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Central European Crossroads
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Social Democracy and National Revolution in Bratislava (Pressburg), 1867–1921

Pieter C. van Duin

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Preface

This study of social democracy and national revolution in multi-ethnic Bratislava (Pressburg) is partly a detailed analysis of the revolutionary events of 1918–1919 (Chapters 5–8), partly an examination of the longer period 1867–1921 (Chapters 2–4 and 9). The latter is to provide a broader historical context to the relatively short period of revolutionary national-political change. The study thus combines two perspectives in terms of historical time, but it also combines two spatial dimensions – the microcosm of the city of Bratislava and the wider world of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the former Habsburg Empire. A third way in which the study aims to be 'multidimensional' is its attempt to integrate social, political, ethnocultural, and pyschological aspects of the historical process. The short-term time perspective, roughly covering the period between October 1918 and March 1919, is largely based on an examination of primary sources, in particular newspapers. The longer-term perspective is based on an interpretative synthesis of what I consider the most important literature in the Slovak, Czech, German, English, and other languages, supplemented by primary source material of my own. I hope that my objective of integrating the ethnopolitical, social, and other aspects of the subject matter has been, at least in part, successful. Historians of East Central Europe, especially perhaps Western European social historians with their traditionally non-political focus, have to be aware that overlooking the significance of politics, the nation, and the state is about the worst mistake they could make when probing the history of the social democratic movement of this multi-ethnic region.

Students of East Central European history are usually faced with certain limits to their knowledge of the different regional languages and other, related deficiencies. I have perused primary and secondary sources in almost half a dozen languages, while in addition it was possible to consult the relatively large body of Hungarian, Czech, and Slovak historical publications in Western languages. Nevertheless there may be certain imbalances in this study, for example with regard to my account of the evolution of the social democratic movement in pre-1918 Pressburg, since there is little material on the movement's local Magyar element. However, the role of the Budapest leadership of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party – as well as the policies of the Hungarian authorities – is abundantly documented, and it would seem that the position of the Magyar social democrats in Pressburg was in line with the party leadership. Although the analysis of the role of the local Slovak and

German social democrats predominates, Chapter 9 also looks at the position of the Magyar social democrats, who after 1918 became part of a national minority in Slovakia. The position of the Germans deserves special attention. While both the Slovaks and the Germans were victims of the pre-1918 Magyarisation policy, only the Slovaks wholeheartedly supported the Czechoslovak national revolution of 1918–1919. The Germans in Slovakia initially rejected the new state but their attitude gradually became more pragmatic (though it always remained critical), and in the long run their ethnocultural position improved under the new regime. Before 1918 the Germans were the dominant element in the Pressburg working-class movement, but like the Slovaks they were marginalised in Hungarian politics and society and subjected to the pressure of denationalisation. After 1918 they remained dominant in local labour politics and marginal in the wider society, while the Slovaks were elevated to a position of unprecedented social and political power. The Germans, indeed, occupied a sociologically interesting ambiguous position in local Pressburg society both before and after 1918. Immediately after the Czechoslovak occupation of the city the German social democrats assumed a wait-and-see attitude to the new regime, but this was interrupted by strong opposition in February 1919, the analysis of which is an important aspect of this study. The role of the German social democrats in both Hungarian and Czechoslovak history has too often been treated as a marginal subject by Slovak and Hungarian historians. This is a historiographic error, and therefore, but also because of its intrinsic sociohistorical interest, it deserves more serious attention. An examination of the German social democratic perspective is important in order to attain a deeper understanding of the changing pattern of interethnic relations in prerevolutionary, revolutionary, and postrevolutionary Pressburg/Bratislava. Arguably, the Germans' politically marginal position and their fate as 'losers of history' lends a certain 'non-hegemonic objectivity' to their point of view in questions of social and ethnic relations. But on the other hand they were also imbued with a degree of cultural chauvinism, as was usual among many German-speakers in Central Europe.

As is the case with so many other studies in East Central European history, this book has to face the issue of the 'correct spelling' of controversial place names and national-political terms. The spelling of 'Czechoslovakia', without a hyphen (as in 'Czecho-Slovakia'), was official usage during the entire period of existence of the 'First Czechoslovak Republic' of 1918–1938. I shall use this form in all cases where reference is made to the state and its official institutions, or where the post-1918 context is politically neutral. In the case of quotations where the original spelling was 'Czecho-Slovak', this is of course retained. I also sometimes use the form with the hyphen with regard to the period before 1918, for example where the loose expression 'Czecho-Slovak cooperation' or 'Czecho-Slovak solidarity' is used (but not in the case of a stronger term like 'Czechoslovak movement'). After 1918 there were political groups and individuals in Slovakia who continued to use the form with the hyphen, especially during the first years of the Republic. Slovak nationalists wanted to express by this that such a thing as a 'Czechoslovak nation' did not exist and that the Czechs and Slovaks – seen as two separate nations – should be equal partners

in the common state, within which Slovakia should be accorded political-administrative autonomy. Other critics of Czechoslovak centralism and supporters of national autonomism, especially the national minorities and their newspapers, often used the form with the hyphen too (though not always consistently), but after 1919 the official spelling 'Czechoslovak' was increasingly adopted by most people in Slovakia. However, many present-day Slovak historians are using the form with the hyphen again. Their wish to see the Czechoslovak Republic as a state of two equal nations – or the relationship between them as one of equality – leads to a mode of spelling that is arguably unhistorical (although this wish itself is not). As against this, figuring among the most convinced supporters of administrative and ethnopolitical 'Czechoslovakism' were the Slovak social democrats (perhaps already before 1918) and the 'Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party' established in December 1918. The original Czech Social Democratic Party was called 'Czechoslav' (*Českoslovanská*), which after 1918 became *Československá*, 'Czechoslovak'. The term 'Czechoslav' expressed a broadly defined Czech ethnic perspective and, for some, 'expansionist' aspirations vis-à-vis the Slovaks, who were seen by leading Czech social democrats and others as a branch of the Czech or Czechoslav nation. Indeed, when after 1918 the Slovaks were absorbed by the Czech-dominated Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, it only had to change one letter in its official name.

