

PRE-WAR SMALL TOWN MIDDLE CLASSES: WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM AFTER THE WAR

Problems and hypotheses

The 'introduction' of socialism to post World War Hungary (and elsewhere) led to a rapid and radical transformation of society. The expressed objective of the socialist government was the elimination of certain classes and the creation of a new elite. Every element of politics and power was mobilised towards this goal which involved such differing programmes as an administrative transformation of the economy and various kinds of negative and positive discrimination. The question is how far such 'interference' can reach into deeply rooted social processes to result in what a 'social planner' had scheduled for the longer run.

We investigated what happened to the pre-war middle class of a small town from the thirties to the present, by tracing family histories.

Our initial hypothesis was that social groups that had evolved as a result of longer socio-historical processes would not entirely disappear, even though a political programme aimed at their elimination. We believed that whatever was socially and culturally determined, would (sooner or later) assert itself, though perhaps in an altered form. The family is one of the major forums of expression of such cultural programming as it is the family which mediates all those forms of behaviour, values, objectives, relations, and capital, which make continued existence possible.¹

The following questions arose from our hypothesis:

1. What means were used by the new government to eliminate the former middle class and how was the middle class discriminated against after 1945?
2. How successful were these efforts? How did the middle class families react to them? What capital — symbolic and material capital in Bourdieu's terms — did they mobilise to preserve their status?
3. What sort of mobility was open to subsequent generations of middle class families, from the thirties to the present?
4. What place do the descendants of these families occupy in society today?

We have only intended to study the middle class of small towns. This group is a social product which plays a decisive role in the life of a given local society. Therefore in our interpretation its members are not simply characterised by certain individual social parameters (wealth, occupation, school education), but by certain social functions, by actual or experienced roles of the participants. In other words, in a sense the middle class

1 This issue has been studied by others as well. Using the concept of lifestyle groups, István Kemény in the sixties and seventies drew attention to the structuring role of historical and cultural factors. In the eighties the same problem was studied by Iván Szélényi and Róbert Manchin in respect of the former middle peasantry in the eighties.

of a small town is the leading group, the elite of local society. In fact the upper classes, major capitalists and landowners, usually do not appear, or at least do not directly appear in the societies of small towns.

We had to map the society of the selected small town so that we may identify the families belonging to the middle class in order to explore the situation, functions and inner structure of that class. Therefore we have decided to study one small town more thoroughly with the prospect of subsequently studying another type of small town by way of control.

The selected small town, Pápa was a district seat during the inter-war period. Our choice was supported by the fact that Pápa

- with its population of twenty thousand is neither too big, nor too small;
- in respect of religious denominations it was colourful, as all the major denominations of Hungary were represented in it;
- the occupational heterogeneity of the middle class was secured by all economic sectors being represented in the town (credit, industry, trade, agriculture), together with the different intellectual callings (medicine, law, secondary education), and, being a district headquarters, public administrators were also represented.

Thus as a first step, we mapped the society of Pápa, defined the position the middle class occupied in it, got acquainted with its inner structure and identified the families belonging to that class. This was done with the help of available written sources and in-depth interviews.²

As a second step, we created a narrower sample consisting of sixty families, and conducted questionnaire-based interviews on family history with the descendants of these families.

The middle class of Pápa between the two World Wars

1. The Situation and Composition of the Middle Class

The nature of the town determined the composition of the middle class in the period under survey. In the first part of this century Pápa was primarily an administrative and ecclesiastical centre, hence most characteristically it was a town of officials and schools. Its economic life was only of secondary importance, and even that was characterised mostly by trade, by the strength of commercial and credit transactions.

Two components of historical development are worth mentioning by way of explanation.

1.1. In earlier centuries Pápa was an important commercial centre with advanced crafts and industries. However, industrialisation following the Compromise with Austria long avoided the town. Moreover, part of the traditional trades withered away as a

2 The written sources are monographs on the history of the town, volumes of the two local political weeklies (*Pápai Hírlap*, *Pápa és Vidéke*) between 1900 and 1944, manuscripts in the District Archives of the Calvinist Church, lists of officials and farmers, *Nagy Magyar Compass*.

consequence of customs union. Up to 1914 only two medium sized industries were set up, the state tobacco works and a textile mill.

The local economy was stagnant between the two World Wars. In addition to the two medium sized factories established earlier, only two more were set up with a few hundred employees. As the town had no significant manufacturing industry, there were no strata of big and medium industrial entrepreneurs. (The tobacco works was owned by the state, and the owners of the textile mill, Bohemian Jewish entrepreneurs, had factories throughout the Monarchy and did not live here.)

