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Social Mobility and Career Patterns of Estonian Intellectuals in the Russian Empire

Lea Leppik *

Abstract: In the success stories of Estonians across several generations we can speak about certain regularities. The career which moved the person out of the taxpayers' status could be started in governmental (often half-military) educational establishments and was related to civil or military service. The way from leaving the countryside for town and to become a white-collar employee would happen no sooner than within 2-3 generations. A large part of the first generation intellectuals in 19th century left for Russia. It was hard to assimilate into well-established structures of the local society, but the vast Russian empire offered various possibilities to ambitious young people. Estonians, once having accepted to act like Germans, could in Russia make a career as engineers of factories, doctors in chief of military hospitals, chemists, headmasters of schools, veterinarians, land surveyors, postal or railway clerks, Lutheran pastor in the vast spaces of Siberia. The mere size of the Russian empire guaranteed extended job opportunities. At the beginning of the 20th century emigrants tried to come back home and use the knowledge and skills obtained in Russia for the (Estonian) public weal. When Estonia became an independent state, 40.000 persons came back and they had a great impact in the building of Estonian professional elites.

Introduction

In Estonia intellectuals are without doubts an important part of the national elite. Mostly the elite is a topic for sociologists; historians have made investigations about different groups in society but without much using the term "elite".¹

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¹ See for example: Birgit-Katharine Seemann. Das Konzept der „Elite(n)“. Theorie und Anwendbarkeit in der Geschichtsschreibung. In: *Eliten im Wandel. Gesellschaftliche Führungsschichten im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert.* Hrsg. Karl Christian Führer, Karen Hagemann, Birthe Kundrus. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2004, pp 24-41.

In Estonia we have, for example, investigations about national intellectuals,² officers,³ diplomats,⁴ political leaders and parliament members.⁵

Most of the treatments of the Estonian national movement view the development of the Estonian ethnic clusters into a nationality in the second half of the 19th century as an unavoidable process. Only Ea Jansen has expressed doubts by saying that we should be more astonished why all the Estonians did not become Germanized.⁶ Social mobility, as a rule, meant that also the living environment and the communicational field also changed. Up to the middle of the 19th century it brought about inescapably Germanization and very often departure from one's home. Indeed – even the daughter of the leader of the national movement Johann Voldemar Jannsen (1819-1890) got married and went to Russia, while the son Harry Jansen (1851-1913) became the apologist of the Baltic national ideology.

Already from the end of the 17th century the Estonian nation was a reading nation; in the 19th century literacy was totally common. This is why it is justified to study the national movement proceeding from the written culture. Besides, the changing of the social structure⁷ and career patterns of Estonians are very little studied. In the treatment below an answer is looked for to the question whether the changes obeyed some rules and what they depended upon, trying to consider both legislation and geographical frontiers, and the possible freedom of choice within these limits.⁸

Sources and historiography

The author's investigation of 1,500 employees of the University of Tartu in the years 1802-1918 allowed insights into early elite formation in Estonia leading

² Toomas Karjahärm, Väino Sirk. Eesti haritlaskonna kujunemine ja ideed 1850-1917. Eesti entsüklopeediakirjastus 1997; Raimo Pullat. Lootuste linn. Peterburi ja eesti haritlaskonna kujunemine kuni 1917. Tallinn: Estopol, 2004.

³ Mati Krõönström. Eesti rahusest kaadriohvitserid Vene armees aastail 1870-1917. In: Acta et commentationes archivi historici Estoniae. 14 (21). Tartu 2006, p. 317-344.

⁴ Eero Medijainen. Saadiku saatus. Välisministeerium ja saatkonnad, 1918-1940. Tallinn: Eesti entsüklopeediakirjastus, 1997.

⁵ Jaan Toomla (compiled by). Valitud ja valitsenud: Eesti parlamentaarsete ja muude esinduskogude ning valitsuste isikkoosseis aastail 1917-1999. Tallinn: Eesti Rahvusraamatukogu, 1999.

⁶ Ea Jansen. Sotsiaalne mobiilsus ja rahvuslik identiteet. In: Acta Historica Tallinnensia, 2003, 7, 15-30.

⁷ See for example: John Hiden. Meeting the challenge to Baltic Studies. In: Die Ostseeregion: Nördliche Dimensionen – Europäische Perspektiven. Hrsg. Von Bernd Henningsen. Bd. 4. The Baltic as a Multicultural World: Sea, Region and Peoples. Ed. Marko Lehti. Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2005, p. 35-44.

⁸ Clenn Deane, E. M. Beck and Stewart E. Tolnay. Incorporating Space into Social Histories: How Spatial Processes operate and How We Observe Them. In: International Review of Social History 43 (1998), Supplement, p. 57 (pp 57-80).

to more general conclusions as well.⁹ In addition, the origin of 1,500 Germans who studied at the University of Tartu in 1919-1944¹⁰ and the origin of the people, who were included in the 1939 handbook "Public figures in Estonia"¹¹ have also been taken into account presuming that they represented the "reputational elite" of Estonian society. The combination of official acts, biographies and memories related to individuals in question gave the author a possibility to investigate different social groups arriving at elite positions through two or three generations.

The biographical handbooks reflect the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century rather insufficiently. In the "Album academicum" published in 1889, for example, for the admitted students in the year 1888 only the faculty is mentioned (basic study option) and we do not learn anything about the person's later life.¹² The same is true for the professors' lexicon published in 1902.¹³ The incompleteness of the handbooks for the period, which brought along big changes in society, can also be felt in the whole literature about Estonian history. Social-historical research by Veiko Berendsen and Margus Maiste analyzing the data of the all-Russia census of 1897 about the City of Tartu casts a fresh look on the issue while raising additional new questions.¹⁴ Unfortunately, this path has not been followed. As the fate of Estonians and Latvians was closely connected with Baltic Germans, the study of issues related to Baltic German is definitely interesting in this context.¹⁵

Before embarking upon this investigation, it is indispensable to give a brief overview of how Estonians became a contemporary nation. In Estonian territory, belonging to the Russian Empire since 1721, there was a not very numerous German-speaking upper layer and a much more numerous Estonian-

⁹ Lea Leppik. Tartu ülikooli teenistujate sotsiaalne mobiilsus 1802-1918 (Social Mobility of the Employees of the Tartu University (1802-1918). Tartu, 2006.

