THE IMPACT OF THE POLITICAL REGIMES ON THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PROTO-CZECHS, THE OLDEST GENERATION OF THE CZECH ELITES AND THE INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAK ELITES

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lucie Cviklová
Philosophical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic

https://doi.org/10.5593/sws.iscss.2020.7.1/s01.03

ABSTRACT
The role of the Proto-Czechs, the oldest generation of the elites and the interwar elites in the national memory can be advanced by showing the examples of the impact of the political regimes on the interpretation of the symbolic role of the individual elite members. The contribution draws on those concepts and methodological approaches that have been employed by the number of historians and historical sociologists such as historical consciousness, collective (social) memory and national memory; a major incentive for choice of the individual elite members were several sociological researchers on the Czech elites. The pluralist debates about the impact of the Czech elites and their contributions were launched in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and developed by the several generations of the Czech and the foreign historians. This thesis about the impact of the political regimes on the interpretation of the contributions of the Czech elites can be illustrated by (1) the current importance of the Proto-Czech elites such as Saint Wenceslaus I. [Svatý Václav], (Saints) Cyril and Methodius, Božena Němcová and Karel Havlíček Borovský, (2) the popularity of the members of the interwar political elite such as the economist Alois Rašín, the journalist Milena Jesenská, the politician Františka Plamínková and the diplomat Zdeněk Fierlinger, (3) the positive and negative response to the actions of the communist elites such as Rudolf Slánský, Klement Gottwald, Alexander Dubček and Gustav Husák and (4) the evaluation of the members of the communist counter-elitie and later democratic elitie such as Václav Havel and Petr Pithart.

Keywords: Administrative Elites, Communist Elites, Cultural Elites, Czechoslovakia, Historical Consciousness, Interwar Elites, National Memory, Political Elites, Post-Communist Elites and Proto-Czech Elites.

INTRODUCTION
Comprehension of the interpretation of the Proto-Czechs and the interwar Czechoslovak elites in the historical consciousness or in the collective memory can be facilitated by the classification or
placement of the Czech elites in the distinct historical periods and by the examples of the impact of the political regimes on the interpretation of the symbolic role of the individual elite members. (A) The first type of the Czech elites is several generations of the intellectuals or the patriots who aimed at the nation-building and later at the foundation of Czechoslovakia [1]. (B) The second category is the elites of interwar Czechoslovakia [2]. (C) The third sort of the Czech elites is the artificially created communist nomenklatura ruling elite [3]. (D) The fourth group of the Czech elites is the Czech post-communist elite and its individual segments: it has been composed of the former communist nomenklatura, the newcomers and the former counter-elite; e.g. the dissenters against the Czechoslovak ‘frozen’ post-totalitarian regime [4].

The discourses on the importance of the Proto-Czech elites and the oldest generation of the Czech elites played the important role in the Czech National Revival and later in the interwar period. After the communist takeover in 1948 these perspectives were partially submitted to the criticism by the communist historians. On the other hand, after 1989 the mainstream post-communist historians contributed to the merger of the current discourses with the previous pre-communist ones. The telling example was the assessment of the actions that had been initiated by the statesman of the Austria-Hungary and the founder of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The early Czech discourses positively assessed Masaryk’s participation in the Reichsrat from 1891 to 1893 with the Young Czech Party [Mladočeši], officially National Liberal Party [Národní strana svobodomyslná] from 1907 to 1914, his later involvement with the Czech Realist Party [Česká strana realistická] and his struggle for the independence for the Czechs and the Slovaks from the Austria-Hungary. The Czech interwar debates put emphasis on his international recognition as the head of the provisional Czechoslovak government, his first success in the presidential elections and his later re-election in 1920, 1927 and 1934. After the communist takeover in 1948, the criticism of the Masaryk’s contribution for the Czech nation and the efforts to remove him from the Czech collective memory can be explained by his criticism of Marxism; in the number of the Czech towns his statues were taken down and replaced by the dignitaries from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union such as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov and the others. On the other hand, the post-communist historical and media discourses reintroduced and reinforced his symbolic importance as the ‘founder of Czechoslovakia’ and the ‘father liberator’ [5].

The pluralist debates about the role of the Czech interwar elites and their contributions were launched in the First Czechoslovak Republic and later were criticized by the official communist line and by the communist historians. On the other hand, the post–communist positive and negative interpretation of the role of the individual elite members more or less merged with the original pluralist interwar perspectives. An illustrative example was the evaluation of the decisions that had been made by the Czech politician and statesman Edward Beneš. The early
Czech discourses positively assessed his position of a Secretary of the National Council in Paris and his collaboration with the first president of the post-war Czechoslovakia Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk; he was seen as one of the leading organizers of the independent Czechoslovakia and as the active contributor to its development. Despite the fact that the German interwar intellectuals held him responsible for the break-up of the Central Europe after the World War I, the Czech ones positively evaluated his positions at the Czechoslovak political scene: they highlighted the fact that he was the first and longest-serving Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, represented Czechoslovakia at the 1919 Peace Conference in Paris, lectured at the Charles University and was the second president of Czechoslovakia. The early radical post-war debates embraced his decision to expel the Germans from the liberated Czechoslovakia and partially drew on the democratic traditions in the interwar period. Nevertheless, later the official communist historians were critical of his participation in the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, his commitment to the Western democratic principles and their embodiment or influence in his first and second presidency. While some Czech post-communist historians pointed out Benesch’s efforts in the organization of government in exile and his contributions to Operation Anthropoid to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, the other ones held him responsible for the expulsion of the Germans and the Hungarians as well as for the introduction of the communist rule in Czechoslovakia [6].