The ethnic pluralism and growing social distance between different national groups, both in pre-1918 Hungary and the Habsburg Empire and in the post-1918 Czechoslovak Republic, was a remarkable phenomenon despite all the social interaction that was going on as well. The extreme ethnolinguistic diversity of the pre-1918 Hungarian state, which starkly contradicted its aspiration to be a unitary Magyar national state, was illustrated by the existence of an enormous number of parallel place names, for example different Magyar, Slovak, and German names for the various towns of 'Upper Hungary' (Slovakia). Although only the Magyar names had an official status, the German and Slovak names were more frequently used by the non-Magyar population. Thus before 1919 Bratislava was known as 'Pozsony' in Magyar (the official Hungarian name), 'Pressburg' in German (the most widely used name), and 'Prešporok', 'Prešpurk', or 'Bratislava' (the name used by some Slovak patriots) in Slovak. In addition, during the revolutionary months of 1918–1919 the new name 'Wilsonov' or 'Wilsonstadt' (after the American president) was proposed by American Slovaks, which was supported by some non-Slovak Pressburgers as well. In March 1919, however, 'Bratislava' became the new official name of the city. It would be wearisome and impractical constantly to repeat the parallel names of 'Pressburg', 'Pozsony', and 'Bratislava.' Therefore, I shall use the name that is most appropriate in the given context. I shall mostly use the old German name 'Pressburg', the most popular one and most generally used by a majority of Pressburg citizens, when discussing the period before March 1919, and the new name 'Bratislava' for the period thereafter. Sometimes, especially during the weeks and months of transition, the two names are used alternatively and alongside each other. The Magyar name 'Pozsony' I shall only use when referring to official documents or quotations. Furthermore, the word

'Hungarian' has a state-political and territorial meaning, referring in the pre-1918 context to the multinational Kingdom of Hungary, 'Historical Hungary', which comprised all people and nationalities of the old Hungarian State. 'Magyar', on the other hand, has a more specific ethnonational and linguistic meaning, referring to the dominant group of the 'ethnic Hungarians' and their language. In the Magyar language itself this distinction was usually not made, both denotations being referred to as *magyar*. But the Slovak language distinguished between the territorial-political *uhorský* (Hungarian) and the ethnic *maďarský* (Magyar), as did the German language between *ungarländisch* (Hungarian) and the ethnic *ungarisch*, *magyarisch*, or *madjarisch*. The Magyars' attempted conflation of the two concepts lies at the heart of many of the problems probed in this study. Finally, when referring to the region or subregions of Central and Eastern Europe, I shall alternatively use the terms 'Central Europe', 'East Central Europe', or 'Eastern Europe' depending on the context or the argument of the moment. I do not believe that one of them is invariably better or should be standardised to the exclusion of the others, as is sometimes argued by certain authors. The truth is that the use of this type of geographical terminology has always been diverse and still varies a great deal in the literature. There is no consensus on it, and perhaps it is not necessary to reach one.

I would like to thank all those who in one way or another have played a part in making this study possible, and who have helped by their comments and assistance to make it become what it eventually turned out to be. I wish to mention the staff of the University Library, the Municipal Archive, and the Slovak National Archives in Bratislava; the staff of the Verein für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung and the Austrian National Library in Vienna; and the staff of the University Library in Leiden, the Netherlands. Without Zuzana Poláčková this study would never have been undertaken. Without Lex Heerma van Voss and Hans Renner it would probably not have been completed the way it was. Of the many historians and others whose active participation in endless debates has also been particularly useful I would like to mention Natália Krajčovičová, Miro Kvasnička, Stanislav Sikora, Peter Zelenák, József Kiss, Slavomír Michálek, František Fundárek, and Jana Fraštacká. I also want to thank my father Piet van Duin, my mother Titia van Duin, and my brother Thomas van Duin for the very useful assistance they have given on various occasions. Other people whose help I highly appreciated are Jan Pieter Spreij, Ivo Poláček, and Marjolein Morée.

Abbreviations

Note: for social and political movements and institutions I have mostly used the English translation, except in some cases where an original abbreviation is more or less standard. Where the English version is used, the original name is not always added.

CSR	Czechoslovak Republic (Československá Republika, ČSR)
CSSDP	Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party (Slovak: Československá sociálnodemokratická strana robotnícka)
GWP	Hungarian General Workers' Party
HNC	Hungarian National Council
HSDP	Hungarian Social Democratic Party (Magyar: Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt)
KSČ	Komunistická strana Československa (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia)
NN	*Národnie noviny*
NVP	Non-Voters' Party
OSČ	Odborové sdružení československé (Czechoslovak Trade Union Association: official Czech name of the social democratic trade union federation)
PJZ	*Pressburger Jüdische Zeitung*
PZ	*Pressburger Zeitung*
RN	*Robotnícke noviny*
SNA, MP	Slovak National Archives, Collection Minister Plenipotentiary, etc.
SNA, PR	Slovak National Archives, Collection Police Administration, etc.
SNA, SD	Slovak National Archives, Collection CSSDP
SNC	Slovak National Council
SNP	Slovak National Party
SPP	Slovak People's Party
VGA	Verein für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung (Vienna)
VGA, P	VGA Archives, Parteistellenarchiv
WG	*Westungarischer Grenzbote*
WV	*Westungarische Volksstimme*

Part I

Contexts, 1867–1918

Chapter 1

Defining the issue

If the First World War was an unprecedented Armageddon in European history, the inauspicious beginning of the bloody twentieth century, the war's political consequences were as least as cataclysmic, especially in Russia and Central Europe. While Russia had to experience the coming to power of the Bolshevists in 1917, Central Europe entered a period of national revolution and state-political fragmentation following the collapse of the Habsburg Empire in October–November 1918, which led to the formation of a number of national or quasi-national successor states including Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the territorially much reduced republics of Austria and Hungary. The process of state-political transformation in East Central Europe was accompanied by the rise of the ideology of national 'self-determination', significant shifts in the regional interethnic power structure, and waves of mutual hostility between different ethnonational groups.[1] The proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918 soon led to new outbursts of ethnic hatred and political violence between Czechs and Germans in Bohemia and Moravia and between Slovaks and Magyars (ethnic Hungarians) in 'Upper Hungary'/Slovakia. This mutual ethnopolitical hostility was also expressed by various social democratic parties representing different national groups. Already before 1914 relations between different national social democratic organisations in the Habsburg Empire had become increasingly antagonistic, although in theory there continued to exist an all-Austrian party in the 'Cisleithanian' part of the Dual Monarchy and an all-Hungarian party in multinational 'Historical Hungary'. Of course, the illusion of 'socialist internationalism' had been one of the first victims of the outbreak of total war in 1914, and in the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire the war led to further tensions between the different social democratic groups and to a final disintegration of the Austrian and Hungarian umbrella organisations in 1918. With the Czech social democrats having already broken away from the all-Austrian party before the war, and the Slovaks withdrawing from the Hungarian party soon after it, the two Slav social democratic 'brothers' formed a united 'Czechoslovak' party in December 1918. The German and Magyar

social democrats in a multinational city like Pressburg, who after 1918 found themselves representing national-minority workers in the new Czechoslovak Republic, refused to join the Czechoslovak party and maintained a separate party that until the end of 1920 constituted a loose political unity of the two ethnic groups. The extent to which national antagonism disrupted the social democratic movement in the former Habsburg Monarchy during 1918–1919, was almost a phenomenon *sui generis.*