¹⁰ Author's report „Zur Frage der Herkunft von Deutschen an der Universität Tartu in den Jahren 1919 bis 1939“ in Sankelmark (Baltische Deutsche. Der Deutsche Bevölkerungsteil Rigas und anderer Städte von 1900 bis zur Umsiedlung) on 28 April 2007, unpublished. The ground was database: Album academicum universitatis Tartuensis 1918-1944 (<http://www.eha.ee/frames.htm>. 31.10.07).

¹¹ Eesti riigi, avaliku- ja kultuurielu tegelased (Estonian Statesmen and Figures of Public and Cultural Life) 1918-1938. I [Tallinn]: Eesti Rahvusraamatukogu, 2006.

¹² Album academicum der Kaiserlichen Universität Dorpat. Bearbeitet von A. Hasselblatt, G. Otto. Dorpat: C. Mattiesen, 1889. The next part has much less data: Album Academicum Universitatis Tartuensis 1889-1918. Compiled by S. Kodasmaa. Tartu: Tartu Riiklik ülikool, 1988.

¹³ Grigorij Levitski. Biograficheski slovar' professorov i prepodavatelej Jur'evskogo, byvshego Derptschego Universiteta. T. I, II. Jur'ev, 1902.

¹⁴ Veiko Berendsen, Margus Maiste. Esimene ülevenemaaline rahvaloendus Tartus 28. jaanuaril 1897. Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, 1999.

¹⁵ For example: Tausend Jahre Nachbarschaft: die Völker des baltischen Raumes und die Deutschen. Hrsg. von Wilfried Schlau. München: Bruckmann, 1995; Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Baltische Länder. Ed. Gert v. Pistohlkors. Siedler Verlag, 1994.

speaking low layer. By the year 1918 there had emerged though an Estonian national elite capable to establish its own state. The most recent overview about the emerging of the nation in Estonia appeared in 2006 by Mart Laar under the title “Awakeners” – where even the title refers to the importance of opinion-makers.¹⁶ In the same year a new evaluation of the role played by one of the leaders of the Estonian national movement Johann Voldemar Jannsen appeared.¹⁷

Mart Laar follows Miroslav Hroch’s scheme for national awakening of the European small nations. In the beginning of the 19th century German-speaking Estophiles, influenced by Johann Gottfried Herder and other romantic philosophers began to “awaken” the Estonian nation. The Estophiles as the movement of Brethren (Herrnhut) in the 18th century had undoubtedly an essential role in shaping Estonian literary culture and, consequently, creating the preconditions of national awakening. The peak period of Estophiles belongs to the end of the 1830s, including the establishment of the Estonian Learned Society in 1838 at the University of Tartu.¹⁸

Baltic Germans had three main viewpoints about the destiny of Estonians: a conservative one (let them remain an Estonian-speaking low strata), a national-romantic one (they need education in their own language) and a liberal one (we can abolish the estates/classes and they are welcome to be Germans).¹⁹

In 1857 a scholarly book on the Estonian national epic “Kalevipoeg”²⁰ appeared and the newspaper “Perno Postimees” in the Estonian language was published. The national movement started under a new energetic leader Johann Voldemar Jannsen (1819-1890). The so-called stage of national agitation lasted from 1857 until the middle of the 1880s. Different national societies appeared. The peak was the first Estonian song festival in 1869. The period ends with the Russification in the Baltic provinces, which included among other things several restrictions for national journalism.²¹ In both Baltic-German and Estonian historiography the period of Russification²² has been primarily giving political assessment, but it was rarely made an object of social-historical research.²³

In spite of that, at the same time the third stage of the national awakening (the transition to the mass movement) started via the establishment of numer-

¹⁶ Mart Laar. *Äratajad*. Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, 2006.

¹⁷ Malle Salupere. *Postipäpa. Mitmes peeglis, mitmes rollis (Johann Voldemar Jannsen 1819-1890)*. Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2006.

¹⁸ Laar, p. 123.

¹⁹ Laar, p. 124.

²⁰ *Kalevipoeg. Eine estnische Sage*. Dorpat, 1857-1861.

²¹ Laar, p. 126.

²² For example chapter “Ängste und Realitäten” in: *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Baltische Länder*. Hrsg. Gert v. Pistohlkors. Berlin: Siedler, 1994, pp 382-388.

²³ T. U. Raun has chapters “economic development” (pp. 88-90) and “demographic and social change” (pp. 90-91), but only on the basis of the incomplete official statistics. See: Toivo U. Raun. *Estonia and Estonians*. Second Edition. Hoover Institution Press 1991.

ous opinion-making societies of different types as well as the publication of books and newspapers in the Estonian language. Estonians have been considered one of the most successful nations in this field in the periphery of Russia so that “by the early twentieth century /.../ Estonians had created sophisticated cultural institutions ranging from schools and newspapers to singing clubs and institutions for economic self-help.”²⁴

The Estonian national awakening has been observed mainly on the basis of the development of journalism and the establishment of societies with the implicit understanding that an Estonian person was first of all a peasant. Mart Laar however has recognized that towns had had a bigger role in the national awakening than thought earlier.²⁵ The development in the quickly growing towns, traditionally treated as carriers of the alien, i.e. German culture, has practically not been investigated. Considering the facts that already in 1897 one fifth of Estonians lived in towns and urbanization continued at the beginning of the 20th century at a high speed, this kind of neglect is not justified in any way.²⁶