METHODOLOGY

The paper partially ignores the mainstream sociological analysis of the elites; e.g. the problems of the social stratification and the demarcation of the national and the local elites by the mainstream sociological researches. Furthermore, it draws on those concepts and the methodological approaches that have been employed by the number of the historians and the historical sociologists, i.e. historical consciousness and collective memory. The historical consciousness, conceptualized by the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch and the number of other social scientists, is usually understood as the connection among the interpretation of the past, the understanding of the present and the visions for the future [7]. The concept of the collective (social) memory has referred to shared representations of a group’s past; its employment has not been reduced to the historical and the sociological analyses and has been enriched by the anthropological an historical perspectives.

More specifically, the paper opens a wider perspective from which to evaluate the individual members of the interwar and the communist elites in the former Czechoslovakia; its major point of departure is historical consciousness or collective memory of Czechs and their opinion on the national elites. A major incentive for the choice of the individual elite members was several historical and sociological researchers on the Czech elites; some of them relied on the structured questionnaires and some of them also involved the open questions. Czechs more or less positively assessed some of the Czech political elite members such as Edward Benesch or Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and had a neutral or negative attitude to the number of the other ones such as Emil Hácha [8].
RESULTS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE PROTO-CZECH ELITES, THE OLDEST GENERATION OF THE CZECH ELITES AND THE INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAK ELITES IN THE HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

1. The Proto-Czech Elites and the Transformation of the First Generation of the Czech Cultural Elites in the Historical Consciousness

1.1. The Interdependence between the Institutional Framework and the National Revival among the Smaller European Nation

The role of the elites in the Czech nationalism was similar to the agitation of the patriots in the European nations, i.e. the Norwegian, Finnish, Estonian, Lithuanian, Slovak, Flemish and Danish ones. From the perspective of the importance of the elites, the structural similarities between the Czech nationalism and the national movements of the other smaller European nations was the domination of ‘oppressed nations’ by the foreign ruling elite and the irreplaceable concern of the first generation of the Czech cultural elites for the formation of the autonomous or independent national consciousness [9].

The emergence and the differentiation of the Czech national elites was facilitated by dense network of the urban communities but it was tainted by the absence of nation state as ‘common destiny’ of the smaller European nations; i.e. absorption of the small nations and the ethnicities by the huge empires such as Tsarist Russia, the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. More specifically, the dissemination of the agenda by the agitating patriots in the bigger towns was enhanced by the gathering places such as the cafés, the reading rooms or the theatres and the access to the target bilingual population in the small settlements was eased or speeded by the relatively small distances among them. Prague was the most important centre of the Czech national movement but its immediate borderland was very passive. On the other hand, the patriots were very active in the smaller towns or in the districts.

My perspective on the Czech elites is based on the long-term and systematic analysis of the historical materials. Compared to the internationally known historian and my colleague Miroslav Hroch, who has coined the thesis about the three major phases of Czech national movement (A, B, C) and emphasized the importance of the social preconditions for the success and the result of the Czech National Revival and the elite formation, I tried to identify the role and the importance of the political forces as well as the process of politicization for the evolution of the Czech elites. I think that that the preliminary cultural and economic empowerment of the Czech elites resulted in their later efforts to enter openly and as equals into the public space and in the politics. The first generation of the nation builders was not preoccupied with the regional and territorial issues but it started to recall the cultural heritage of the Proto-Czechs and made efforts to formulate the common or the general interest of the Czech ethnic group and of the Czech nation. The first generation of the Czech political elites imitated the
aristocratic model and conceived the participation at the political life as its honorary right. To put it differently, the Czech political elites were not interested in the mass politics and were convinced that the entrance into the politics should be restricted to the narrow group of the privileged people.

[Interview with V.D., the Professor of History, Charles University, 28.11.2019].

The specific efforts of the patriots to revive the Czech culture and the Czech language reposed on the various principles and referred to the diverse phenomena; for example František Palacky and Josef Jungmann accentuated the creation of the Czech language and the importance of the belles-lettres. František Palacky and Karel Havlíček Borovský coined the political concept and the program called Austro–Slavism and argued by the influence of the historical processes on the formation of the Czech national identity. On the contrary, the Czech poet and journalist Svatopluk Čech, together with the other adherents of the Pan–Slavism such as Croatian Juraj Kižanić, Vinko Pribojević from Venetian Dalmatia and Ragusan Mavro Orgini, in his utopian epic Slávie [Slavia] coined or propagated the thesis about the Slavic unity. Later the proponents of the official communist historiography positively assessed František Palacky’s analyses of the Proto–Czechs and mainly the Hussite movement including its individual and collective representation; i.e. the commander Jan Žižka, the prominent Czech priest Jan Želivský and the radical faction Taborité [The Taborites]. On the other hand, the more or less neuter or the indifferent history writing of the communist historians about Josef Jungmann was interrelated with his restraint assessment of Jan Hus’ contributions to the development of the Czech language; for example Jugmann’s piece History of Czech Literature, or Systematic Survey of Czech Writings with a Short History of the Nation, Enlightenment and Language [Historie literatury české, aneb, Saustavný přehled spisů českých s krátkou historií národu, osvícení a jazyka] involved the intellectual contributions of Jan Hus but it did not include the assessment of his religious and political activities.