On the other hand, the stratum of officials swelled after World War I, partly because of officials fleeing from the territories taken away from Hungary. This stratum was further expanded by the officials of district offices (chief constable's office, district court) and other state offices (land register, local customs).

As far as the composition of the middle class is concerned, it was an important feature that no big or medium landed strata were present in the town. A significant part of the lands surrounding the town belonged to the Esterházy estates. However, Tamás Esterházy did not live in Pápa and was thus not a member of the local society. But one or two bailiffs did live here, but because of their position, belonged to the middle, and not to the upper class. The same applies to the landlords and tenants, in possession of a few hundred acres of land, living in the town or its environs.

1.2. Another important feature of historical development is that Pápa was in the front-line of the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism during the time of the counter-reformation. This brought a lot of cultural advantage to the town. Both sides mustered significant forces. The Catholics introduced monastic orders, which set up monasteries, schools and hospitals.³ At the same time Pápa became the stronghold of Trans-Danubian Protestantism. The Calvinists founded a college where a faculty of theology, and for some time even an academy of law were functioning. From the late nineteenth century onwards lower grade teacher training schools and junior secondary schools were also opened. The Jewish community, not insignificant in numbers and economic strength, set up its own schools too.

One result was that in the inter-war period there were twenty-four schools in the town: in addition to the Calvinist College, there were two grammar schools, three teacher training colleges, three junior secondary schools, an agricultural, an industrial, a women's vocational training school, a school of commerce and ten primary schools. Catholics and Protestants each operated a printing press and published several newspapers. From the twenties onwards the Episcopal seat of the Trans-Danubian district of the Calvinist Church was also located here.

3 It was not accidental that the Benedictine order was appointed to organise the grammar school in the early nineteenth century. The Benedictines were well qualified to compete with the Calvinist College. Following new trends, in the 1920s the Benedictine grammar school of Pápa, one of six in the country, was transformed into a grammar school specialising in the natural sciences, with additional emphasis on modern languages, primarily on French, whereas the Calvinist College retained its major bias towards the humanities and the primacy of Greek and Latin.

All this defined the position and composition of the middle class from three different angles.

1.3.1. As there were neither large entrepreneurs nor big landlords in Pápa, it was the middle class, which constituted the topmost, leading stratum of the town, its elite in a certain sense (the problem of the elite will be discussed later).

1.3.2. The weight of public administrators and intellectuals was bigger than usual compared with that of the proprietors and entrepreneurs within the middle class.

1.3.3. The religious composition of the middle class did not reflect the religious composition of the population as a whole (see Table 2). While two-thirds of the population were Catholic, and the other three denominations shared only the remaining one-third, the proportions significantly shifted towards the Calvinists and Jews within the middle class. Of the Catholics and Lutherans it was the former who were less represented in the middle class if compared to their numerical proportion. The higher proportion of Calvinists is explained by the fact that at that time the town was the centre of Trans-Danubian Calvinism. As far as the Jews are concerned, this was not a primarily local phenomenon of Pápa: their proportion was generally higher among the professions and the merchants than their proportion within the population as a whole. It was a local characteristic in so far as the proportion of the Jewish population was somewhat higher in Pápa than in small Hungarian towns in general, though this had already decreased: their proportion was twice as much (25%) in 1869.

The Nature of the Middle Class in a Small Town

There are certain conceptual issues which should be raised in relation to a study of the middle class, even if their clarification lies beyond the scope of our present research. One such question is the relationship between the middle class of small towns and the bourgeoisie. Another is the elite character of such middle class. In the following this issue is addressed in brief.

1. The middle class of small towns and the bourgeoisie

Based on our research, we have formulated our view according to which the middle class of Pápa of the thirties cannot be regarded as of bourgeois character in the modern sense of the term. At the same time it cannot be stated either that the middle class consisted of two, clearly separable groups, a middle class of the gentry and of the bourgeoisie. Certain middle class occupations can be classified as bourgeois, but if the true elements of group formation, such as the hierarchy of prestige and the values related to the way of life and to objectives, are also considered, then it becomes obvious that the process of embourgeoisement has not reached the level where occupation in itself would be decisive.

It can be stated with high probability on the basis of our knowledge, that there had existed a dominant set of values and status hierarchy which functioned as the principle of group formation for the majority of the Pápa middle class. This comprised a mixture of feudal and bourgeois values, with the former being dominant.

Income, property and activities matter a great deal, but they are not all in this set of values. The occupations have their own feudalistic hierarchy, which does not depend on the income drawn by them. A suitable background and title also matter a great deal. The landlord occupies a very high position in the local hierarchy, even if the land is in debt and the income it yields is not high. The hussar and later on parachutist officers stationed in the town were preferred targets for marriage.