After its reopening in 1802 the University of Tartu became the center of the intellectual life in the three German-speaking provinces of the Russian Empire. The impulses of the university were important for shaping the collective identity of Estonians, Latvians as well as Baltic-Germans.²⁷ Usually the Baltic-German common identity is treated as something already existing and the Estonian and the Latvian nationality as only in the process of its construction. At the beginning of the 19th century there was not yet any unity between the three German-speaking provinces – people from Estland, Livland and Curland felt themselves relatively separate, although the German language, the culture and the Lutheran faith served as elements of cohesion. Consequently, we may speak of the formation of three parallel national identities in the Russian Baltic Provinces where Baltic German culture competed with its Estonian and Latvian counterparts. The traditional understanding of climbing the social ladder to become German (*die Eltern waren zwar Esten, aber sie haben sich emporgearbeitet*) was operational as a possible alternative much more strongly than it can be perceived in the new narrative of Estonian (Latvian²⁸) nationalists. The

²⁴ Theodor R. Weeks. Concepts of ethnic Separation in North-East Europe to World War I. In: Nordost-Archiv. Zeitschrift für Regionalgeschichte. Zwangsmigrationen in Nordosteuropa im 20. Jahrhundert. N. F. Bd. XIV/2005. Nordost-Institut Lüneburg 2006, p. 25.

²⁵ Laar, p. 231.

²⁶ See: Lea Leppik. The Multicultural Urban Space and the Tartu University at the 19th century. In: The Baltic world as a multicultural space. Ed. Marko Lehti. The Baltic Sea region: Northern Dimension – European Perspectives. 4. 2005. Series ed. Berndt Henningsen, pp. 131-153.

²⁷ For example: James D. White. Nationalism and socialism in Historical Perspective. In: The Baltic States. The National Self-determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Edited by Graham Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. pp. 13-40.

²⁸ See for example: Arnolds Spekke. History of Latvia. An outline. Jumava, 2006. P. 279-284.

proportion of the Estonian-Latvian element in Baltic-German nationality is estimated as 10%.²⁹ No large scale research of adopting another nationality based on sources has been made though until today. It is clear that in the conditions when the old social structure and ideology entered into decomposition, all the local ethnic groups had to find their places. In addition to the development of societies the legislation adopted in the middle of the 19th century played a major role in the destruction of the social order based on the status system. The legal acts regulating the ownership of land allowed peasants to become landowners. The abolishing of the guild order in 1866, the establishment of rural municipalities in 1866, the new city law from 1877 e.c., played a great role in the modernization of Estonian society as well.

For a long time the extensive social mobility of Estonians has been ignored viewing Estonians as peasants. Only recently it has been seen as an important factor in the shaping of the nation. Ea Jansen namely considers as a precondition for the quick growth of the national ideology of Estonians and Latvians the evolution of the social structure, including extensive upwards mobility and the formation of the communicative field in the native language – which, under the conditions of weakening outer pressure, lead to national statehood.³⁰ We cannot underestimate the moment of competition, following Toivo U. Raun: the national self-assertion of Baltic Germans became stronger especially after 1905 in the Baltic provinces and in the whole of the Russian Empire. “The establishment of German educational societies and private schools served as a major stimulus for similar mobilization by Estonian activists who were also concerned about holding their own in the continuing Estonian-German *Kulturkampf* in their homeland. National forms of identity had to compete with a growing consciousness of social class at all levels in these increasingly diverse and complex societies.”³¹

The revolution of 1905 had a very big importance for Estonians in becoming a modern nation, which was accompanied by a general nationalist awakening in Estonian society with a trend to move apart from both Russian and German cultures. The new cultural movement Young-Estonia and the first Estonian political parties also appeared in the same time. In 1906 the first Estonian secondary school for girls was organized as a private school, in 1906 the demand for autonomy for Estonians within the Russian Empire was presented for the first time in the Russian Parliament. In 1909 the Estonian National Museum in Tartu was opened.

²⁹ Wilfried Schlau. *Die Deutschbalten*. München: Langen Müller, 2001, p. 41.

³⁰ Ea Jansen. *Rahvuslusest ja rahvusriikide sünni eeldustest* Baltimail. In: *Vaateid eesti rahvusluse sünniaegadesse*. Ilmamaa, 2004, pp 110, 124 (103-124).

³¹ Toivo U. Raun. *National identity in Finland and Estonia 1905-1917*. In: *Ostseeprovinzen, Baltische Staaten und das Nationale*. Festschrift für Gert von Pistohlkors zum 70. Geburtstag. Hrsg. Norbert Angermann, Michael Garleff, Wilhelm Lenz. *Schriften der Baltischen Historischen Kommission*. Bd. 14. LIT Verlag Münster 2005, p. 349, 365 (343-356).

After the collapse of the Tsarist regime on 30 March 1917 the Russian provisional government gave Estonians autonomy, and the new *Eesti* province appeared. For the first time most Estonians were living in one province. But after the October Revolution and before the German conquest the Estonian national leaders issued the declaration of Estonian independence on 24 February 1918. The first Estonian Constitution was completed in 1920.

So the process of disintegration of the empires during WWI has given political independence to the nation where people had only dreamed of cultural autonomy under Tsarist rule.