1.2. The Specific Features of the Czech National Movement

Unlike the formation of the many other smaller European nations, the emergence of the first generation of the Czech elites was interrelated with the long-term industrialization processes and the transition from the agrarian to the industrial societies. More specifically, the agrarian polity, composed of the stratified, horizontally segregated layers of the military, administrative, clerical and sometimes the commercial ruling classes and laterally insulated communities of the agricultural producers, came through the process of the transformation to the modern industrial society.

More specifically, the transition from feudalism to capitalism was characterized by the emergence of the organic division of labor, the systematic randomness and the fluid totality; these processes had impact on the formation of the Czech national consciousness. Thus complex comprehension of the emergence and the differentiation of Czech national elites should not be limited to the presentation of patriots’ biographies but should also
include their ‘embeddedness’ in the economic and social relations. Moreover, the comprehension of the formation and the differentiation of the Czech elites should also involve the chronological perspective; firstly the analysis of the role of the new social networks among the Czech individual scholars, secondly of their organizational efforts to mobilize the masses and thirdly of their common interest in the political goals with the other segments of the population.

In fact, one can encounter various perspectives on the importance of the economic and the social influences in the national elite formation and in the national movements; while the first group of the researchers have argued by the crucial role of the occupational mobility, the instrumental usage of language and the social egalitarianism, the second one has put emphasis on the language and the ethnicity; the economic component was reduced to the generally ‘accepted knowledge’ in the field. To put it differently, the importance of the cultural component can be highlighted by the comparative perspective on the formation of the Czech, Hungarian and Slovak elites; i.e. firstly the cultural dissimilarities at the period of the revitalization of the cultural values and the absence of explicit nationalism, secondly the contrasts at the era of the efforts of the cultural elites to mobilize the population and thirdly the distinctions at the stage of the acclamation of the elites by the masses [10].

The early stages of the Czech national revival were influenced by the cultural advancement such as the gradual liquidation of the illiteracy and the fight of the patriots for the expansion of the reading public. On the other hand, in the middle of the nineteenth century the actions of Czech patriots were intertwined with the revolutionary upheavals; the increasing differentiation and the segmentation of the Czech elites headed towards the elite structuring, characteristic to the capitalist system.

I have come to the conclusion that the segmentation of the Czech elites was interrelated with the rising importance of the Czech political parties and the other forms of the politicization process. In fact, the distinction among the different Czech elite groups occurred only after the original patriot’s efforts, lost appeal and faded away. The first generation of the Czech patriots was resentful that their original ideas were relegated to the second place. They were critical of the fact that the Czech society grew mature, that the younger generation of the elites aimed at the mass politics and that the original homogenous Czech elite fragmented in the elite segments with their partial interests. In fact, the Czech elites consisted of the local or the provincial elites, the entrepreneurial elites, the worker elite and others. Approximately at the end of the nineteenth century, the Czech rural elites lost the interest in the common political representation with the Czech burghers or the townsmen and strived for their own representation [Interview with V.D., the Professor of History, Charles University, 28.11.2019].

Despite the fact that the activities of the Slovak cultural elites had had some
influence in the middle of the nineteenth century, the last stage of the nation formation occurred only in the twentieth century. More precisely, the belated character of the differentiation of the Slovak elites in the administrative, cultural, economic and political ones can be explained by the two components; firstly the lack of the industrialization and secondly the negative effects of the militant Magyarization after the Compromise. To put it briefly, the foundation and the later developments of the independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 were negatively marked by the bifurcation of the Czech and Slovak elites: while the Czech elites were already differentiated in the administrative, cultural, economic political and other ones, the Slovak ones were homogenous and their number was limited to the several hundreds of patriots.

I believe that the original homogenous character of the Czech and Slovak elites and the timing of their later differentiation or segmentation has been the important topic of the historical research and the historical discourses till today. For example, the historians have argued about the role or the importance of the individual politicians. For example, I think that the sufficient attention has not been paid to the contributions of Josef Václav Frič. I believe that the mainstream rejection of his radical perspectives on the formulation of the Czech national interest and his personality have illustrated the rudimentary level of the political scene and the political elites at that time. In the middle of the nineteenth century he was the important Czech cultural and political actor and was implicated in the important national and the international revolutionary actions. Later he fell into oblivion because of his disagreements with the mainstream patriots such as Josef Havlíček Borovský, František Palacký and František Ladislav Rieger [Interview with V.D., the Professor of History, Charles University, 28.11.2019].