Beside the dominant set of values, certain traces of the evolution and growing strength of a point of bourgeois crystallisation could also be identified, but it could not reach the level where one could speak about two group-forming principles of equal standing and the corresponding status hierarchies up to the end of the period. The bourgeoisie had no separate club, association or other point of reference. There was only the club (the 'Casino') of the gentry and the Lloyd's Circle, the meeting place of the Jewish middle class excluded from the former. The partial separation of the Jewish middle class was naturally not due to their being bourgeois, but to their being Jews. Its leading figures came from among those who had gone farthest in assimilation into the middle class. Those craftsmen who did not meet the unwritten standard of Casino membership (i.e., they lacked a secondary school final certificate) joined the Bourgeois Circle, the only social organisation carrying the word 'bourgeois' even in its name.

The middle class of Pápa was essentially pro-government in its political commitment. With the exception of a few, its members did not carry on party political activities, but showed their loyalty to state and government on certain occasions. It did not support opposition politics and parties. It voted against the official candidate at elections at the most because of religious or other, not expressly political reasons. The significance was local or personal at most, and did not indicate support for any political alternative.

2. The middle class of the small town as elite

The local middle class can be regarded as an elite in the sense that due to its position it had a decisive influence in the major spheres of the life of the small town: in the economy, in local politics, in public life and in culture.

It is another question whether the inter-war middle class of Pápa could be regarded as an elite in the sense István Bibó used this term. In this sense it would mostly depend on whether the middle class, or at least part of it, was able to present such a pattern in the field of ethics, way of life, social behaviour, needs, in other words, in the field of culture that would be acknowledged as valid and worth emulating by the society.

We are unable and cannot be expected to be able to answer to this question on the basis of our research. We only state that in this sense we do not regard the elite nature of the middle class of the small town a proven fact.

Nevertheless, on the basis of the in-depth interviews the important inference can be drawn that an elite consciousness was present in part of the middle class families during the inter-war period. These families regarded certain elements of their life style and behaviour as values, deliberately identified themselves with those elements and considered them as the bases of an important social role. This consciousness, inherited

within the family, whether it was well founded or not, acted as an important factor, as capital under the entirely new conditions that evolved after 1945.

A Sample of the Middle Class

The concept of middle class has been interpreted empirically and pragmatically during the course of research. The thirties were regarded as the eminent period, and we considered members of the pre-war middle class those who had some influence upon the life of the town and its citizens in the field of economy, administration, politics, religion and culture because of their office, skills, or wealth during that period. In other words:

- senior officials of the town and the district offices, other state administrators in senior jobs or with higher education;
- ecclesiastical leaders, leaders and employees of parishes, ministers;
- graduate intellectuals: members of the professions (doctors, lawyers), teachers;
- leading and organising figures of more significant religious and social organisations, the elected members of the town council;
- proprietors, entrepreneurs, specialist intellectuals of a leading role in economic life.

A total sample of 491 persons was created on the basis of these criteria. These 491 persons, and their respective 491 families were regarded as the pre-war middle class of our small town. In the next step a more restricted sample consisting of sixty families was created, keeping in mind that its occupational and religious composition should correspond to that of the total sample (see Tables 1 and 2). It is again the thirties that are regarded as the starting point of the selected sixty families.

Table 1. Occupational Distribution of the Middle Class of Pápa

Occupation	Total Sample		Narrower Sample	
	Person	%	Person	%
State officials ^a	135	27	17	28
Church employees and officials	106	22	15	25
Private officials	48	10	5	9
Intellectuals of the professions	65	13	6	10
Private (landowners, craftsmen, merchants, entrepreneurs)	101	21	17	28
Others, unknown	36	7	–	–
Total	491	100	60	100

^a This category comprises both state and municipal officials.

Table 2. *Distribution of the Population and Middle Class of Pápa by Religious Denomination*

Religious denomination	Population	Middle Class		Narrower Sample	
	%	Person	%	Person	%
Catholic	65	231	47	25	42
Calvinist	13	118	24	21	35
Lutheran	10	34	7	6	10
Israelite	12	108	22	8	13
Total (N = 21356)	100	491	100	60	100

Source: 1930 Census (KSH)

The composition of the total and the narrower samples show certain differences, particularly in the proportion of religious denominations. The simple reason is that we were unable to find an adequate number of families in each category which had at least one descendant still alive and traceable in Hungary. We had difficulties particularly in the field of middle class Jewish families. The major part of the Jewish population of Pápa perished as a consequence of the war and persecution of the Jews⁴ and a significant part of the survivors, mostly those who had belonged to the former middle class, left the country between 1945 and 1949, or after 1956. Hence the representation of Jewish families in the sample of sixty families does not reach the desirable proportions, particularly in certain categories. For instance, they are entirely missing from among the intellectuals of the professions. Consequently the narrower sample shows quite distorted proportions to the advantage of the Calvinists.

