elite without subordinates	21.8	10.5	14.3
Retired	8.0	28.5	29.2
	(N=212)	(N=123)	(N=154)

Table 5.
Origins of new (1993) elites
All new elites

Position in 1988	Russia	Poland	Hungary
Nomenklatura	51.0	40.7	32.7
Other officials	33.4	37.9	47.5
Non-elite	15.6	21.4	19.8
	(N=958)	(N=960)	(N=783)

Table 6.
Origins of new (1993) elites
New political elite

Position in 1988	Russia	Poland	Hungary
Nomenklatura	51.0	23.7	30.4
Other officials	29.4	33.3	26.1
Non-elite	19.6	43.0	43.5
	(N=255)	(N=282)	(N=161)

Table 7.
Origins of new (1993) elites
New economic elite

Position in 1988	Russia	Poland	Hungary
Nomenklatura	52.6	50.7	34.9
Other officials	33.4	38.8	54.7
Non-elite	14.0	10.5	10.4
	(N=565)	(N=588)	(N=489)

Table 8.
 Origins of new (1993) elites
 New cultural elite

Position in 1988	Russia	Poland	Hungary
Nomenklatura	44.9	29.9	27.1
Other officials	40.6	45.5	47.4
Non-elite	14.4	24.4	25.5
	(N=138)	(N=90)	(N=133)