1.3. The Selected Cases of the Proto-Czech Elites and Dependence of Their Symbolic Role on the Political Regimes

Saint Wenceslaus I. [Svatý Václav] was the duke of Bohemia and began to rule at the age of eighteen after the death of his father Prince Vratislaus. He supported the German missionary priests and contributed to the Christianization of Bohemia. Furthermore, Wenceslaus I was peace–loving, had respect for clergy and supported church, e.g. in Prague he levered up the magnificent church in the name of Saint Vitus. Nevertheless, in the context of the German invasions in 929 his submission to the German king Henry I the Fowler resulted in conspiracy of the nobles against him and later his brother Boleslaus murdered him. His personality motivated the medieval artists to portray him in the Christian buildings, e.g. the remarkable Chapel of the Holy Cross of the Karlštejn Castle, the Church of Saint Wenceslas of Zderaz in Prague’s New Town, the Saint Prokop Church in the Žižkov district, etc. Later the contributions of the Saint Wenceslas were highlighted during the Czech National Revival and the patriots mostly emphasized his heroic virtue, his elevation to sainthood and his role as the patron saint of the Czech state. On top of that, the first Czechoslovak
president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk listed him among the most important prominent representatives of the Proto–Czech or Proto–Slovakian elites; e.g. Charles IV, John Amos Comenius, Josef Dobrovský, Ján Kollár, Karel Havlíček Borovský, František Palacký and others [11]. His rising symbolic impact on the Czech national identity can also be illustrated by his statue in the Wenceslas Square, the regular goal of political protestations or eventually cultural gatherings. Under the communist rule, in compliance with the communist sharp criticism of any religious beliefs, Wenceslaus I. was often associated with his critical appropriation by the official representatives of Nazi Germany and the date of the murder of the Wenceslaus I. ceased to be day of remembrance. On the contrary, his current rising importance can be demonstrated by his representation on the Czech twenty crown coin and by the new recognition of his political importance; e.g. September 28 became the Day of Czech Statehood.

(Saints) Cyril and Methodius were the two brothers, the Greek missionaries and the apostles of the Slavic peoples, the translators of the Bible in Old Church Slavonic/Old Bulgarian; they were also the authors of the Glagolitic alphabet, i.e. the Slavic alphabet based on the Greek characters and resulting in its final version: the Cyrillic alphabet.

Moreover, they were preaching Christianity in the native language of the population and brought the Slavic countries into the sphere of the Christian Church. Despite the fact that Methodius had continuous difficulties with the Latin clergy and several times was summoned to Rome, the pope Adrian II took their side and formally authorized the use of the Slavic liturgy. During the Czech National Revival the nation builders ascribed the importance to their ecclesiastical and legal texts as well as their mission to evangelize the Slavic subjects of the Great Moravia: the translations of some parts of the Bible, the invention of Old Church Slavonic and the first Slavic Civil Code. On the other hand, the chief founder and the first president of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk preferred the reformers such as Jan Hus or Petr Chelčický to Cyril and Methodius and pointed to the political abuse of their intellectual heritage by the Czech Catholics and Liberals such as Julius Grégr and others. More precisely, Masaryk was critical of the emphasis put on the merger of nationalism and religious issues; in this context he pointed to the requirement of some Young Czech Party politicians for the introduction of the Slavic language in the religious service [12]. The ideological appropriation of Saint Cyril and Methodius by the official Czechoslovak communist politicians and their alleged relationship with the communist ideas brought about one of the most important mass anti–communist rallies at Velehrad, the capital of the Slavic state of Great Moravia and the most important pilgrimage place in the Czech Republic. Under the post-communist condition the brothers have been revered as national saints, considered co-patron saints of the Czech Republic and their recognition resulted in the introduction of national holiday; it has been celebrated on 5 July and has commemorated the arrival or Cyril and Methodius in Great Moravia in 863 AD.
1.4. The Selected Cases of the Oldest Generation of the Czech Elites: Dependence and Independence of Their Symbolic Role on the Political Regime

Božena Němcová was the female writer and the systematic collector of Czech and Slovak fairytales who in the final stage of the Czech National Revival contributed to the influx of the low culture into the high one; she was also active in the important cultural and public structures. Together with Karel Havlíček Borovský, she strived for the advancement of the Czech written culture and namely for the emancipation of the Czech prose from the older classical manner. She has been seen as the first Czech feminist writer and the feminist perspective has been seen in her literary portrayal of the number of female characters; her heroines or female protagonists had different social standing and they were of different ages. During the interwar years, her persisting importance for the Czech culture can be exemplified by the foundation of Božena Němcová’s Association; it was financially supported by the first president of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and the Czech philanthropists. Moreover, her intellectual heritage was recognized not only by the respected intellectuals such as the writer Václav Tille, the literary critic František Xaver Šalda and the literary historian Albert Pražák but also by the politicians such as the senator Františka Plamínková and the deputy Milada Horáková [13]. Furthermore, the official interpretation of her writings was adapted to the guiding ideological principles and her work was regularly republished; for example, the writer Julius Fučík, in his piece The Fighting Božena Němcová [Božena Němcová Bojující], associated her with the realistic depiction of the lower classes and “alleged” communist persuasion. Her perennial support by the Czechs can be illustrated by the national curriculum for the primary and the secondary education, the current actions of the Božena Němcová’s Association and her portrait on the five hundred crown banknote.