The distribution by occupational sector of the sixty heads of family is nearer to the proportions of the total sample, as indicated by Table 1.

It is an important figure in respect of the entire middle class that almost two-thirds of the sixty heads of family (37 persons) were first generation inhabitants of Pápa, in other words, they were born elsewhere and came to the town later. The proportion of third generation, or even older residents of Pápa is 22 per cent (13 persons). Data referring to the total sample are somewhat deficient, but by and large the proportion of the old residents of Pápa in the middle class as a whole would not go beyond 20 to 25 per cent.

These data corroborate the conclusion drawn on the basis of other sources, that belonging to an estate was more important for the pre-war middle class of the small town than belonging to the locality: newcomers were immediately accepted provided they belonged to the estate. It is not accidental that it is among the Jewish families where the largest number of third generation or even older residents of Pápa can be found in the narrower sample. This indicates that in their case 'old residence in Pápa' was more necessary to their progress.

4 The proportion of survivors was hardly above ten per cent. Source: Láng, Jehuda Gyula: *A pápai zsidóság emlékkönyve* (Album of the Jewry of Pápa). Tel Aviv, 1974. (R. Braham also relies on these data.)

The group of state (or town) officials and teachers was the most mobile one. Very few of them are long time residents of Pápa. At the same time they are the people who 'struck root' fastest, becoming members and even office holders in the different middle class associations.

In the following we consider some of the sociological characteristics of the sixty heads of family in the narrower sample.

1. School education

Two-thirds of the heads of family were diploma holders, almost half of the remaining one-third had completed secondary education (grammar school, higher commercial or teacher training school). A law degree is the most common (16 persons) among the diploma holders.

2. Social background

Almost one-third of the heads of family have a gentry background. In the majority of cases the land of the gentry family was lost, and the immediate predecessors were already in clerical or intellectual jobs. Another almost one-third (17 persons) had craftsmen, merchants or other agricultural landowners as their ancestors. Nine persons look back to ancestors who were farmers. In the case of the remaining heads of family the ancestors were non-gentry intellectuals, poor peasants or unknown.

3. Life cycle

When building the narrower sample, we did not regard the age of the heads of family as a point of selection, therefore there is a great diversity of age among them. This should be remembered as it causes differences in the family cycle. On the other hand, the actual effect of the decisive historical events was significantly influenced by the family cycle besides other factors, as it is also supported by the analysis of the family history interviews.

Understandably the families also differed in how many generations were born from the thirties up to the date of interview, as a function of the age of the head of family. As it is shown by Table 3, in the mid-thirties, that is in 1935, more than two-thirds of the sixty heads of family were already 50 years old or more (moreover, three of them had already passed away).⁵

5 The selected sixty heads of family did not necessarily fill those positions simultaneously during the decade chosen as our starting point and on the basis of which they were included in the sample.

Table 3. Age Distribution of Heads of Family in 1935

Age	Person	%
60 years and more	21	35
50 – 59 years	21	25
40 – 49 years	12	20
Less than 40 years	6	10
Total	60	100

Thirty-seven of the sixty chosen heads of family lived to see 'liberation' (only few of them would justify dropping the inverted commas). However, when our research started, none of them were alive (the last died in 1985), though quite a few lived to an old age. One-third (19 persons) lived to their eightieth year, and all but five lived to the age of sixty.

The Subsequent History of the Middle Class

In the following we study the history of the selected sixty families after 1945 and try to answer at least in part the questions raised at the beginning of the present paper.⁶

1. Loss of status, discrimination

In the second half of the 1940s the entire old Hungarian middle class sank in the most general sense of the term, simply because it was eliminated in the socialist system. Not only were old people replaced by new ones where the positions of the middle class were retained, but the positions themselves disappeared, together with the middle class features attached to them (prestige, influence, way and style of life).

The propertied middle class was wound up by expropriation, the middle class of officials disappeared by the transformation of the function of public administration and by the devaluation of the role of expertise. The institution of municipal officialdom was eliminated by the liquidation of local governments. The professional careers survived but their autonomy, and hence their prestige largely decreased. The most important social terrain of the middle class, the function of organising the local society and of offering a pattern disappeared for a long time by the total elimination of social self-organisation.

These developments represented rapid and shocking changes in a large number of cases in the middle class of our small town, mostly in the period after 1947, and in a smaller number of cases, that of the Jews, already in the first part of the forties.