Labour and nationalism

The importance of the 'national question' and ethnic nationalism for the labour history of East Central and South-East Europe – and, of course, for labour history in general – has even today hardly begun to be appreciated by Western European historians writing on 'international' or 'European' labour history, even when social factors and identities other than class, notably ethnicity, are integrated by them into the wider picture as well.[2] This is partly because these regions, and the nations living in them, are often overlooked by labour historians who are mainly acquainted with the 'core regions' of the Western world and because language barriers are a formidable obstacle to integrating 'Eastern European' labour history into a broader, truly 'international', and multifaceted comparative perspective.[3] Eastern European labour historians themselves have perhaps been insufficiently in touch with international historiographic developments, and the problem is made worse by the fact that, today, the number of such historians is very small. In part, however, the limited attention paid to the question of ethnic nationalism in labour history also has to do with the fact that, for Western European historians, its significance seems difficult to understand, hailing as they do from societies where it usually did not play a decisive historical role – in stark contrast to historians from Central and Eastern Europe, who would never fail to grasp and stress the fundamental importance of the national question for the social and labour history of their regions.[4] In the field of nationalism studies, of course, the picture is somewhat different, but to date its overlapping with the field of social and labour history has been rather limited. A major objective of this study is to help extend the historiographic segment where the study of nation and ethnicity and the study of labour history overlap. An attempt is made to bring together in one analysis issues like ethnic stratification, national oppression, ethnic aspects of labour organisation, and the rise of national antagonisms within the social democratic movement. My understanding of the meaning of nation and nationalism – in particular as far as the concrete problematic of this study is concerned – is especially informed by those social scientists and historians of nationalism who have stressed the link between the older phenomenon of ethnic and cultural identity and the modern phenomenon of nationalism, i.e. the politicised concept of the ethnic nation. In my view it is difficult to take a different approach when dealing with a region like East Central Europe, where, particularly among small nations like the Slovaks and the Czechs, nationalism began as an ethnocultural movement with cultural nationalism gradually

developing into political nationalism, which also influenced a mass political movement like social democracy.

Of the historians and social scientists who, in my view, have most convincingly explained the rise of nationalism and the process of nation-building in Central and Eastern Europe – the region to which I want to confine myself when making these brief general observations on nationalism[5] – I want to mention in particular Anthony D. Smith, Miroslav Hroch, and Karl W. Deutsch. All of them have stressed the 'objective' reality of the cultural and ethnic nation (notably of language, the principal basis of ethnic and national identity in this part of Europe) as against the primacy of a 'constructed' reality, an 'imagined community' created by nationalist ideologists propounded by a 'subjectivist' school of researchers, without denying the importance of ideologists. In addition, Otto Bauer should be mentioned, an important contemporary thinker on the national problems faced by the social democratic movement in early twentieth-century Austria-Hungary. Smith has pointed to the long-term survival of ethnic communities with a 'distinctive shared culture', which were subsequently, mostly during the nineteenth century, 'politicised', i.e. turned into political communities and modern nations by the agitation of a successful nationalist intelligentsia. He refers, *inter alia*, to the example of the Slovaks, who during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century were merely an ethnic community, or a group of kindred ethnic communities, and who initially possessed little sense of political community and solidarity, which had to be developed by an educated class who could 'communicate it to other strata and regions in the community'. What followed was ethnic mobilisation and struggle to defend the Slovak language and nationality, in this case against the dominant Magyars and the Hungarian ruling class.[6] Hroch stresses that nationalism – the political movement armed with the concept, the 'imagination', of the national community – was in fact not the 'primary formative factor' and the nation not just 'derivative'. On the contrary, he argues that the nation is a 'constituent of social reality of historical origin', and nationalism a phenomenon derived from the existence of this nation. But Hroch understands very well that what remains to be explained is the transformation of the 'pre-nationalist' ethnic nation into the nationalist, the modern political or 'politicised' nation, and this is precisely what he has been foremost in doing. He has shown the different ways in which the national intelligentsia of various small European nations has created, through a process of 'national agitation' and increasing ethnic mobilisation, 'modern national consciousness', which could assume different ideological forms and which was the precondition to the rise of mass national movements and modern nations. He also analysed the social composition of different national movements, especially of their leading groups during the first stages of national agitation. In the Slovak case, for example, the national intelligentsia included a significant clerical element during the nineteenth century, especially Protestant pastors, while in addition to this 'patriotic clergy' other nationalist groups were Slovak students and teachers and, increasingly, a secular petty bourgeoisie of lawyers, physicians, and small entrepreneurs.[7] As Chapter 4 of this study will show, the Slovak

social democrats were another important sociopolitical group agitating for the defence of the Slovak language and Slovak cultural and national identity.

Despite his critical attitude to the phenomenon, Ernest Gellner, another analyst of nationalism of Czech origin, stresses likewise its objective and 'functional' character, the fact that it is, or was, all but universal, an inevitable part of the modernising world. He argues that the nation is based on shared culture, which means 'a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating', and that 'nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities'.[8] This general insight may also help us to understand that, in the age of 'mature' nationalism of the early twentieth century, the distinction between 'civic-political nations' (those of Western Europe) and 'ethnic-cultural nations' (like Germany or the small East Central European nations) was of diminishing importance. Nations with a political-revolutionary origin like France incorporated linguistic and cultural identity, in some circles even racial notions, as part of their self-perception, while nations with an ethnonationalist origin like the Czechs incorporated historical and political notions – such as the idea that they were the successors to the medieval Bohemian Kingdom and to the freedom-loving Hussites – into their national self-definition. There can be no doubt that such ethno-ideological notions, hallmarks of the imagined community, were of great significance in the formation of nationalist movements and modern nations – or rather of their special ideological character and historicising self-image. However, this study is not primarily concerned with the origins of nationalist ideology or the national idea, but with examining the 'objective' historical context and the 'hard facts' of the ethnolingual antagonisms between different national groups making up the multi-ethnic social democratic movement of Austria-Hungary, especially in the early twentieth century. What was most important in this context was the difference between dominant, powerful nations and subordinate, relatively powerless nations and the ways in which this interethnic sociopolitical constellation influenced the development of the working-class movement. When a series of national revolutions occurred at the end of the First World War, leading to a sudden and, for many, shocking change in the interethnic power structure of Central Europe, this was followed by an unprecedented amount of highly 'subjective' nationalist and demagogic rhetoric, including on the part of different social democratic parties. Indeed, the analysis of this biased and moralistic political rhetoric is one of the principal subjects of this study of national revolution. But this does not change the fact that what was finally most important was the real, 'objective' character of historical change, the post-war reality of the transformation of power structure, of the pattern of interethnic relations, and above all of the status of different national languages.