Karel Havlíček Borovský has been listed among the second generation of the Czech patriots and considered to be the contributor to the modern character of the Czech language; he wrote the number of the diverse literary pieces such as the elegies, the epigrams, the books of the travels and the satires. He has also been viewed as one of the most important representatives of the Czech realism, the other nationalists wrote screenplays about him and he was portrayed on the Czechoslovak banknotes [14]. After the European political upheavals in 1948, as the public supporter of constitutional reform and the national rights, he was persecuted and forced to live in the external exile in Italian Bressanone [Brixen]. His experience with travelling to Russia prompted his scepticism to the Pro-Russian orientation, coined by some Czech patriots and inspired him for the elaboration of the concept of Austro-Slavism: the program of the modus vivendi between the Germans and the Slavs in the Austrian Empire. In the period between the First World War and the Second World War his constant popularity with the Czechs can be illustrated by the positive assessment of his intellectual contributions by the first president of Czechoslovakia Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk as well as by the popularity of the song “Sleep Havlíček
quietly in your grave, the Czech is not afraid of the German [Spi Havlíčku v svém hrobečku, Čech se Němce nebojí]”. During the World War II, the influence of the German nationalism and the Nazi propaganda ended in the removal of his statue from The Square of Havlíček [Havlíčkovo náměstí] in Prague and to the critical appropriation of the selected components of his intellectual heritage by the communist historians. Despite the fact that he has been known as the radical opponent of the communism and the abolition of private property put down as the foolish idea, the proponents of the Czechoslovak communist post-war propaganda used some Karel Havlíček Borovský’s ideas about the Slavic-speaking peoples for their own ideological purposes; e.g. the interpretation of the Slavic unity for the post-war social developments. His perennial popularity can also be illustrated by his monuments outside Prague: Havlíčkova Borová, Havlíčkův Brod, Kutná Hora, Rakovník and in the other Czech settlements.

2. The Czechoslovak Elites in the Interwar Years

2.1. The Major Characteristics of the Interwar Czechoslovak Elites

The early interwar Czechoslovak political elites were composed of the number of the experienced Czech politicians such as Alois Rašín, František Soukup, Jiří Stříbrný, Antonín Švehla and many others. On the other hand, the belated character of the Slovak national movement resulted in the absence of the Slovak party clubs in the Revolutionary National Assembly [Revoluční Národní Shromáždění]; the situation was solved by the recruitment of Czech professionals and cooptation of some deputies such as the daughter of the first president of Czechoslovakia Alice Masaryková, one of the first women elected as the member of the parliament of the post-war independent Czechoslovakia. Apart from the first Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the most important recognition has been attributed to the authors of the first laws on establishment of an independent state, later known as ‘men of 28th October’ or founding fathers of the First Czechoslovak Republic: Alois Rašín, František Soukup, Vavro Šrobár, Jiří Stříbrný and Antonín Švehla [15].

The gradual interwar political and economic developments were ‘fruitful soil’ for the flourishing of the Czech cultural elites; their formation and ‘cultural fruits’ were influenced by the intricate modus vivendi among the Czechs, Germans and the German–Jewish speaking community. The number of the Czech cultural elites has received the long-term recognition: among the prominent cultural elite members can be listed the writers brothers Čapek, the journalist Milena Jesenská the writer Vladislav Vančura, the painters Marie Čermínová (Toyen), Alfons Mucha, František Kupka and the actors Josef Vlastimil Burian, Ludmila Baarová, Adina Mandlová, etc.

After the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, the shortage of the experienced administrative elites resulted from the former inferior position of the Czechs in administration of the Empire. In the long run, the Czechs were disadvantaged or discriminated against as regards their chances to reach the top of the Austrian–Hungarian public administration ladder.
and at the turn of twentieth century made efforts to ‘break through the barrier’. Despite the fact that in the last decades of the Dual Monarchy the composition of the employees in the state administration corresponded to the national cleavages and thus the lower administrative positions were also occupied by the Czechs, they did not permeate the highest level of the Austro-Hungarian administration and were not employed as the councillors or the chief executive officers in the state administration. As a consequence of these developments, the first decades of the post-war Czechoslovakian development were negatively affected by the lack of the Czech experienced diplomats and officials and the British observers viewed the interwar Czech administration as unprofessional and dysfunctional.

The symbolic importance of the interwar economic elites in the national memory was different from the mainstream assessment of the respective national elites in the influential nations, e.g. German, French and British one. The German and French historians associated the interwar period with the worldwide economic depression in the thirties, labeling it as the time of ‘Darkness’ and also critically assessed the role of the national elites. On the other hand, in the Czech historical consciousness the First Czechoslovak Republic was seen as the Halcyon Days’ or the ‘Golden Days’. While in the interwar period there were linkages between the Czech political parties, the Czech entrepreneurs and the Czech entrepreneurial subjects, the post-communist Czech political parties have more or less ‘levitated’. In the interwar period the so called Živnostenská banka [Živnobanka] was affiliated with the Czech National Social Party and thus the relative decline of the party ended in the weak influence of Živnobanka; the Agrarians were associated with Anglopragobanka, i.e. the merger of Anglo-československá banka (Anglobanka) and Pražská úvěrová banka (Pragobanka).