Different types of discrimination struck two-thirds of the families figuring in our sample of sixty. We did not consider it possible or necessary to discover the causes in each case. We were satisfied with the registration of the bare fact. There were death sentences, gaolings, internment or deportation in several cases. More often autonomous economic activity was wound up. In other words there was nationalisation. Later on jobs were lost, people were prohibited from practising their profession, forced to do manual

⁶ The question of the paths of mobility will be analysed in a subsequent paper.

labour, and their personal belongings and flats were confiscated. In the case of the elderly their pension was withdrawn, in the case of the young they were in effect excluded from university studies, or their application for admission was rejected.

This period of discrimination gradually came to an end from the late fifties onwards, but some forms survived even in the sixties, such as discrimination in university admission, which was abolished in 1962. All this may have struck several generations of the families included in the study.

Middle class families had different ways of coping with discrimination. Perhaps going abroad for good should be mentioned in the first place. Some of the descendants went abroad after 1945 in thirty families out of the sixty. Presumably the real proportion of emigrants is even larger in the total sample, as the families who went abroad in their entirety obviously could not be included in the narrower sample.

Certain correlations can be discovered between going abroad and the type of occupation of the head of family: it was most frequent among the families of state officials (public administrators), and least among families of church employees that one or more descendant emigrated.

One characteristic correlation between going abroad and religious denomination⁷ is that in almost every Jewish family there were descendants who went abroad.

Limitation of births was also a characteristic phenomenon. By now quite a number of the middle class families of our town have become extinct, and though it would be difficult to prove, it can be assumed that the loss of status played a role in this. In other cases the family did not become extinct, but it turned out in the interview that there was only one child at most for similar reasons.

Moving from the town was also one of the strategies of defence. Actually it can be shown that those who stayed on were more strongly and lastingly discriminated against than those who moved to another place. Presumably this effect is inversely proportional to settlement size. In other words, the larger the town, the less would people tend to move.

The comparison of the career of two former bailiffs illustrates this well. After the period of nationalisation one of them disappeared for a couple of years, but returned in the fifties and became an agronomist of the co-operative two villages away. The other remained on the spot and was unable to get a job corresponding to his training. Naturally one should remember that chance plays a role in career changes. However, it cannot be considered accidental that two-thirds of the families of our sample have by now left the town with all their members, and even the remaining one-third (20 families) only partly remained there. Of the sixty heads of family (and their spouses) 24 remained in Pápa up to the end of their life after the war. The others died before 1945 or moved to another place (prior to, or after 1945).

7 There is not much point in speaking about the religious affiliation of families after 1945, as according to our data its significance, together with priority given to marrying within a certain denomination, has greatly decreased. Therefore religious denomination always refers to the original head of family.

2. *The 'present generation'*

Certain categories have to be introduced to differentiate among the generations as we continue our analysis. We use the term 'zero generation' for those persons and their spouses included in our sample who belonged to one of the groups of the middle class in the thirties. We call 'present generation' those descendants of the sixty families of our sample, who are already adults (thirty years or more) and are past the stage of beginning their careers.⁸

The 323 persons belonging to the present generation are rather mixed in respect of their age: 23 per cent were born before 1935, and 54 per cent after the war. Thirty people (9%) are no longer living.

Thus the present generation may be the first, second, or third generation following the zero generation, in other words, it can be child, grandchild, or great-grandchild in respect of family status. Most characteristically the descendant belonging to the present generation is the grandchild of the zero generation. This is the case in three-fifths of the sample. The proportion of the two other family statuses is one-fifth respectively.

Of the 323 members 48 (15%) live abroad. The majority (40 people) were born in Hungary and left the country only later, as children together with parents, or as adults.

Later the subsequent history of the middle class of Pápa will be presented primarily through the situation of the present generation. In other words, we will compare the starting and the final points.

In the meantime another brief methodological remark should be made. The gender distribution of the present descendants of the sixty families is: 170 males and 153 females. The joint presentation of men and women may, in certain cases, give a distorted image, as the role and situation of women differ from those of men in Hungarian society. In the case of women, 'marrying upwards' is general. Therefore the occupation and school education of the husband better defines the status of a family than those of the wife. On the other hand, only heads of family, that is males were considered in the zero generation. The concept of present heads of family (in addition to the present generation) was therefore introduced to exclude distortions. This group is the result of substituting female descendants by their spouse. Thus the composition of the group would be the following: 170 male descendants, 124 male spouses, 29 single women.

3. *Status characteristics of the present generation*

We may now return to the basic question asked earlier but not yet answered, namely how far the descendants of middle class families were able to acquire the statuses accessible in the new system after the passing of the period of discrimination.