Hroch, who is after all (or had to be in communist Czechoslovakia) a Marxist of sorts, has criticised Karl W. Deutsch's interpretation of nationalism – which argues that nationalism is primarily an issue of intensification, differentiation, and transformation of social communication – for underestimating the role of class in the formation of modern nations; otherwise he seems to value, at least implicitly, Deutsch's approach.[9] Hroch

observes that in industrialised areas a process of national disintegration, of assimilation of minority or immigrant workers, tended to prevail, frustrating the efforts of national movements – including, it should be noted, national-minority social democrats – to protect the language and identity of ethnically non-dominant workers. But Deutsch did not ignore the question of social class and national assimilation, paying attention, for example, to national assimilation in smaller regions, usually the result of changes in the use and position of specific languages and of new forms of social communication.[10] The question of language, of the social and political position of different languages in multi-ethnic regions, was of paramount importance for the rise of nationalism, resistance to national assimilation, and national conflicts in East Central Europe, and this, of course, is what makes Deutsch's approach to the problem particularly relevant for historians and analysts of this region. In Deutsch's sociological terminology, nationality is the alignment of large numbers of individuals and different social groups through channels of social communication. From this perspective it is easy to understand that, if a multi-ethnic state or society experiences large-scale economic and social change, a process of intensification and 'homogenisation' of social communication occurs, leading to the assimilation of many of those who belong to non-dominant language groups. This does not mean that, in any given historical situation, the latter necessarily submit to this tendency without resistance. Especially where the process of economic and social change was not powerful enough to assimilate a significantly larger number of people than the minorities' middle classes, as was the case in Hungary, the 'plebeian masses' of the minority nations, even if led by only small groups of nationalists, could pose an insuperable obstacle to the programme of national assimilation.

The case of Hungary during the period 1867–1918 provides a significant example of an oppressive 'official' nationalism (nationalism from above, imposed by the state) entering into confrontation with a number of defensive counter-nationalisms, namely the national movements of the Slovaks, the Romanians, the Serbs, and others. The fact that Hungarian (Magyar) nationalism itself retained some of its defensive anti-Austrian flavour did not change this situation but rather strengthened the Magyars' resolve to fight their national war on two fronts – against the Austrian dominance in the Dual Monarchy on the one hand and the aspirations of the subordinate nationalities in Hungary on the other. The term 'official nationalism' was coined by Hugh Seton-Watson, an important historian of modern Eastern Europe,[11] and is also used by Benedict Anderson, whose concept of 'imagined community' has become popular with all those who are keen to stress the subjectivist, 'constructionist', ideological character of nationalism and of the process of nation-building.[12] But more interesting than looking at the general distinction between 'subjectivist' and 'objectivist' approaches to nationalism, or even the important difference between 'official' and 'defensive' nationalism, is the posing of sociohistorical questions relating to concrete examples of national oppression, national assimilation, and the rise of nationalism among the working class. In this regard the observations of Otto Bauer are still of great interest, especially as far as the historical national problems of Austria-Hungary

are concerned, the multinational state that perhaps deserves more attention from modern social and labour historians. Some of Bauer's ideas are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. They are concerned with the social, cultural, and psychological meaning of the nation in Central Europe, the problem of working-class nationalism and national divisions, and the economic, political, and cultural conditions promoting or discouraging national assimilation among different sections of the multi-ethnic working class. Bauer noted, among other things, that the crucial group of skilled workers, the pioneers of labour organisation, workers' education, and socialist literacy, were also the ones that were most attached to their national language and national culture. The case of the Czech workers and the Czech social democrats, not only in the Czech heartland of Bohemia and Moravia but also in Vienna with its large Czech immigrant working class, was for Bauer the most significant example of this and he had few illusions about the willingness of Czech organised workers – in contrast, perhaps, to some groups of unskilled and unorganised workers in predominantly German cities like Vienna – to abandon their national language and identity and to assimilate to the dominant German language and nationality.[13] What we must understand above all is that in East Central Europe, with its patterns of national inequality and its complicated, often antagonistic interethnic relations, national feeling was the result of – and part of – linguistic and cultural identity and even of popular historical consciousness. Leading socialists and organised skilled workers participated in the national culture of their ethnic groups and regarded national inequality as another form (in addition to class exploitation) of social oppression. This is why many convinced socialists could also be 'progressive nationalists', especially those belonging to the small and weaker nations of Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time it was difficult for socialists belonging to the dominant nations, particularly the Germans and the Magyars, to abandon the idea that their nations were superior in terms of cultural and social development. Although he was in many ways more sensitive and intelligent than many of his German comrades, this also applied to Otto Bauer, who relished the idea of the great historical role and cultural importance of the German nation.

Ethnicity and social democracy in Central Europe, Hungary, and Pressburg

Otto Bauer, Austrian social democratic leader, renowned 'Austro-Marxist' theoretician (not least with regard to the national question), and from November 1918 foreign minister of the 'Republic of German Austria', warned the Czechs on 4 December 1918 that, if they went too far in their expansionist policy and 'hostile behaviour' towards the Germans of Bohemia and Moravia, they might provoke a deep historical resentment among 'the great German nation of seventy million people', by which they were surrounded on three sides and which might want to take revenge 'in the future'.[14] Bauer, whose views sometimes had a prophetic quality, was nevertheless the first Austrian