2.2. The Impact of the Political Regimes on the Interpretation of the Interwar Political Elites

Alois Rašín was an economist, proponent of the conservative liberalism and the Czech capitalism; after the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia he was the founder of the first Ministry for Finance and the creator of the first Czechoslovak currency the Czechoslovak Crown [Československá koruna]. Despite the fact that the Czechoslovak official communist propaganda criticized his economic policies and overstated the negative influence of his economic reform on workmen, his perennial national and international recognition for the Czech nation can be illustrated by the commemoration of his name; e.g. Rašín embankment in Prague, the quarter Rašínov in Rokycany, the bust of Rašín in Vienna, etc. [16].

František Soukup was a lawyer, a student activist and an active member of the Czech Social Democratic Party [Česká strana sociálně demokratická]; he participated at the foundation of independent Czechoslovakia, was the member the Revolutionary National Assembly, the author of the first Czechoslovak laws and the first Minister of Justice of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The communist historians more or less recognized his
sufferings and his death under the Nazi regime; his current popularity among the Czech public can be illustrated by the memorial plaque of František Soukup in Zbraslavice and the gravestone in his birthplace Kamenná Lhota.

Vavro Šrobár studied medicine at Charles University in Prague and was appointed as the minister for public health and physical education, minister for the unification of the laws and of information, and the minister of education and national enlightenment; later he became a professor for the history of medicine at Comenius University. Positive assessment of Šrobár’s contributions by the Czechoslovak communist historians was connected with his participation in Klement Gottwald’s government; the monument was built to commemorate him at Trenčianske Teplice and the streets in Prague, Chomutov, Ostrava–Hrabová, Přerov and Chomutov were renamed after him for Šrobárova Street [Šrobárova ulice].

Jiří Stříbrný was a member of the Revolutionary National Assembly and later the deputy of the Czechoslovak parliament; he also served as the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, the Minister of Railways and the Minister of National Defense. On the contrary, the merger of the negative perspectives of the communist and the post–communist historians on Jiří Stříbrný’s contributions were interrelated with his inclination for fascism and his participation in the foundation of the Slavic Socialist Party [Strana slovanských socialistů], later known as the National League [Národní liga].

Antonín Švehla was a self–made man and a self–taught person; he was a persistent critic of the Austrian–Hungarian Empire and considered to be the successful politician in the negotiations and the compromises; between the wars he was the leader of the Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants and served three terms as the prime minister of Czechoslovakia. While the official communist historians had contradictory attitude to his contributions, some of the post–communist historians recognized him and compared him to the Czech politician Václav Klaus; his constant popularity among the Czechs can be illustrated by the fact that after the introduction of the communist rule, the group of the Czech citizens had hidden his bronze statue in the water well in Lipany and confessed their deed only after the fall of the regime in 1989.

2.3. The Impact of the Political Regimes on the Interpretation of the Interwar Cultural Elites

Karel Čapek was the popular Czech interwar writer, playwright and critic who has received the growing international recognition. The numerous translations of his novels, plays, travel books and other literary genres in the tens of languages have pointed out his continuous international popularity. His famous piece The Makropulos Affair [Věc Makropulos] tackled the issue of human immortality and was set to music by the composer Leoš Janáček; the novel The Absolute at Large [Továrna na Absolutno] dealt with the matter of the mystical source of virtually free energy and raised the danger of the consumer society; the play White Disease [Bílá nemoc] adverted the threat of the coming Nazi era by the allegory of the conflict between the pacifist doctor Galen.
and the fascist Marshal. His popularity considerably increased after the publication of the set of the interviews and the dialogues with the first Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk called Talks with T.G. Masaryk [Hovory s T.G. Masarykem]; the first part focuses on Masaryk’s youth, studies, marriage and the other biographical aspects; the second part copes with Masaryk’s critical attitude to the Czech political parties such as Young Czechs [Mladočeši], his efforts to found independent Czechoslovakia and his participation in The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia; the third part treats the evolution of Masaryk’s philosophical, religious and political worldviews and his original concept of Realism. Karel Čapek has also been known as the irreconcilable opponent of the communist ideology, as it can be deduced from his famous essay Why I am not a Communist; he sided with the poor but pointed to the danger and dogmatism of the communist ideology. In contradiction to the original Karel Čapek’s worldview, the official communist propaganda highlighted his literary rendition of the number of social issues in some of his novels and plays: e.g. Mother [Matka], Rossum’s Universal Robots [Rossumovi Univerzální Roboti] and War with the Salamanders [Válka s mloky]. Permanent popularity of Karel Čapek’s writings can also be illustrated by the publication Toward the Radical Center: A Karel Čapek Reader [17].

Milena Jesenská was the Czech journalist, writer, editor and translator; she studied at the academic gymnasium for girls Minerva, the Prague Conservatory and the Faculty of Medicine. She became famous for her journalist works and her articles and editorials were published in the prestigious Czech periodicals such as Národní Listy [The National Newspaper], Pestrý Týden [Variety Weekly News], Lidové Noviny [People’s News] and Presence [Přítomnost]. After the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia she helped the endangered victims of different backgrounds and participated in the underground resistance to German occupation; due to her writings to the periodical Defence of the Nation [Obrana Národa] she was arrested and sent to the concentration camp. The feminist perspective has been critical of the fact that her public recognition put too much focus on her personal relation with the reputable writer Franz Kafka: she has been seen as Kafka’s lover and the translator of Kafka’s story The Stoker [Der Heizer]. The one–sided perspective on Milena Jesenská was reinforced by the popularity of the piece by Franz Kafka Letters to Milena [Dopisy Mileně]: collection of some Kafka’s emotional love letters to Jesenská, translated in many languages. Under the communist regime, Milena Jesenská's name was removed from the Czech curricula and the ‘loudhailers’ of the Czechoslovak communist propaganda criticized her not only for her friendship with the ‘bourgeois writer’ Kafka but also for her short-term and fickle attraction to the communist ideas. On the other hand, her long–standing popularity can be demonstrated not only by the secondary literature about her life and translations of her pieces but also by the musical adaptation of Kafka’s Letters by the Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera, the song ‘Milena Jesenská’ by the French songwriter Dominique Ané and the other works of art [18].
2.4. The Impact of the Political Regimes on the Interpretation of the Interwar Administrative Elites