8 Excepting those who died before 1945.

We attempt to answer this question by an analysis of the status characteristics of the present generation (or heads of family). This means that we characterise the path of mobility of the sixty families of our sample by a description of the final point.⁹

3.1. School education

Table 4. The Distribution of the Present Generation, or the Present Heads of Family by Education

Type of school	Present generation	(%)	Present heads of family	(%)
University	47		53	
College	16		13	
Together		63		66
Secondary school before 1945		5		6
Secondary school after 1945		20		14
Lower		12		44
Total	(N = 323) 100		(N = 323) 100	

It is quite clear from the data that the level of school education of the present generation, with almost two-thirds being diploma holders (and particularly in the case of heads of family), is much above the national average. To make a comparison: according to the data of the 1990 census published so far, 11 per cent of the male population above thirty years completed their studies in an institution of higher education, and 18 per cent have maximum secondary education.¹⁰

If the above is compared to the school education of the heads of family of the zero generation, it is found that the present generation is somewhat behind its ancestors. In the zero generation the proportion of diploma holders was 67 per cent and of those having a secondary school certificate was 13 per cent. The school education of the present heads of family (it is justified to take them for the basis of comparison as the heads of family of the zero generation were all men) lags behind in that the present equivalent of the diploma of those days is a university degree, which about half of the heads of family have only.¹¹

On the other hand, the present secondary school certificate does not reach the standard of the pre-war one. Nevertheless, it may be said that survival was not unsuccessful in respect of the school education acquired.

When interpreting school education, it should also be kept in mind that over the past forty years the extent to which the achievement of higher status was linked to higher

9 The events between the two extreme points, namely the initial situation of the thirties and the present (last) status will be described in a subsequent paper on the families' paths of mobility.

10 1990. évi népszámlálás. Összefoglaló adatok a 2%-os minta alapján. (Census of 1990. Summary Data Based on the 2% Sample.) Budapest: KSH, 1990.

11 Certain colleges such as art colleges, the colleges of veterinary science and physical education were regarded as universities, as these institutions offer the highest training in the respective fields.

school education varied. The status of occupations linked to a degree decreased somewhat during the past ten to fifteen years, though it has again risen during the last two or three years.

This relationship comes out in bold relief particularly if the descendants of the sixty middle class families are not classified by generations, but only by age group, keeping in mind in what historical period was their critical age when their schooling was chosen. In fact it becomes clear that those descendants who were 14 to 18 years old between 1945 and 1963 could reach a higher level of school education than the earlier and later age groups of descendants, despite the fact that they were definitely discriminated against in terms of admittance to institutions of secondary and higher education during that period. The higher level of school education can be explained by the fact that our middle class families recognised after 1945 that the best way of preserving their status was the acquisition of high school education. With the later age group the trend reversed, since from the early seventies on alternative ways of status preservation were increasingly opening up.

This relationship is particularly strong among the descendants of the zero generation heads of family who had a maximum six years of primary education. All of these heads of family pursued some kind of industrial, trade or agricultural occupation and did not consider the acquisition of higher school education important before 1945. Thus after 1945, when they were forced to change their career somehow, they got into the worst situation. Yet the proportion of descendants who had acquired high school education in the above mentioned age group had grown by leaps and bounds: that of higher education grew from 21 to 61 per cent, with university graduates from 15 to 36 per cent among them.

Table 5. Highest School Education of the Present Generation by the Highest School Education of the Zero Generation

School education	University	College	45 Secondary school	45- Secondary school	Vocational	4-8 classes	Abroad	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1	97	30	1	41	9	2	1	19
University, college	51,1 63,8	15,8 57,7	5,3 58,8	21,6 64,1	4,7 36,0	1,1 33,3	0,5 20,0	59,2
2	20	5	3	7	5		2	4
Secondary school	47,6 13,2	11,9 9,6	7,1 17,6	16,7 10,9	11,9 20,0		4,8 40,0	13,1
3	16	2		3	1	1		23
between 2-4	69,6	8,7 10,5	3,8	13,0	4,3 4,7	4,3 4,0	16,7	7,2
4	19	15	4	13	10	3	2	60
Maximum primary school	28,8 2,5	22,7 28,6	6,1 23,5	19,7 20,3	15,2 40,0	4,5 50,0	3,0 40,0	20,6
	152 47,4	52 16,2	17 5,3	64 19,9	25 7,8	6 1,9	5 1,6	321 100,0

Let us now see how far the school education of the heads of family of the zero generation influenced the school education of descendants belonging to the present generation. As is shown by Table 5, the family types thus differentiated show some characteristic differences in respect of schooling mobility.

One difference can be found in the proportion of descendants with higher education. Only half (51%) of the present descendants of the zero generation heads of family, who had only six years of primary education, completed their studies in institutions of higher education, and the proportion of university graduates is particularly low, whereas the proportion of college level graduates is relatively high among them. Surprisingly the largest proportion of degree holders (75%) can be found among the descendants of zero generation heads of family¹², who had school education higher than the primary but lower than the secondary school.