Numbers of Estonians in Russia

The territory settled by Estonians was administratively divided between three *guberniyas* before 1917 – Estland (Northern Estonia), Livland (Southern Estonia and Northern Latvia) and the city of Narva, which belonged to the St. Petersburg *Guberniya*. The mobility of people was radically growing after the construction of the railway and the issuing of the Passport Act in the Baltic *guberniyas* of 1863. The latter allowed farmers to settle down all over the Russian Empire. The migration of Estonians was mostly limited to the neighboring *guberniyas* of St. Petersburg and Pskov.³²

Table 1: The number of Estonians in St. Petersburg

the end of the 18th century	3,500
1834	5,214
1850	5,703
1858	4,600
1862	5,353
1890	7,431 (calculated 10,000)
1897	12,238 (data of the census)
1910	14,704 (calculated 23,000)

First we have to realize, that we actually do not know, how many Estonians migrated to Russia before 1918. In the literature we can find a figure that before WWI about 200,000 Estonians lived outside the territory of Estonia,³³ but it does not tell us anything about the people who, after leaving the territory of Estonia, would not consider themselves Estonians, also there is no clarity in the

³² Tiit Rosenberg. Eestlaste väljaränne 19. sajandil – 20. sajandi algul: taust ja võrdlusjooni naabritega. In: Eesti kultuur võõrsil. Loode-Venemaa ja Siberi asundused. Tartu 1998, pp. 34-59.

³³ For example: T. U. Raun. Estonia and the Estonians. 1987, p. 90.

statistical calculations. The first (and the last) census in Tsarist Russia was carried out in 1897, but in the years before WWI, especially in the years 1906-1914, there was a very active migration movement.

On the basis of the all-Russia census of 1897 the population of the Estonian territory was 958,351 out of which 90 % were Estonians. The number of Estonians outside of the Estonian territory was 120,000 (including Narva, half of them in St. Petersburg province).³⁴

The capital of the Empire was naturally a centre of attraction, especially to intellectuals.

The differences between the data of the census and the calculations are caused by the fact that during the census the person was asked what his or her native language was, not the nationality. Many persons of Estonian origin did not admit Estonian as their native language, all the more because – often due to mixed marriages – Estonian was in fact not their native language. In the middle of the 19th century about a half of Estonians living in the Russian Empire outside Estonia resided in St. Petersburg. By 1917 the number of Estonians in St. Petersburg had grown probably to 50,000.³⁵ Reliable data for the whole of the Russian Empire are missing. Only one example: in 1915 there was a census of Estonian students at different Russian higher schools.³⁶ The Siberian University Tomsk was not taken into account, but still in the list of its students we can find at least 25-30 Estonian students.³⁷ There may have been many more Estonians in the Russian Empire than it is known to us.

Riga, the capital of the Livonian *Guberniya* was another center of attraction where already since the end of the 18th century there was a small stable community of Estonians. The establishment of the Riga Polytechnic Institute in 1862 and the fact that at the turn of the 19th-20th century Riga became an industrial town, multiplied the reasons why to go to Riga. On the basis of the 1897 census there were 3,702 Estonians in Riga,³⁸ but in 1917 the number of Estonians was already 10,000.³⁹

³⁴ Raun. *Estonia and Estonians*, 1991, p. 72.

³⁵ Raimo Pullat. *Lootuste linn Peterburi ja eesti haritlaskonna kujunemine kuni 1917*. Tallinn: Estopol, 2004, p. 44.

³⁶ Villem Ernits. *Eesti üliõpilaste üldise nimekirja arvustikulised kokkuvõtted*. In: *Üliõpilaste leht*. 1915. Nr 7-8.

³⁷ County Archive of Tomsk. University of Tomsk (archive 108), inventories. There are at least 30 clearly Estonian names.

³⁸ Valters Ščerbinskis. *Das Riga der Esten*. In: *Portrait einer Vielvölkerstadt am Rande des Zarenreiches 1857-1914*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004, p. 241.

³⁹ See: Tiit Rosenberg. *Zum Problem der Arbeitskräfte in der Landwirtschaft Estlands 1907 bis 1914*. In: *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia* 5, 1990. *The Baltic Countries 1900-1914*, p. 278 (275-298).

Why had an Estonian to go to Russia?

The main reasons were to get land, education or a better place of work. The agrarian resettlement took place in conformity with activities of the Russian government which either favored or hindered this movement.⁴⁰ Beginning from the 1840s there were several waves of migration to southern Russia or Siberia, including the Stolypin Agrarian Reform of 1906, which caused the migration of 18,000-20,000 Estonians to Russia.⁴¹ The proportion of landless peasants in Estonian Society was big and the possibility to have a personal piece of land was a stimulus, which made Estonians to move even to the Pacific Ocean. Nobody wanted to be a farm hand any more, so Estonians (and Latvians) in the Siberian settlements were most active to use machinery and introduce agro-technological innovations, thus providing for the modernization of agriculture in these regions. As the agrarian resettlement at least in the first generation was not accompanied with a social career, we shall not treat it.

Obtaining education, on the contrary, almost always brought about a measure of social mobility. Getting education in Russia, especially in St. Petersburg, had its reasons – the freer spirit, the opportunities to find work in a big city were more numerous – which were important to the student who did not get support from home. At the University of Tartu technical and economic subjects were not taught, also art and musical higher education were only available in St. Petersburg.

Having received education, the young person of Estonian or Latvian origin could not always find work in his home *guberniyas*. Only a part of the Baltic German society welcomed newcomers, others were keeping them off. Very often a child from a poorer family studied at university thanks to a state scholarship, which meant an obligation to work for six year at the post given to the graduate. In the large Russian Empire there was a constant lack of specialists. The person who knew its profession very well could always find good career opportunities, – which could not be dreamed about at home. In Russia the (semi)Estonian could become a general as Karl Gustav Craffström (1784-1854), the emperor's personal physician as Philipp Karell (1806-1886) and Gustav Reinhold Hirsch (1828-1907), an academician as Alexander Theodor v. Middendorff (1815-1894), an artist at the imperial court like Johann Köler (1826-1899), etc.