In their career path, the Czech elite members very often moved over or shifted from the political elite to the administrative one and vice versa; the thesis about the overlapping of the interwar Czech administrative and the political elites can be illustrated by the choice of the two significant elite members: Františka Plamínková and Zdeněk Fierlinger. Františka Plamínková was the politician, the teacher, the author of journalist articles about inequality, the fighter for women’s suffrage and the critic of mandatory celibacy of female teachers. She served as the president of Women’ National Council [Česká národní rada], the umbrella organization for women’s associations in Czechoslovakia, aiming at reforms of marriage laws, equal access of women to public spaces, etc. Her active involvement in the international movement for human rights can be documented by the positions she held; she was a vice president of the International Council of Women, the International Woman’s Suffrage Alliance and the Open Door International. She was convinced about the equality of men and women and in the 1930s she vehemently opposed the demand for restricting paid jobs of married women. At the dawn of World War II she wrote the open letter to Hitler, criticizing him as dictator, and got involved with the resistance activities against the Nazi regime. As a result of her oppositional activities against Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia she was sent to the concentration camp Theresienstadt and after Heydrich’s assassination she was executed by the Nazis on the Kobylisy Shooting Range. The attempts of the Czech communist politicians to remove the name of Františka Plamínková from the national memory can be explicated by the negative perspective of Antonín Zápotocký and the other communists on the women’ associations and by their emphasizing the ideal of a proletarian woman. For example, her commemorative plagues were cleared away and the street ‘Františky Plamínkové’ in Prague neighborhood Holešovice was renamed to the street ‘Františka Kizka’. Her current popularity among the Czech citizens has appeared in the various forms; in 1992 she was awarded the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, her name has been mentioned in the number of the national and the international publications about the Czech history and the educational institutions were named after her; e.g. Primary School Františky Plamínkové in Prague 7, Elementary School Františky Plamínkové in Prague 4, etc. [19].

Zdeněk Fierlinger was the Czech diplomat and one of the most influential post-war politicians who subscribed to the introduction and the stabilization of the communist rule in the post-war Czechoslovakia. After leaving the grammar school he joined the Legion in Russia, played the important role in the enlistment and the development of the Czech army and later joined the Legion in France. After the war he returned to Czechoslovakia and thanks to his international experience and the knowledge of the foreign languages, he entered the diplomatic service and became not only the close co-worker of the president Edward Benesch but also the Czechoslovak ambassador to
Netherlands, Romania, United States of America, Switzerland and Austria. In 1924 he joined the Czech Social Democratic Party and during the Second World War he was a Czechoslovak ambassador to the Soviet Union and became friends with Klement Gottwald [20]. After the World War II, Fierlinger became the president of Košice government and his pro-Soviet orientation had the tremendous impact on the negotiations and agreements between the Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. After the coup in 1948, as the president of the Czech Social Democratic Party, he succeeded in the merger of the Czech Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. While Edward Benesch had not complied with the criticism of Zdeněk Fierlinger by some Czech politicians for his pursuit of Soviet interests and their requirement to remove him from his office, after the communist takeover he viewed him as ‘the traitor and enemy of nation’ [21]. The positive assessment of Fierlinger’s actions by the official communist propaganda corresponded to his credits in the completion of the victory of the communist party; from 1948 until 1966 he was a member of the Central Committee, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the State Office for religious affairs, Chairman of the National Assembly and Minister in charge of the State. The post-communist publications and the documentaries also highlighted his negative impact on the economic and the social development of the post-war Czechoslovakia; e.g. A Czech Biographical Dictionary of the 20th Century [Český biografický slovník 20. století] by the Czech historian Josef Tomeš.

CONCLUSION

The typology of the political regimes was fruitful for sorting the short case studies of the Proto-Czechs and the ‘democratic-minded’ patriots in the two subgroups. Firstly, the symbolic importance of Božena Němcová, Karel Havlíček Borovský and eventually the other members of the Proto–Czech elites and nation builders and their role in the national memory has not depended on the communist discourses. Secondly, the symbolic impact of the (Saint) Wenceslaus I., the (Saints) Cyril and Methodius and eventually the other members of the proto-Czech elites and the nation builders and their place in the national memory has been negatively affected by the impact of the communist ideology on the public debates; e.g. the anti-religious sentiment, the criticism of bourgeois culture and the other issues. Furthermore, the informal symbolic role of the Saint (Wenceslaus) I., the (Saints) Cyril and the other proto–Czechs or the nation builders contributed to the undermining or to the subversion of the regime; e.g. the regular anti-regime protestations of the Czech citizens in the Wenceslaus square and the riots against the ideological appropriation of the (Saints) Cyril and Methodius by some communist politicians.