Hardly any of the descendants of the zero generation heads of family with a university degree have a lower school education than the secondary school leaving certificate. The proportion of low school education is relatively high among the present descendants of heads of family who had six years of primary education.

3.2. Occupation

A comparison of the status or occupation of the present generation with that of the zero generation as a means to analyse occupational mobility was rejected, since in our view the former middle class has no corresponding class today, or it is just about to evolve. Therefore it is more expedient to study their place occupied in the present occupational hierarchy. As at present there is no elaborated theory in this field in Hungary, we speak quite schematically about high status occupations in respect of top and intermediate leaders, degree holder specialist intellectuals and entrepreneurs, and we study to what extent the descendants of the present generation of families figuring in our original pattern possess such a high status.

In the case of occupational distribution those who live abroad or who do not work were disregarded in the case of the present generation as well as in the case of the present heads of family.

12 Those zero generation heads of family were classified under this heading who completed their studies in junior secondary school, in vocational schools, or completed less than all eight years of the grammar school.

Table 6. *Occupation of the Present Generation and of the Present Heads of Family*

Occupation	Present generation (%)	Present heads of family (%)
Top leader ^a	6	10
Entrepreneur	6	9
High prestige degree holder	16	16
Middle-level position	8	11
Subordinate intellectual	17	17
Low prestige degree holder	13	8
Middle-level intellectual	16	11
Small entrepreneur	8	9
Subordinate manual worker		
in good market position	4	3
in bad market position	6	6
Total	100 (N = 265)	100 (N = 264)

^a Top leader = leader or specialist intellectual employed by a national agency, leader of a major organisation (company, hospital, university chair); entrepreneur = owner, leader, or specialist intellectual of significant position in a major enterprise; high prestige degree holder = medical doctor, veterinarian, lawyer, artist, journalist, university lecturer, researcher, teacher in an elite grammar school, etc.; Middle-level position = head of department or workshop in a major organisation, headmaster of primary school or vocational school, head of a smaller unit in a national authority; employed specialist intellectual = engineer, lawyer, economist, etc. in a non-private company, chemist, secondary school teacher, priest; low prestige degree holder = primary school teacher, school master in lower classes, nurse, tutor, medical gymnastics trainer, officer of armed forces, etc.; small entrepreneur = private trader or craftsman, himself working and having one or two employees, private farmer, working in catering and entertainment or sports; subordinate manual in good market position = skilled worker working in a better job in the state sector, manual employee in a private enterprise, outworker; subordinate manual in bad market position = other manual workers in the state sector.

If the occupations in the upper five categories of Table 6 are regarded as of high status, then we obtain the result that a little more than half (53%) of the present generation, and two-thirds (63%) of the present heads of family pursue occupations of high status.

The descendants belonging to the present generation who do not belong to the high status group may be regarded roughly as members of the lower middle class. At the most we have found one or two people who can be classified as clearly falling, who belong to the lowest, poor stratum of the society. For the time being we have also found the unemployed negligible in number (one or two people), but our survey was completed before the beginning of massive dismissals.

If the status of the descendants is studied in relation to the original sixty families, we find that with half of the families all the present descendants are of high status. There are one or two families where every branch has experienced downward mobility and has lost all middle class aspirations. The other families are mixed, in other words, both the former two elements can be found in them.

We now examine how far the occupational status of the descendants depends on the occupation of the zero generation head of family.

Table 7. Comparison of the occupational status of the zero generation and their descendants

Occup. sector	Unknown	Top leader	Owner	High pres. degree holder	Middle-level leader	Sub-ordinate intellectual	Low pres. degree holder	Middle-level intellectual	Entrepreneur	Better skilled	Unskilled	Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
State	1	4	4	4	4	7	7	9	17	5	3	469
	5.8	5.8	5.8	7.2	10.1	13.0	10.1	24.6	7.2	4.3	5.8	25.2
	28.6	26.7	25.0	11.9	33.3	20.5	20.0	41.5	25.0	30.0	25.0	
Church	2	2	3	1	22	5	17	12	3	4	3	72
	2.8	4.2	1.4	30.6	6.9	23.6	16.7	4.2	5.6	4.2		26.3
	14.3	20.0	6.3	52.4	23.8	38.6	34.3	7.3	20.0	30.0		
Private clerk	3	2	1		4	2	3	1	3		2	2
	10.0	5.0		20.0	10.0	15.0	5.0	15.0		10.0	10.0	7.3
	14.3	6.7		9.5	9.5	6.8	2.9	7.3		20.0	12.5	
Free	4	1	4	2	6	1	3	2	5		1	25
	4.0	16.0	8.0	24.0	4.0	12.0	8.0	20.0		4.0	9.1	
	7.1	26.7	12.5	14.3	4.8	6.8	5.7	12.2		6.3		
Owner	5	5	3	9	5	6	12	13	13	11	29	89
	5.7	3.4	10.2	5.7	6.8	13.6	14.8	14.8	1.25	2.3	10.2	32.1
	35.7	20.0	56.3	11.9	28.6	27.3	37.1	31.7	55.0	20.0	56.3	
Total	14	15	16	42	21	44	35	41	20	10	16	274
	5.1	5.5	5.8	15.3	7.7	16.1	12.8	15.0	7.3	3.6	5.8	100.00