When speaking about Russian intellectuals, the low educational level of the Russian officials is very often stressed. The nobility could indeed secure simi-

⁴⁰ The same today: “But as a Glance at the recent history of the European union and the phenomenon of labour migration within it will remind us, free migration is a creation of governments not of nature”. David Feldman. Global Movements, Internal Migration, and the Importance of Institutions. In: International review of social history. Vol. 52, part 1, april 2007, p. 107 (105-109).

⁴¹ Rosenberg, Zum Problem, p. 278.

lar career privileges as education.⁴² But the issue can also be viewed from the other side. Thanks to education and an intellectual profession it was possible to obtain the privileges of nobility. This kind of opportunity was used by many people of lower strata, including Estonians.

The two very important stimuli for obtaining education were the tax system and the Table on Ranks. A significant advantage of university education, but also of public service, secured the status of being exempt from the poll tax. Those, exempt from the poll tax, could – among other disadvantages – not be subjected to corporal punishment. The divide between the social status of those who had to pay the poll tax and those exempt from taxes was decisive, definitely wider than between the literati⁴³ and the nobility, or the literati and the wealthier merchants. The social career of civil servants could also have other motivations: they came into direct contact with other educated circles and they shared their cultural practices and pursuits.⁴⁴ But in an estate society such social mobility is usually realized only in the second generation. The civil servants encouraged their sons to study, since the Russian Table of Ranks was linked to academic positions.

The person who graduated from the university with a pass mark at the examinations received the lowest 14th service rank and he was freed from the poll tax. The candidate obtained the 12th rank, the “master” the 9th and the person with the PhD degree the 8th in the Table of Ranks. At the beginning of the 19th century the Russian government promised each full professor the rank of the court counselor (7th rank) which, at that time, secured the hereditary rank of nobility and guaranteed a pension after 20-25 years of service. It was a very essential privilege that attracted foreigners to study at Tartu and other Russian universities, many of whom would never have had the chance of transmitting to their children the rank of nobility at home. In the mid-century the automatic step-by-step awarding of ranks of nobility on the basis of the Table of Ranks was substantially stopped. The hereditary nobility started now from the 4th rank only. The All-Russian Statutes of Universities from 1863 granted a professor the 5th rank,⁴⁵ but depending on social origin it was necessary to serve for several years in the post of this rank before the attached privileges were really implemented, their confirmation taking place only subsequently.

⁴² See: Dietrich Geyer. Zwischen Bildungsbürgertum und Intelligenzija. Staatsdienst und akademische Professionalisierung im vorrevolutionären Russland. In: Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Teil I. Hrsg. Werner Conze, Jürgen Kocka. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985, p. 211-212 (207-230).

⁴³ About Baltic-German literati: Wilhelm Lenz. Baltischer Literatenstand. Marburg, 1950.

⁴⁴ Derek Robbins. Bourdieu and Culture. London, 2000, pp. XII-XIII; Thomas Krikser. Ein interpretatives Modell zur Erklärung von unterschiedlichen Bildungsschancen. www.astafu.de/inhalte/publikationen/hopo/umbruch/habitus (1.05.2005).

⁴⁵ Geyer, p. 219.

University education was indispensable for the reproduction of some social strata (for example, the Lutheran clergy), but more often the completion of university studies removed graduates from their former social environment. Obviously enough, few returned to land cultivation or trade. Tartu has official statistics of occupations concerning 14,000 university graduates in the years 1802-1889.⁴⁶ There were particularly many doctors among graduates, from whom at that time 1,008 were employed in Russia and 718 in the Baltic provinces. The number of civil servants was observed to be continuously on the rise – from 1,900 there were 1,200 serving in the home provinces. The proportion of graduates of Tartu University among the civil servants of the Baltic provinces had grown particularly since the 1860s – it can well be associated with the extension of the bureaucratic structures of the Russian state to the Baltic Provinces since the same period.⁴⁷ At the beginning of the 20th century the enlargement of state bureaucracy offered more possibilities to find a service place at home. In the course of the 19th century the significance of Estonians continuously increased as one of the most mobile ethnic stratum – among middle-class clerks and intellectuals. Their national identity may have been ambiguous but by the beginning of the 20th century there were more and more persons who had made a social career but who still made the choice in favor of Estonianness. The imperial university left to the new Republic of Estonia a university that had already about 50% of the middle level and 80% of the lower level clerks a professional experience obtained in the Tsarist state.⁴⁸ We also find Estonians in many other public occupations among the “Russian” clerks of the period of Russification. An assumption that there was no national bureaucracy in Estonia should definitely be revised. Such a picture was drawn by the press of that time and more recent books of memoirs, which tended to amplify aspects of the contemporary scene that caused dissatisfaction. In building up the necessary structures of independent statehood, Estonians showed sufficient earlier acquired professionalism in the 1920s, which would have been much more difficult to find it overnight.⁴⁹

When in addition to students and employees we also take into account those who passed examinations to become assistant chemists, midwives or gover-

⁴⁶ Gustav Otto und Arnold Hasselblatt. Von den 14,000 Immatriculierten Dorpats: Streifzüge in das „Album Academicum“ der Kaiserlichen Universität Dorpat. Dorpat: Mattiesen, 1891.

⁴⁷ See for example chapter “Administrative Russification in the Baltic Provinces, 1855-1881”. In: *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*. Ed. Edward C. Thaden. Princeton University Press, 1981. pp 33-53; Lea Leppik. *Die Generalgouverneure im Baltikum – Instrumente zur Vereinheitlichung des Russischen Imperiums oder ein Schutz der baltischen Sonderordnung?* In: *Estland und Russland. Aspekte der Beziehungen beider Länder*. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2005, pp. 53-76.