social democratic leader who had unreservedly accepted the right to national self-determination of the Slav nations, but he demanded the same right for the Austrian and Bohemian Germans. After the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Austrian social democrats became the leading political force in the Austrian republican government and called for *Anschluss* of the ethnic-German territory to the new republican and democratic Germany. They also claimed Austrian sovereignty over the ethnic-German areas in what became Czechoslovakia but were unable to enforce this demand. Meanwhile, the Hungarian social democrats had similarly become a prominent factor in the post-Habsburg government of Hungary led by the progressive Count Mihály Károlyi. Like their 'bourgeois-democratic' allies in the new government and the overwhelming majority of Magyars of all social classes, they wanted to maintain the territorial integrity of 'Historical Hungary', i.e. the territory of the old Hungarian Kingdom (also known as the 'Lands of the Crown of St Stephen'). The political outlook of the Hungarian social democrats with regard to the national question was less realistic than that of the Austrian social democrats. Indeed, they did not want to go further than granting minority rights or a form of cultural autonomy to the non-Magyar nationalities, including the Slovaks, within an intact greater Hungary. At an Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in Budapest on 13 October 1918, the Hungarians tried to persuade non-Magyar delegates to sign a Party Manifesto supporting the territorial integrity of a future democratic Hungary that would guarantee national-minority rights. The Slovak and other non-Magyar social democrats refused to do this because they had already passed the stage where they could be satisfied with promises about autonomy given by Magyar politicians. The Slovaks actually did not even bother to attend the congress or to be officially represented at it; only an 'unofficial' Slovak delegate (one not representing the official Slovak Party Committee) from the heavily Magyarised city of Košice attended the congress, and even he refused to support the Hungarian Party Manifesto. The Slovak social democratic newspaper *Robotnícke noviny* (Worker News) explained that the moment had come for the Slovak social democrats to discuss the future of the Slovak nation with the other Slovak political parties, and that only the Slovak National Council (then in the process of formation) could rightfully speak for the Slovak nation and its aspirations. It was one of the decisive moments in the final parting of the ways of the Magyar and Slovak social democratic movements.[15] By this time the Slovak social democrats were openly coming out in support of the creation of an independent Czechoslovak state and were heavily leaning on the Czech ('Czechoslav') Social Democratic Party, by whom they were effectively absorbed in December 1918. The new Czechoslovak party was a loyal state-supporting political force and it proved impossible to reconcile its orientation with that of the German and Magyar social democrats, who always maintained a highly critical attitude to the Czechoslovak Republic after its foundation in October 1918.

The dramatic transformation of the interethnic power structure in Central Europe and its effects on the social democratic movement can be studied particularly well when looking at what happened at the local level. In this

connection the city of Pressburg (Bratislava) is a significant case in point.[16] The events in Pressburg during the last few months of 1918 and the first months of 1919 provide crucial information for deepening our understanding of the complex pattern of relations between different national groups and different social democratic organisations in Central Europe, particularly in the urban multi-ethnic context. The Pressburg social democratic movement, especially its ethnic-German component, played a major part in the unfolding of events in the city, which was occupied by Czechoslovak forces only during the first days of January 1919, and which experienced the following month a general strike led by the German and Magyar social democrats. Pressburg was an old multi-ethnic city located at the crossroads of three ethnolinguistic regions (German, Slovak, and Magyar) in the north-western part of the Kingdom of Hungary, and only at a small distance from the Habsburg imperial metropolis Vienna. Traditionally, the German-speaking population was the dominant social, economic, and cultural element in the city, but by 1900 there were a growing number of Magyar-speakers as well as a substantial number of Slovaks. According to the Hungarian census of 1910 (notorious for its tendency to inflate the proportion of Magyars in the country), German-speakers – probably including the majority of the city's considerable Jewish community, which made up more than 10 per cent of the total population – represented about 42 per cent of Pressburg's 78,223 inhabitants, Magyar-speakers 40 per cent, and Slovak-speakers some 15 per cent.[17] Although the policy of 'Magyarisation' was implemented by all possible means, the atmosphere in the city was one of small-scale cosmopolitanism, with a population that was accustomed to a multilingual and multi-ethnic microcosm. At the same time, however, nationalism among the different nationalities was on the rise, not only among the dominant Magyars, but also among the Slovaks and some of the Germans. It can be argued that Pressburg, although a smaller city than Vienna or Budapest, was sociologically even more interesting and actually more complexly structured than its larger Austro-Hungarian sister-cities. Whereas Vienna and Budapest, despite their heterogeneous population, were more distinctly dominated by the German and Magyar nationality respectively, Pressburg had a more intricate 'trinational' character and a more subtle social equilibrium between the three major ethnocultural groups. While the Magyars were dominant politically and the local Germans economically, the Slovaks constituted a sizeable proportion of the working class. All groups were involved in a diffuse struggle over ethnic and social positions in the city, and over the question of whose culture was to dominate it now and in the future.

The social democratic movement in Pressburg was the most important in early twentieth-century Hungary after that of the metropolis Budapest, which contained about half of all organised social democratic workers in the country.[18] While the classical German skilled-worker element formed the backbone of the labour movement in Pressburg, there was also an increasing participation of Magyar and Slovak workers and of social democratic leaders from the non-German nationalities. From the mid-1890s there gradually emerged a regional 'West Hungarian' Social Democratic Party organisation centred on Pressburg,

which enjoyed a degree of autonomy from the Budapest headquarters; by the mid-1900s it had assumed a distinct organisational form and began to hold its own regional conferences. In the West Hungarian party German-speakers, who constituted a major element of the population not only in the city of Pressburg but in four western counties (Pressburg/Pozsony, Wieselburg/Moson, Ödenburg/Sopron, and Eisenburg/Vas) bordering on Austria, played a leading role. Arguably, this made it easier for both the Germans and the Slovaks in the Pressburg social democratic movement to withstand, at least to some degree, the pressure of Magyarisation, which in various ways was also brought to bear on the organisations and institutions of the local labour movement by the local Hungarian authorities and even the predominantly Magyar party leadership in Budapest. Simultaneously with the consolidation of the West Hungarian party organisation, a separate 'Slovak Nationality Committee' was formed in 1904 by disaffected Slovak social democrats, who wanted to intensify the organisational and propaganda efforts among the relatively neglected Slovak working class and who were determined to launch a permanent Slovak social democratic newspaper, an undertaking that the Budapest party leadership – which was in control of party finances – had thus far not been showing much enthusiasm for. This lack of support was one reason why the Slovaks decided after 1900 to choose Pressburg instead of Budapest as their political and organisational centre. The proximity of Vienna, whose local Czech social democratic movement gave indispensable financial and political support to the Slovaks, no doubt played a crucial role in this decision, but in addition the somewhat different social atmosphere of Pressburg and the different ethnic composition of the Pressburg labour movement compared with Budapest must have been important reasons for taking this step as well. In 1905 the Slovak Committee in Pressburg even tried to establish a separate Slovak Social Democratic Party on the Czech autonomist model. But for financial and other reasons this step proved too ambitious and the Slovaks had to content themselves with their special Nationality Committee, which seems to have been tolerated by the Hungarian party to forestall a more serious 'separatist' crisis.