The transition from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Czechoslovakia was impacted by the personal continuities of the national political and cultural elite. Apart from the cases presented in the text above, the personal continuities can be illustrated by the other highly regarded interwar elite members. 1. Karel Kramář (1860–1937) was a politician and a representative of the political party Young Czechs [Mladočeši]
in the Austrian Imperial Council, he also headed the Czechoslovak National Committee in Prague and later became the first Prime Minister of the independent Czechoslovak state. 2. Milan Hodža (1878–1944) was a Slovak politician and journalist who became the ideological leader and the founder of Slovak agrarianism; he also strove for the establishment of a democratic federation of Central European states and served as the Prime Minister of the interwar Czechoslovakia. 3. The historian Kamil Krofta (1876-1945) belonged to the Jaroslav Goll school of thought and his research interests focused on the early Czech history; he headed the Presidium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was a key foreign policy advisor to Edward Benesch and later served as Minister of Foreign Affairs. 4. Josef Pekař (1870–1937) was a prominent Czech historian, professor and rector of Charles University in Prague; he was critical of Masaryk’s research methods and of his perspective on the meaning of Czech history as religious idea of humanity. 5. In the Austro–Hungarian Empire Františka Zemínová (1882–1962) was a feminist activist who made efforts to put through women’s suffrage and was an active member of the Czech National Social Party; in the interwar period she was a politician and a member of parliament.

REFERENCE

[1] Čapka, F., Czech National Awareness in Moravia in the Revolutionary Years 1848/1849, Czech-Polish Historical & Pedagogical Journal, vol. 6/1, Czech Republic, 2014, pp. 48-56.

[2] Beneš, E., The Problem of the Small Nations after the World War, The Slavonic Review, vol. 4/70, United Kingdom, 1925, pp. 257-277.

[3] Hejlová, D., Klimeš, D., Propaganda Stories in Czechoslovakia in the Late 1980s: Believe it or not?, Public Relations Review, 45/2, Netherlands, 2019, pp. 217-226.

[4] Pakulski, J., Kullberg, J.S., Higley, J., The Persistence of Postcommunist Elites, Journal of Democracy, 7/2, United States, 1996, pp. 133-147.

[5] Tatinec, T., Statecraft and Leadership in Europe: The Case of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Journal of Arts & Humanities, vol. 3/8, 2014, pp. 65-78.

[6] Milyukov, P., Edward Benes, The Slavonic and East European Review, vol.17/50, United Kingdom, 1939, pp. 297-328.

[7] Hroch, M., Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe [A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations], United States, 1985, pp. 11-13.

[8] Vinopal, J., Šubrt J. et al., Historické vědomí obyvatel České republiky perspektivou sociologického výzkumu [Historical Consciousness of the Czechs: Sociological Evaluation], Czech Republic, 2013, pp. 115-123.

[9] Hroch, M., National Self-Determination from a Historical Perspective, Revue Canadienne des Slavistes, vol. 37/4, Canada, 1995, pp. 283-299.

[10] Hroch, M., The Nation as the Cradle of Nationalism and Patriotism, Nations and Nationalism, vol. 26/1, United Kingdom, 2020, pp. 5-21.
[11] Bravemanová, M., The So-Called Armour of St. Wenceslaus – Historical Introduction, Acta Militaria Mediaevalia VIII, Poland, 2011, pp. 213-220.

[12] Dvornik, F. The Significance of the Missions of Cyril and Methodius, Slavic Review, vol.23/2, United Kingdom, 1964, pp. 195-211.

[13] Saicová Římalová L., The Interpretation of Božena Nemcová’s Letters: the Linguistic Picture of the World and Image Schemas, World Literature Studies, VII, Slovakia, 2015, pp. 26-35.

[14] Herben J., Karel Havlíček (1821-1856), The Slavonic Review, vol.3/8, United Kingdom, 1924, pp. 285-303.

[15] Palecek, A., Antonín Švehla: Czech Peasant Statesman, Slavic Review, vol.21/4, United States, 1962, pp. 699-708.

[16] Seton-Watson, R.W., Alois Rašín, The Slavonic Review, vol. 1/3, United Kingdom, 1923, pp. 636-639.

[17] Wellek, R., Karel Čapek, The Slavonic and East European Review, vol.15/43, United States, 1936, pp. 191-206.

[18] McAnn, M., Milena Jesenská: The Power of Friendship, Studies in American Jewish Literature, vol. 17, United States, 1998, pp. 109-119.

[19] Reinfield, B., Plamínková, F. (1875-1942): Czech Feminist and Patriot, The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity, vol.25/1, United Kingdom, 1997, pp. 13-33.

[20] Rokoský, J., A Small Country, but Ours. The Czechoslovak Autumn of 1938, Securitas Imperii, vol. 35/2, Czech Republic, 2019, pp. 148-192.

[21] Davidová Glosarová, J., David, J. Thematization of Place Names in Opinion Journalism: Czech Exile Politicians’s Radio Speeches between 1938 and 1945, Acta Onomastica, vol. 60/1, Czech Republic, 2019, pp. 17-23.