⁴⁸ Lea Leppik. *Tartu ülikooli teenistujate sotsiaalne mobiilsus 1802-1918*. Tartu, 2006, p. 249.

⁴⁹ See: Toomas Anepaio. 1889. aasta justiitsseadused – Eesti peaaegu et esimene põhiseadus. In: *Acta et commentationes Archivi Historici Estoniae* 14 (21). Tartu 2006, pp. 83-106.

nesses⁵⁰ and by this rose to the stratum of those exempt from taxes, there is no more need to confirm that university education had a very big impact in social careers.

The most prestigious study track 19th century was medicine. This had two main reasons: first, medicine was rapidly developing during the nineteenth century, and second – it was the best way to go forward in the Table of Ranks. In medicine the doctorate was the first scientific degree,⁵¹ but it gave the same privileges as the Doctor in Philosophy. There was a permanently growing need of doctors in Russia, there were state scholarships and numerous workplaces in the Army, the Navy and factories –most of them being positions of state service providing some privileges to the person concerned and his offspring. Most of the doctoral degrees were defended in medicine at Tartu University in the 19th century. Most of first-generation Estonian intellectuals were actually doctors. The medical people of Estonian origin could expect to achieve the highest career in the Russian state service.

The analysis of the social origin of 322 assistants at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tartu shows that 2/3 of them came from the taxed (lower) strata.⁵² If we consider the fact that according to the 1897 census 88% of the population of Tartu belonged to the taxed strata, the situation in Tartu was radically different from the situation in Germany, for example, where half of the students at the beginning of the 19th century came from families of the educated elite. During the century teachers of general (primary) schools and officials⁵³ joined them but they were also intellectuals. This confirms the relatively open character of the educational career in the Baltic Sea provinces and demonstrates that education was a serious levelling factor of the social status in society.

Studies at the Faculty of Theology – what, for example in Germany served as a usual road to social rise –, in the case of Estonians and Latvians played a much less significant role. The reason was that in many parishes the tradition of patronage right was observed. When electing the pastor for the local parish the landlord who was materially supporting the parish had the decisive word. Mostly they preferred Germans and so for Estonians the opportunities to find a position were not numerous. This is why young graduates of Estonian and Latvian origin often became pastors of Lutheran congregations in Russia. Only when the towns were growing and new congregations appeared that Estonian

⁵⁰ About midwives and governesses: Lea Leppik. Naiste haridusvõimalustest Vene impeeriumis enne 1905. aastat. In: Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo küsimusi. XXXV. Tartu 2006, pp. 34-52.

⁵¹ About system of medical degrees see: L. A. Bulgakova. Služebnye prava vračej v carstvovanie Nikolaja I. In: Iz istorii Russkoj intelligencii. Sbornik materialov i stat'ej k 100-letiju so dnja roždenija V. R. Lejkinoj-Svirskoj. Sankt-Peterburg, 2003, pp. 349-374.

⁵² Leppik, 2006, p. 141.

⁵³ Geschichte der Universität in Europa. Band III. Vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg (1800-1945). Hrsg. von Walter Rüegg, pp. 218-219.

pastors started to enjoy better employment chances. As a result of educating Lutheran pastors for the whole of Russia mainly in Tartu (as well as to a lesser extent at the University of Helsinki and in some German missionary schools⁵⁴), the Russian Lutheran church developed a special sense of community due to the Network of Baltic alumni.

The beginning of the 20th century can be characterized by an accelerated social development, one of the features being that the patterns of social mobility, which had earlier taken several generations to be accomplished, took now only one or two generations. Here one could recall the career of several well-known Estonian public figures who, after finishing a theological seminar (like the one in Riga – with an especially great impact⁵⁵) – or a pedagogical seminar, they would not begin to work in their specialty (which would have been natural in the times of a more peaceful social development, so that the subsequent upwards step in the career would have been taken by their children), but continued studies in a higher school. Later on they rose to the leading positions in the country's political or educational hierarchy. Such a development would not have been possible if the structure of the whole society had not changed and placed a social subscription, on the other hand, society could not have changed without the availability of such educated people.

Some characteristic Estonian success-stories

The two following families of Estonian origin offer a glimpse of almost all the spectrum of typical career patterns open to Estonians of lower class background in Russia. In Estonian literature they are not mentioned as Estonians.

Carl Hohlbeck (1796-1853, beadle of the University of Tartu 1830-53) was born in the peasant family near Tartu. As a child he became the servant of the Baroness Caroline v. Knorring. In 1830 he was elected beadle of the University of Tartu, in which position he remained until his death in 1853. From his six children Fromhold Hohlbeck (b. 1836) studied medicine in Tartu in 1855-60 and later became a doctor in chief in the port of Kronstadt and a real state counselor (i.e. with hereditary nobility rank).⁵⁶ Carl Hohlbeck *junior* (b. 1840) studied Pharmacy in 1863-1866, working at the same time as a chemist at the University, later as a chemist in Smolensk and in St. Petersburg province and in 1894 he was appointed an auditor at the State Auditing Office.⁵⁷ Markus Hohl-

⁵⁴ Biographies: Erik Amburger. Die Pastoren der evangelischen Kirchen Russlands vom Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts bis 1937: ein biographisches Lexikon. Institut Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1998.

⁵⁵ Anu Raudsepp. Riia vaimulik seminar (Riga Theological Seminary) 1846-1918. Tartu 1998.

⁵⁶ Estonian Historical Archives (EHA). 402-3-477.