In Budapest, the tendency to assimilate Slovak, German, and other non-Magyar trade unionists and party members was much stronger than in 'German-dominated' Pressburg,[19] although a small number of Slovak and other minority-worker societies, especially for cultural and social purposes, continued to exist in the Hungarian capital as well. While the Hungarian party leadership paid lip service to the objective of interethnic solidarity, national equality, and non-Magyar minority rights, it gave in reality only limited support to autonomous non-Magyar social democratic activities. Indeed, sometimes it was openly admitted that the working-class movement was a 'school of Magyarisation' and assimilation of the other nationalities, a development that was seen by some as inevitable or even desirable.[20] But even among the German minority, which was more dispersed, less geographically concentrated than the other nationalities (apart from the Jews), there was a growing, if limited, number of people who wanted to resist the process of Magyarisation and to keep their own cultural identity. Some of them, including some Pressburg social democrats, also showed occasional sympathy

for the national aspirations of the other non-Magyar minorities. Nevertheless, many Germans – but also Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, Romanians, and, perhaps most of all, Hungarian Jews – more or less accepted the necessity of (at least a degree of) assimilation to Magyardom as a precondition for improving their chances of upward social mobility in Hungarian society, particularly in the urban centres. However, in some Hungarian cities, especially where Germans, Slovaks, or others managed to keep their hold on important social and economic positions, the pressure of Magyarisation was somewhat less effective and the tendency or ability to resist stronger. Pressburg, thanks to its sizeable German population and, perhaps, the proximity of Vienna, was one of these cities, even though the statistical proportion of Magyar-speakers was constantly growing and the mode of 'resistance' normally far from spectacular. This does not mean that the non-Magyar population of Pressburg or of other multi-ethnic Hungarian cities did not possess a sense of Hungarian patriotism. On the contrary, traditional Hungarian patriotism, with its historical, inclusive, supra-ethnic, state-political connotations, was a notable feature of social and political attitudes in a city like Pressburg. But both Slovaks and Germans tended to combine – and some of them increasingly to replace – this with a consciousness of their own ethnic and cultural identity. Indeed, the more Hungarian patriotism became ethnic-Magyar nationalism and the more it became intolerant and chauvinistic, the less it could rely on the undisputed loyalty of the non-Magyar ethnolingual population groups.

The fact that the structure of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, although heavily focused on Budapest, allowed after 1900 for the existence of relatively autonomous regional organisations and Nationality Committees facilitated, in combination with the social and cultural preponderance of the German element in Pressburg, the defence and building of ethnic positions in the city's labour movement. If this held true for the Germans, it must to some extent also have applied to the Slovaks, despite all the pressure of Magyarisation. It is, therefore, a plausible hypothesis that in a city like Pressburg a national group with a weak sociopolitical position like the Slovaks could benefit from the strong position of the Germans; by being part of the German-dominated, multi-ethnic labour movement and by creating Slovak-language islands in organisations like the Workers' Educational Society, they could more successfully resist policies of denationalisation. Thus Pressburg's trinational pattern of interethnic dynamics also helped to shape the history of the local social democratic movement. Even if many Pressburg Germans, like the politically dominant Magyars, tended to look down upon the 'primitive' Slovaks, the presence of independent German employers and of a German-dominated labour movement some of whose leaders were sensitive to ethnic issues were factors making life somewhat easier for the Slovaks from a national point of view. Indeed, the cultural orientation of Pressburg's German labour movement towards Vienna rather than Budapest, evidence of its reluctance to accept certain Magyarisation policies and complete Magyar hegemony in the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, and a degree of German understanding for the national-cultural aspirations of the Slovaks were all factors setting the Pressburg social democratic movement somewhat apart from the rest of

Hungary.[21] It meant that the pattern and atmosphere of ethnopolitical relations within the social democratic movement of tri-national Pressburg had its own special flavour, since it was more difficult than elsewhere for one group to dominate the others. This relative openness and 'multiculturalism' in terms of interethnic power structure may have made the Pressburg movement unique in Hungary, or at least significantly different from those of many other cities including Budapest. But at the same time there was unmistakably also a degree of friction and mutual antagonism between the different national groups making up Pressburg's social democracy. This was expressed in the form of increasing Slovak organisational separatism; a lack of interest, perhaps even fear, among local Magyar and German social democratic leaders in actively supporting the mobilisation of Slovak workers by means of their own Slovak-language press and propaganda (thus strengthening the impression of the Slovaks that the party leaders were consciously neglecting them); and a growing tendency among different social democratic groups, especially the Slovaks, to seek cooperation with democratic middle-class groups of their own nationality in addressing issues of ethnocultural and national importance. For the relatively weak Slovak social democrats, the process of increasing national differentiation and political regrouping also meant the need to seek a closer alliance with the much stronger Czech social democrats, who around 1910 gained a virtually independent status within the Austrian social democratic movement, even in the field of trade unionism. For the German social democrats in Pressburg and the rest of Hungary, it similarly meant a growing interest in issues of cultural autonomy and ethnic self-preservation, although in contrast to the Slovaks most of the Germans remained loyal to the Hungarian State even during the last months of 1918. The Magyar social democrats in Pressburg – who, unlike the Germans and the Slovaks, typically did not have their own local newspaper until 1919 – seem to have felt most closely linked to the Hungarian party leadership in Budapest. Some of them tended to support the Hungarian fatherland as late as 1919, that is, until the start of the 'White Terror' in August that year. The general hypothesis underlying this study is that the history of social democracy in Pressburg, both before, during, and after the period of national revolution, was shaped by the contradictory dynamics of interethnic coexistence and cooperation on the one hand, and increasing national tensions, fragmentation, and mutual alienation on the other.[22]