The most conspicuous relationship we have found is that among the present descendants of zero generation heads of family who owned a private enterprise or who were employed as state officials, there is a significantly lower proportion of high status occupations than among the descendants of other heads of family. (We continue to disregard those who live abroad, as they were not included in Table 7 either.) In the case of private entrepreneurs the reason is that after 1945 they were unable to bequeath property and the means of production. In some cases school education was rather low, hence they could not make up for this by cultural capital.

The cause of the phenomenon is not clear in the case of the descendants of state officials. It is a fact that state officials and their children faced strong political discrimination, which, in many cases made the continuation of the same occupation, following the same career in the case of children, and the acquisition of a degree impossible. However, this does not explain why relatively few of the grandchildren have been able to reach a high status.

It is among the present descendants of the zero generation heads of family, in ecclesiastic employment, or pursuing the professions, where the high status occupations are in the largest proportion. It was here that discrimination was the least, and the possibility for the children to follow the same career was the greatest. There was also a larger amount of cultural capital.¹³

13 The overwhelming majority of those employed by the Church were teachers.

3.3. Domicile

The present (or last) domicile of the present generation is considered as the final item of status characteristics.

Table 8. Distribution of the present generation according to the type of settlement (%)

Budapest	39
City of county rights	11
County seat	7
Other town	7
Village	9
Pápa	12
Abroad	15
	<hr/> 100 (N=323)

Our data show that the descendants of our middle class are above the national average in respect of domicile, as more than half of those belonging to the present generation live in the capital or in a county seat, and only a little more than one quarter lives in somewhere of lower rank. If it can be stated on the basis of school education and occupation that they have been able to retain their earlier level, then it can be said that they have moved ahead in respect of geographical mobility, even if it was not entirely due to their own efforts.

Those who remained in Pápa are older than the average of the present generation and have a significantly lower school education.

A Change of the System Again

The question occurs how far the descendants of the former middle class could or wished to avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the current systemic change, and in what proportion they are members of the new elite in its formative stage. Unfortunately we are unable to give a realistic answer to this extremely exciting question, as we did not expect the changes beginning in 1989, and started our research too early. The related processes have just started before we completed data collection. Therefore we can only offer a partial answer.

From the answers given to questions relating to the changes of recent years, it turned out that 42 of the present heads of family took up new main or subsidiary jobs related to systemic change (they entered the entrepreneurial sphere or were promoted in the state sector), eleven people undertook new public, political or social functions, and ten people undertook both. These sixty-three people constituted 27 per cent of the 'present heads of family' who lived in Hungary in 1989.

Conclusions

On the basis of studies of the status characteristics of the present descendants we may draw the conclusion that middle class families of small towns, together with the middle class as such, lost their pre-war middle-class status. However, the majority of descendants (about two-thirds) have achieved successful reconversion, and are in the higher statuses that can be achieved in the present society.

The curves of family mobility leading to the present status could be different. Here only the basic cases are outlined:

1. The families have more or less achieved successful reconversion after the break caused in the life of several generations by various discriminations caused by nationalisation, loss of property, imprisonment, internment, prohibition against pursuing original occupation, withdrawal of pension, etc.

2. Discrimination only caused a break in the life of the zero generation, therefore one may speak about reconversion in the life of the descendants only in the sense that they were able to pursue a smooth career under the changed conditions.

3. The family or its branch did not suffer discrimination, the earlier high status occupations could be pursued by the subsequent generations, therefore only the former middle-class status, related to the given occupation, was lost.

Every system operates certain mechanisms the objective of which is the intra- and inter-generational reproduction of statuses. In the case of the middle class families we studied (primarily in the cases mentioned under items 2 and 3), the change of the system meant that even if they did not become victims of direct discrimination, they lost the support of these mechanisms of reproduction, and in most cases had to adapt in some ways to the new situation. In this sense the high status of the descendants is definitely the result of a certain reconversion.

This reconversion was the most successful in families where the former middle class ethos and mentality were preserved and bequeathed in some form and converted into new middle class ambitions, where the alternating and suitable use of different means and symbolic capital promoted adequate adaptation to the changing conditions.