⁵⁷ EHA. 402-3-473.

beck (b. 1838) studied medicine in Dorpat in 1858-59, working at the same time and after completing his studies as a clinical assistant. In 1867 he became a prosecutor, but left in 1868 for the Wjatka province to become the senior doctor of a factory and later the doctor in chief of the mining industry there.⁵⁸ 1878-79 he was the doctor in chief of the military hospital in the Caucasus and then in Tbilisi, with the rank of a state counselor. His son Otto Hohlbeck (b. 1871) studied medicine at the University of Tartu, worked for some times in the city hospital in Riga and then in the naval hospital. In 1899 we can find him as a member of the Red Cross in South Africa, then in German, Swiss, French and St. Petersburg clinics, in 1905-05 in the Far East (as a member of the Red Cross). For some time he worked in Tartu University clinics, where in 1911 obtained his habilitation so as to become in 1912 private docent of surgery. His traces are lost in WWI.⁵⁹

The other family: Jaan Hoop (1815-1888, beadle in 1874-88)⁶⁰ became university beadle and changed his name to Johann Thal. His first son Voldemar (b. 1851) became a merchant in Pärnu; Artur (b. 1854) studied in a veterinarian school in Stavropol and became a veterinarian in Vladikavkaz; Richard (b. 1858) acquired at Tartu University the degree of master in pharmacy in 1879-1883 and worked in 1882-1885 as a pharmacist at the University pharmacy, later as a chemist in St. Petersburg military hospital; Rudolf (b. 1860) finished his studies at the University of Tartu as a Candidate in History and worked later as a teacher in Tula and Yaroslavl provinces, then at the Wiedemann school in St. Petersburg and after that as an official with special duties assigned by the governor of Yaroslavl; Friedrich (b. 1863) became a marine engineer in Kronstadt; and the daughter Olga (b. 1872) finished the higher school for women in Tartu.

Chemists and veterinarians were the two occupations, which very often led to social rise. To be a chemist, in Russia there was no need to have official secondary education – one could take an examination in practical skills and then study for two years at the university. In the eyes of the local Baltic German society a chemist belonged to the class of literati (just like pastors, teachers, lawyers). For example, the marriage between a professor and a chemist's daughter was no problem. Consequently, on the one hand, it was easier to obtain this type of education than to become a lawyer or a pastor, but, on the other hand, it brought about Germanization. Veterinarians stayed mostly in state service, i.e. they had an opportunity to climb the ladder of ranking step by step.

⁵⁸ EHA. 402-3-474.

⁵⁹ EHA. 402-3-475, 476.

⁶⁰ EHA. 402-3-1621

Russification or Germanization?

In both examples given above and in many other cases the second generation was Germanized. Until today the process has not been prosopographically studied in a serious manner. During WWII Germans started to do genealogical research in Estonia, but as it was connected with the Nazi ideology, such a theme was later properly tabooed.

The Russification or Germanization of those who had obtained education very strongly depended both on the surrounding environment and the selection of one's marriage partner. In local towns people having made a social career usually became semi-Germans (in Estonian – *kadakasaks*). The contemporary people remembered the period of 1850-1860 as the peak years in the process of Germanization of the Estonians.⁶¹ Thanks to a continuous influx of country people Estonians represented obviously the most numerous stratum in towns and their faulty German was a variety of the spoken language.

But the Estonians, who had gone to Russia, tried to become Germans too. This was due to established social consensus that an educated person is a German. German-speaking specialists lived in different parts of Russia but Lutherans were mostly living near their churches. An educated Estonian, as a rule, would speak German, even during the time of Russification. This process created actually a pretext for looking for contact with Germans, culturally closer than Russians when living abroad. Most evidently it was responsible for the large scale Germanization of Estonian and Latvian offsprings living in Russia. For example most chemists in St. Peterburg proved to be Germans, but some of them, obviously enough, with clearly Estonian ethnic surnames.⁶²

The names, however, do not give us an adequate picture. We do not know how many Germanized Estonians and Latvians lived among the Germans in Russia because it was common practice at that time to adopt either a German or a Russian name was quite common. The head of the Pharmacy Factory of St. Petersburg Paul Birkenwald was, for example, of an Estonian peasant background with the original surname of Paul Kaasik.⁶³ Sometimes such persons are regarded as Germans in Baltic German historiography and as Estonians in the Estonian historiography, sometimes they are forgotten in both. It could happen that brothers of one family, when coming back from Russia, were considered one as German, the other one as Estonian like, for example, the astronomer Wilhelm Anderson (1880-1940) and the philologist Walter Anderson (1885-1962) at the University of Tartu. Consequently, Ernst Renan's (1823-1892)

⁶¹ Laar, p. 269.

⁶² Mnogonacional'nyj Peterburg. Istorija. Religija. Narody. St. Peterburg, 2002, p. 90.

⁶³ Paul Birkenwald. Erinnerungen an das Petersburger Apothekermagazin und die Fabrik militärärztlicher Beschaffungen in St. Petersburg. In: Eesti Rohuteadlane. I. 1926, pp. 73-78, 93-96.

idea that the existence of a nation was based on a “daily plebiscite” – i.e. the persons wishing to belong to one or other nationality – holds true.

At the same time we can also say that the level of Germanization (Russification) is overestimated. Several people in Russia having sent their sons to study to Tartu, many of them came back as so called optants after 1918,⁶⁴ constituting then a new and interesting stratum of “new Germans”.

According to Georg von Rauch, the Baltic Germans and Germans of non-Baltic origin or the Russian emigrants with Baltic links formed a rather democratic or progressive wing in the German community of Estonia between the two world wars (Rauch does not treat them as successors to Estonians). The old organizational forms and convictions of Baltic Germans were alien to them and this is why they found their place in the new social reality of the Estonian nation state more easily and were ready to respect the ensuing diversification of opinions and lifestyles. After the year 1925 their efforts were devoted to building up a German cultural self-government, which was based on the idea of national unity.⁶⁵ In fact, such an idea of a Baltic national unity was promoted (although not very successfully) already at the end of the 19th century. Genealogical research allows us to state firmly that a part of this group consisted of social offsprings, who identified themselves as Germans and did not want to remain in Russia after 1918.

