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The social aspect of the students of the universities in Hungary
between the two World Wars

I. Some ideas about the chosen matter and objectives

Our knowledges about Hungary in the interwar period can be completed with the lightning of many earlier not, or only osculatorian and very one-sidedly discussed questions. There are so forgotten problems, which solving was nearly burning important in the given age but the posterity forgot from these completely. This kind of question is the estimation of the condition of the students of the universities.

The special literature of the students of the universities in the examined period deals with mainly the numerus clausus and the modification of this in 1928. We have some kind of knowledges about the social mobility of the Horthy-age and the social condition of the students who are entering to the higher education, based on Rudolf Andorka's researches, but one of the greatest defectiveness of these mobility-examinations is that they leaned almost exclusively on the datas of the national censuses. About the problem which arose in consequence of the First World War and which existed permanently because of the economic crisis's effects namely about the importance of the social condition of the students of the universities and joined with this the importance of the students' social work we can hardly find a mention in the Hungarian historiography after 1945.

Our knowledges about the internal structure and construction of the students' society are also incomplete. While the history of the students' political movements were written up strongly ideological but thoroughly by the scholars so important questions like the regional distribution of the students namely the mapping of the main attraction areas of certain universities didn't come to light. Many scholars dealt with the increasing of the students' numbers after the First World War but that important difference which can be found between the students of the universities and the students of the colleges avoided their attentions. The effects of the numerus clausus and its modification in 1928 appeared much stronger among the students of the colleges as it can be established in the case of the youth of the universities. Andor Ladányi and others set out the appearance of the woman question in the universities in

the Horthy-age, but important contemporary publications and statistical statements avoid their attention during the examinations.

Perhaps we don't go too far when in the light of these we consider the writing of a dissertation about the social aspect of the students of the universities between the two World Wars timely. The main purpose of the choice of matter was a profound synthesis, which wanted to focus several forgotten problems and which was written in the required detail. So the intention of this doctoral dissertation was the presentation of the retraceable data as completely as possible. But it's the part of the truth, that in the case of certain issues (numbers of the students, denominational distribution) the work was able to catch the changes which came true, but in the case of some issues (social distribution) we could make a comparison among certain points of time or an all-embracing presentation of one chosen session (regional distribution, social condition).

In the case of those issues, which brought one session into focus the session of 1934/35 was the examinations' sample session. The choice of it depended on in part the scholar decision but in part the bordered possibilities of the sources. However, all these lead us to the domain of the used historical method.

II. The approach of the examined question: the historical method

March Bloch who was an outstanding figure of the French Annales School in his very effective work, which was entitled 'The historian's profession', put it as follows: "*Only the future is occasional. The past is a given thing which doesn't allow scope to the possible.*" In this sense, the task of the historian is the searching of this given thing. It can be done with the searching, the critical constructing and the several points of viewed interpreting of the evidences (sources) which stayed for us.

However, the question of the chosen method is connected with the possibilities of the matter and the possibilities of the source-material, which was the base of the approach. The historical method is basically narrative and make a wide scope for the historian to present his results in the way that he find the best according to his sources, his knowledges, his way of putting a question and the examined problem's type. However, the difference of the methods don't depend on first of all the scholar's personality much rather the available sources.

This doctoral dissertation aspired to describe the social aspect of the students of the universities between the two World Wars. The approach of the matter was hard to imagine

without those several times very informative statistical statements, which stayed for us form the period. Beside these, naturally those even-aged examinations and studies also had important source value which dealt with the condition of the students of the universities. Owing to those unique wealthy and accuracy statements, which were made by those Hungarian statisticians who lived between the two World Wars the searching became executable not only the universities' but also the faculties' level. All these had unique and so far nowhere readable results and made the uncovering of earlier unknown connections possible.

The chosen method can be connected with the social-historical approach mainly. Relatively many datas in tabular form as well as graphs, illustrations, circle diagrams were used in the work. All these naturally joined with such examination, which was worked out in the required detail and aspired to the presentation of the found occurrences and the uncovering of their reasons.

That source-material which was collected during 4 years archival searching and which was the base of several microhistorical citations is also important part of the dissertation. Those letters in which the students and their parents applied for a respite of payment of school fees or justified the break of their studies, allowed insight into the everyday life of the students of the universities. One of the mentioned letters called our attention to the definite connection of the regional distribution and the social condition when the student justified the break of his studies definitely with the distance of the university.

Beyond all of these the work's novelty consist in mainly that the most of the used datas came to light from so far hardly mentioned statements (The Hungarian Royal Government's reports) and from such manuscript statistics (The Collections of National Educational Documents) which wasn't published at all and which was protected in archives. Owing to this in the case of social mobility for example, whit the help of those source-material, which more detailed than the datas of the national censuses, became possible to present such results, which go beyond the declarations of the past and uncover unknown occurrences. But with this we have already arrived at the representation of the dissertation's abstract of the thesis.

III. The abstract of the thesis of the doctoral dissertation. The results of the searching.

Gustav Droysen who was a German historian in the eighteenth century and worked out the “epistemology of the history” in his well known work which was entitled *Historika* called the trade’s attention to “[...] whatever form was chosen for the presentation of the results of the searching this presentation only in part, certain way and according to certain points of view can be suitable and want to be suitable for the existence of the things, such as it seemed for the livings and activists in that time its own present [...]”