National revolution: contexts, events, and results

The aim of the present study, then, is to present an analysis of the historical development and the complex political role of the multinational social democratic movement in Pressburg/Bratislava, with particular though not exclusive emphasis on the years of Central European crisis and national revolution, 1918–1919. It was during the period of national revolution that a whole range of painful issues concerning the relations between the different national groups in the local social democratic movement became suddenly more manifest. Until 1918 the Pressburg movement, despite the trend of

growing national separatism, had managed to maintain at least a semblance of interethnic unity; in 1918–1919 this illusion was shattered. Instead of helping to 'resolve' the national question in the social democratic movement after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic, the revolutionary events of 1918 merely transformed the interethnic power structure in the region, the city, and the movement. The result was a new phase of national strife in the context of Czechoslovakia, a state that was almost as multinational as the old Austria-Hungary, in particular in the sharply divided working-class movement. In Pressburg this was expressed in the form of political protests against the new rulers, strikes, and a campaign of excited moral-political rhetoric focusing on the issues of 'self-determination' and 'Czech imperialism', with demagogic overtones. It is necessary, however, to place the dramatic events of 1918–1919 in the broader context of the evolution of the Hungarian and Pressburg social democratic movement during the previous decades. The contextualisation of the national revolution of 1918–1919 must embrace an understanding of the peculiarities of Hungarian politics and society, the character of Pressburg as a tri-national Central European crossroads, and the complex nature of the national question as it affected the Hungarian and Pressburg social democratic movement. Pressburg was a 'crossroads' in a double sense.[23] It was the place where the ethnic territories of the three major national groups of north-west Hungary met and overlapped in an urban setting – while in addition to the Germans, the Slovaks, and the Magyars the city also contained Jews, Czechs, Croats, and other ethnic minorities. Pressburg was also the city that during the turbulent months of 1918–1919 had to decide in a more dramatic way than many other places in Central Europe where it politically belonged and what its identity – or indeed the identity of different groups in the city – was to mean. The fact that at the end of 1918 some prominent individuals tried to attain an internationalised autonomous status for the city – something like that of Danzig/Gdansk – was partly an expression of disorientation and despair and partly a positive attempt at political reorientation based on a proud tradition of urban patriotism. The position and identity of Pressburg as a crossroads in a double sense is what ultimately determined the historical fate of the city, including the confusion and the political and ethnic tensions prevailing during the months of national revolution. It was also a crucial determinant of the social history of Pressburg and its multi-ethnic labour movement during the entire period 1867–1921.

For Pressburg's social democrats the eruption of national revolution in 1918 was an even more dramatic experience than for other social and political groups; after all, they had to uphold an ideology of 'internationalism' and class solidarity, if only within their own Austro-Hungarian domain. After the catastrophe of the First World War, the outbreak of national revolution and new waves of ethnic strife were another setback for those social democrats in Pressburg and Central Europe who wanted to restore a sense of interethnic working-class unity. From the viewpoint of Magyar and German social democrats, the Czechoslovak occupation of Pressburg and the formation of a Czechoslovak State incorporating large Magyar and German minorities were

acts of 'Czech Imperialism', and especially during the first year of the state's existence they found it difficult to accept the new political reality. It is interesting to observe how the relatively sophisticated German social democratic press reacted to the national-revolutionary transformation of 1918–1919. I shall pay special attention to the German press in Pressburg to show how the important German social democratic movement and also other political groups among the Germans and the Magyars reacted to the dramatic events especially of the first two months of 1919, when the new rulers tried to consolidate their hold on the city. It would seem that after December 1918 the German social democrats – more easily than the Magyars – were able to face the new and inescapable reality in Pressburg, thanks to a strongly developed common sense. This was partly the result of their classical socialist-evolutionary ideology, which claimed to regard state-political changes as a matter of secondary importance, but also of pragmatism and their new identification with ethnic-German rather than Hungarian state identity; in the case of some other political groups it was also the result of the reputed Pressburg mentality of 'opportunism'. Nevertheless, in February 1919 the German and Magyar social democrats launched a general strike to protest against the policies of the new Czechoslovak regime, which allegedly refused to keep some of the promises made immediately after the occupation of the city and had begun to take what looked like arbitrary and repressive measures. After the bloody events of 12 February 1919, when at least six people were killed by Czech soldiers and some two dozen wounded, the German social democratic press started a campaign of moral rhetoric and political denunciations, which may have further discredited the Czechoslovak authorities in the eyes of many Pressburg citizens. The memory of the February events was bound to play a lasting role in the subsequent history of the city, and the explanation of the bloodbath given by the Czechoslovak authorities in Pressburg, which was strongly coloured by propaganda, did not help to improve the situation. After 1919, the Czechoslovak government succeeded in consolidating the new regime in Slovakia among other things, by granting minority rights to the Germans and the Magyars. But these substantial minority groups (some 5 per cent and 20 per cent of the population of Slovakia, respectively) had been incorporated into the new state against their will; the fact that they were referred to as 'national minorities' meant they had the status of a kind of second-class citizens vis-à-vis the ruling 'Czechoslovak nation'. This, in combination with the memory of the bloodshed in Pressburg and other places in Czechoslovakia during the months of national revolution, was bound to result in a permanent sense of alienation among the minorities. As citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic, the minorities benefited from the democratic character of the state and freely participated in its political life, but they also keenly felt its 'ethnocratic' dimension. No doubt national-minority status was especially difficult to accept for people who until recently had been members of politically or culturally dominant nations.

This study aims to be a contribution to the historiography on the national revolution in Central Europe after the First World War as well as to the history

of the social democratic movement in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Czechoslovakia. Like all historians trying to address controversial issues in Central European history, I am faced with certain problems that are specific to the region. Thus, although the social democratic movement was in many ways an 'international' (interethnic) one, especially before 1918, its historiography is fragmented along national lines; the same holds true for the historiography of the national revolutions of 1918–1919. It is mainly Austrian historians who have studied the pre- and post-1918 Austrian social democratic movement, Hungarians the Magyar/Hungarian, Czechs the Czech/Czechoslovak, and Slovaks the Slovak movement. The important role of the ethnic-German social democratic movement in Hungary is a neglected topic because the Germans of pre-1918 Hungary or post-1918 Slovakia are apparently seen – and wrongly so – as a group of only marginal importance. In addition, of course, they have largely disappeared from the scene after the Second World War, which did not favour the historiography of this tragic but interesting ethnic group either.[24] The degree of (even attempted) integration of different national perspectives and research activities is limited, while the problematic of the national revolutions of 1918–1919 and that of the history of the Central European labour movement are fields of study that overlap only to a limited extent. At least as important is another problem: the perhaps inevitable problem of incomplete knowledge of the different Central European languages among most historians of this multicultural region, a circumstance that obviously sets certain limits to the amount and type of publications and primary source material they are able to study.[25] Related to this is the creative challenge of trying to balance and integrate the different (often nationally biased) perspectives on contested historical questions. Last but not least, there is the problem of the relative weakness in former communist countries of modern sociohistorical perspectives on issues like the one addressed in this study. Official 'Marxist-Leninist' ideology, which claimed to possess a ready-made interpretative framework, had a negative influence on the writing of innovative sociohistorical work, the consequences of which can still be seen today in a country like Slovakia.[26] This does not mean that, for example in Czechoslovakia, no useful research was done between the 1950s and 1980s. On the contrary, as every student of 'Eastern European' history knows, it is rewarding, if sometimes wearisome, to work one's way through the communist-era literature and to sift the useful material from the ideological humbug. In addition, of course, one has to go back to the sources where they still exist.