To prove this statement it is sufficient to have a look at the birthplaces of Germans having studied at the University of Tartu in 1919-44. We should bear in mind that the Germans who came to study at the national University of Tartu with Estonian as the language of instruction were ready to cooperate with Estonians or at least live together with Estonians. Other Germans preferred different possibilities.

The structure of the specialities studied by Germans differs from the general choice of specialities of the students in Tartu. The Germans chose more often the practical specialities like medicine and engineering which allowed them later to work as distinguished specialists when leading positions in society were reserved for Estonians. A major part of these people left for Germany in 1939, which means that Estonia lost a number of professionals. This phenomenon had a serious social impact. After WWII namely many engineers and other technical specialists came from the Soviet Union to Estonia in addition to communist party activists.

⁶⁴ See: Eero Medijainen. Optieren für Estland – eine freiwillige oder eine erzwungene Migration 1920-1923? In: Estland und Russland. Aspekte der Beziehungen beider Länder. Hamburg, Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2005. Hrsg. Olaf Mertelsmann. Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa. Bd. 11, pp. 193-212.

⁶⁵ Michael Garleff. Esten und Deutsche im Freistaat Estland. In: Tausend Jahre Nachbarschaft. Die Völker des baltischen Raumes und die Deutschen. Hrsg. Wilfried Schlau. Bonn: Bruckmann, 1995, p. 127.

Table 2: The birthplaces of the Germans studying at the University of Tartu in 1919-1944

Tallinn	221
Tartu	206
Russia*	190
St. Petersburg	153
Riga	97
Livland	64
Curland	57
Moscow	52

*excluding St. Petersburg and Moscow, these data are given separately

Although Estonians had doubts about the national reliability of optants, in the period between the two world wars among the Estonian elite there were very many people having earlier benefited from the opportunities of the large empire. The official number of the optants was 37,578.⁶⁶ Considering other categories returning to Estonia, the total number of people who came from Russia to Estonia is considered to be 44,000.⁶⁷ The generation which built up the Republic of Estonia was mainly born in the period 1880-1900 and received education in Tsarist Russia. Out of 526 public figures in the Estonia of the 1930s there were 262 people who had been born, studied or worked in Russia before the revolution.⁶⁸ Considering their social position, most of them belonged at least to the upper middle class. Some of them had difficulties in adaptation which made them join Germans circles of those who also felt to be socially excluded in Estonian republic.

Conclusions

So the typical career patterns were influenced by legislation and the state's needs on the one hand and by patterns of mentality on the other hand. As elsewhere in Europe, social career followed a relatively predetermined scheme. In Germany the offspring of poor parents could get grants to study at teacher training seminars to become elementary school teachers. When the son studied theology to become a pastor, it was regarded as a high career, but only the

⁶⁶ A. Tooms. Opteerimisliikumine ja Eesti jõudnud optandid, In: Eesti Statistika kuukiri (1922). Vihik 5, p. 5-22.

⁶⁷ Medijainen, p. 209.

⁶⁸ Counted on basis of: Eesti riigi-, avaliku- ja kultuurielu tegelased 1918-1938. I. Tallinn, 1939.

grandson could become, occasionally, a lawyer. Thus it kept going till the end of the monarchy in the 20th century.

A common pattern of social mobility here was as follows: a servant of an estate – a servant in a state office – a person achieving vocational education, often in military service (a chemist, veterinarian, land surveyor) – an academic intellectual (e.g. a doctor). In the case of buying a farm for perpetuity with the 50-year redemption money it was necessary to take into account the possibility that the father's work was to be continued by the son and perhaps even the grandson. When leaving the country for town, to become a white-collar employee for the offspring would take no less than 2-3 generations.

A large part of the first generation intellectuals left for Russia, the process continuing until the revolution in 1917. Although the people who had emigrated were lost to those at home, their example provided trust and hope that a simple countryman could also make his career. The peasants' emigration to Russia in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century was apparently influenced by the fact that a few of them had a relative working as a postmaster, a chemist, a land surveyor or a veterinarian, later a railway worker somewhere out there (in Southern Russia or in Siberia). Since the 1870s national movement had had its impact already, the emigrants began to demand native-language schools and churches, e.g., in Siberia.

Career on the spot – in the Baltic provinces – is somewhat rarer than moving to distant locations. Local society was more conservative and it was hard to assimilate into well-established structures. The newcomers could find a post more easily in new fields – the railway, telegraph, chemical industry, etc. The vast Russian Empire offered various possibilities to ambitious young people. The same fate befell to Latvian intellectuals of the first generation and mid-level civil servants. The children or grandchildren of the people who had migrated to Russia often tried to come to study namely to Tartu University. This pattern of behavior was widely spread among Baltic Germans. The Estonians who had gone to make their career in Russia followed the same pattern. The educated Estonians who never participated in the national movement had not disappeared: a minor part of them became Germanized Estonians in their native country and a major part left for Russia as Germans, some of them assimilated with Russians and made a brilliant career for themselves there. It prevalingly happened before the beginning of the national movement and continued up to the end of the 19th century or even until Estonian independence. The Estonians who had decided to become Germans, in Russia became engineers of factories, head-doctors in military hospitals, owners of chemist's shops or workshops, headmasters of schools, veterinarians, land surveyors, postal or railway clerks, evangelic pastors in the vast spaces of Siberia. The vastness of the Russian Empire caused its extensive development, overproduction that might have brought about a rebellion or a breakthrough in the development never happened.

Something did change, though – at the beginning of the 20th century emigrants tried to come back home and use the knowledge and skills obtained in Russia for the public wealth at home. Likewise, the emigrants who did not consider themselves Estonian any longer often came back and implemented their experience in the service of the Estonian state.

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