In this sense every historical presentation is only interpretation, one kind of construction of the past, which can present only approximately those events and occurrences which happened in the past. Who want to know the past as it truly happened undertake impossible because the historians aren’t in their power to try experiments or make models against the scientific approaching.

The base of the examinations can be only those sources which stayed for us. This dissertation’s matter namely the description of the social aspect of the students of the universities was very hard to do without the mentioned types of sources. It’s easy to see from this that the chosen method mainly determined the whole construction of the work and the got results too. After these, there is nothing left but to present the abstract of thesis of the dissertation in logical order:

1. The numbers and the denominational and regional distribution of the students of the universities. Women among the students.

The complete consideration of the results of the doctoral dissertation is very difficult because the work raised several questions, which weren’t submitted to a searching examination earlier. The change of the numbers of the students of the universities was examined on macro level by Zoltán Magyary in 1929 last time. After that nobody did statement including the faculties of the universities or any comparative examination. The establishments of the dissertation about this, which were supported with datas and demonstrated with illustrations can consider the new results of the scholar searching.

It's true to a greater extent relating to the denominational distribution of the students of the universities. The earlier special literature in this respect considered worth to examine almost only the numerus clausus and the numerical ratio of the students with Israelite denomination. But this dissertation want to present every single denomination's numerical ratio in course relating to the whole age in that way it has a consideration for the comparison between the universities and the faculties at the same time.

Although the women's appearance in the universities was noticeable in the end of the nineteenth century, real (but not mess) spreading can date from the period between the two World Wars. It's no accident that this is the best documented from the examined questions in the Hungarian special literature. The occurrence of the women's studies in the universities was dealt with intensively by not only those experts who lived after 1945 but the previous period's experts too. The dissertation was able to go beyond the foregoing during examine the known course in that it was using consistently the determined basic conception made a difference between universities and colleges. This is the main reason why the dissertation's datas can differ from the known numbers and rates.

The examination of the regional distribution namely the bordering of the universities' attraction areas became possible with the help of that manuscript statement which became known from the session of 1934/35. Considering that, the attraction areas could be changed remarkably after the First and Second Vienna Award in the given age perhaps we don't go too far when we consider true this all-embracing examination of a sample session for a wider time interval. We managed to prove from the examinations that there was a straight connection between the universities distances from the homes and the choices of professions. (All these were supported clearly by those microhistorical sources, which came to light.)

Its explanation is nothing else that the clear appearance of the students' social condition and those costs of study which effectively increasing with the distance of the university. So we arrived at the most exciting issue of the dissertation which brought into focus the social distribution namely the origin of the students and their chances for mobility.

2. The distribution of the student society based on the parents' occupation.

The most important establishments and the most forward-looking results of the doctoral dissertation connect with this domain of question. The special literature on the subject actually consists of Dezső Laky's student statistical record for the session of 1929/30

and Rudolf Andorka's study from 1979. Considering that, Andorka relied on the data of the national censuses almost solely when he put into words his establishments so Dezső Laky can be considered the only authentic source.

Owing to those educational documents, which were written up newly the data of the session of 1929/30, became comparable with the sessions of 1934/35 and 1936/37. More established conclusions could be drawn by the help of these data like any time until now. The origin of the students of the universities became knowable in details with the bordering of the occupation and the social status of the parents what conduced to earlier unimaginable results owing to the comparison between the universities and the faculties. So it became true that Rudolf Andorka's establishments were corrected because of data.

This was the first time when we managed to establish that – perhaps on the effect of the professional classes' unemployment – the rate of the original intellectual classes decreased gradually in the Hungarian universities and that the students with attendant origin were mainly who took up social mobility.

3. The family conditions and the life circumstances of the students of the universities. The social condition in the middle of the thirties.

That part of the dissertation, which is dealing with the social condition of the students, has an epoch-making importance. It's especially true considering that such work which dealt with this question scholarly was published in 1934 at the last time. But the primary task of this work wasn't the revaluation of the earlier statements or the repeating and rethinking those establishments which had been born before 70 years.

That issue which dealt with the social condition of the students of the universities examined the family and life circumstances of the students in the session of 1934/35 based on those sources, which stayed for us in manuscript form. We could support our conclusions with exact data about for example the family conditions, the numbers of brothers and sisters, the food and domicile conditions, the supporting demands, the scholarships and the school fees reductions of the students. Especially the statements about the war orphans and the students with war-disabled parents were remarkable and didn't readable anywhere else.

It's characteristic of this issue and the whole dissertation that the presented data and the connected examinations didn't confine to make a comparison between the universities but

they reached the level of the faculties, so more combined and more wideness conclusions could be made.

Considering the divergent matter and because of the scholarly interest turned to quite different questions at the last decades, the work mainly the issue about the social questions can be completed with further searching. Perhaps the publishing of this dissertation as monograph in later times will contribute to the development of the historical scholarship and our knowledges about the students' society get wider.

This matter is hardly searched and there are several possibilities for the problem-centred historical examinations. The sources can be found and they speaking today. We have to listen to them. Often they witness about sad fates and long-forgotten problems but as we know, *“the past is a given thing which doesn't allow scope to the possible.”*

Finally, I would like to give thanks to all those people who directly or indirectly contributed to the realization of the work. Great acknowledgements are due to my family for the calmness of home and for their encouragement, to my supervisor scholar for the right directions, which were given in the important moments, but thanks are due to those librarians and archivists who helped the searching with their work too. Special thanks to those several people who are close to me and who supported for me in the last years.

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