Methods and research strategy

In this study I have done two things in terms of method and research strategy, which I hope in combination have enabled me to make a satisfactory analysis of the subject matter. First, I have analysed the Slovak but also the Hungarian, Czech, Austrian, and German historiography on the social democratic movement in Hungary and Slovakia (and, to some extent, in the Habsburg

Monarchy as a whole), focusing on the role and position of the Slovaks and the Hungarian Germans and on the region of Pressburg/Pozsony/Bratislava. Secondly, I have looked selectively at the German- and Slovak-language primary source material (mainly newspapers and printed sources, but also some archival material), that is, quite comprehensively for the period of national revolution 1918–1919, more selectively for the earlier and later years. I hope that this differentiated approach helps to create a balanced picture of, on the one hand, the evolution of the multi-ethnic social democratic movement in Hungary and trinational Pressburg (and of the political and social conditions in which this happened) during the longer period 1867–1921, and on the other hand the revolutionary and immediate postrevolutionary events in Pressburg between October 1918 and March 1919, which are analysed in greater detail. While the focus of my research is on the Slovak and German national groups within the broader multi-ethnic Hungarian social democratic movement, the predominantly Magyar party leadership is part of the story as well, especially where the period before November 1918 is concerned. Before 1918, it was especially the Slovak social democrats that reacted to the allegedly 'chauvinistic' and pro-Magyar policies of the Budapest party leadership, although occasionally there were German opposition voices as well. After 1918, it was the German and Magyar social democrats in Slovakia who reacted to Czechoslovak measures that seemed to forcibly transform the ethnopolitical power structure of Pressburg and to threaten the existing socio-economic positions of the Magyar and German working class. Both dimensions – the old grievances of the Slovaks, the new grievances of the Magyars and Germans – are important to examine in order to understand the dynamics of group relations in the city. Therefore, while the focus of the more detailed research is on the years of national-political transformation 1918–1919, I want to integrate this period of revolutionary change into a longer term analysis of the development of social democracy and interethnic relations. There is also an additional chapter on postrevolutionary developments in Bratislava and Slovakia during the years 1919–1921, which looks at the political and electoral successes and the subsequent disintegration of the social democratic movement, and at the problematic relationship between the German–Magyar and the Czechoslovak social democrats. I hope that the fact that I have chosen – in addition to primary sources – to base much of my analysis on material from Slovak publications has not resulted in biased interpretations. In fact, I believe that this is not the case, and my analysis of the revolutionary and postrevolutionary developments after 1918 aims to do full justice to the viewpoint of the German and Magyar social democratic and other critics of the new Czechoslovak regime. I have tried all along to fairly answer the following basic questions: What were the nature and consequences of the tension between integrating and differentiating tendencies in Pressburg's multinational social democratic movement? Why did the tendency towards national separatism eventually prevail?

In Chapters 2–4 I shall examine the broader historical context – or, rather, the different more specific contexts – of the question of national conflict and

national revolution: the structure of prerevolutionary Hungarian politics and society, the particular sociopolitical and multi-ethnic environment of Pressburg, and the national problems of the Hungarian social democratic movement. Chapter 2 analyses the development of Hungarian society and political life during the period between the Austro-Hungarian 'Compromise' (*Ausgleich*) of 1867 and the end of the Dual Monarchy in 1918. It will be argued that the backward 'semi-feudal' character of Hungarian society, the country's weakly developed democratic culture and highly restricted franchise in comparison with Austria, and the chauvinistic policies and narrow outlook of the ruling gentry, middle classes, and even a major proportion of the broader Magyar population were all key factors influencing the development of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party as well. Although the metropolis Budapest became an important economic and cultural centre, the level of social and economic development in Hungary as a whole was not sufficient to render the objective of creating a greater Magyar national state through assimilation of the other nationalities a realistic proposition. The Magyars were never even a majority of the overall population of 'Historical Hungary', while the Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs, and others were increasingly preoccupied with their own national aspirations, which also deeply influenced their social democratic labour movements. Chapter 3 focuses on the urban microcosm of Pressburg, whose ethnic structure and social atmosphere were different from those of Budapest. The demographic and economic growth of the city, the emergence of modern political movements, and changes in the city's ethnolingual structure as a result of the Magyarisation policy were principal determinants of the social and political conflicts in the period between 1867 and 1918. While the economic and political struggles of Pressburg's working class tended to unite people of different nationalities on issues like universal suffrage and better wages and working conditions, the ways in which workers belonging to different national groups responded to policies of national oppression and forcible assimilation could be quite diverse. Given the specific ethnic make-up of Pressburg's social democratic movement and the influence exerted by the Czechs and Germans of nearby Vienna, tensions between different nationalities both within and outside Pressburg's social democracy had their own local flavour and political consequences, setting certain limits to the process of Magyarisation.

In Chapter 4 a detailed analysis will be made of how the national question in Hungary, which was different in some respects from the national question in the Austrian half of the Empire, helped to shape the development of the social democratic movement. Although the Hungarian Social Democratic Party claimed it rejected national as well as social oppression, it proved unable, perhaps unwilling, to deal with the problems resulting from the oppression of the non-Magyar nationalities, or indeed with the agrarian question in the semi-feudal countryside. It preferred to focus on the growing working class in the major cities, and even here some important social groups – in particular workers belonging to national minorities like the Slovaks – were often neglected. The party tended to believe that its principal task was to help Hungary 'complete her bourgeois-democratic revolution' and that the

achievement of universal suffrage and full democracy, or even of socialism itself, was a necessary precondition to 'resolving the national question'. Even if this analysis was in part correct (fighting for democracy was essential), the party tended to draw the wrong strategic conclusions from it, believing that the highly sensitive and politically dangerous national problem should – as far as this was possible at all – be evaded. As a result, it confined itself to making formal statements on the equality of all nationalities in Hungary, without seriously addressing the concrete social, cultural, and political manifestations of national oppression. It was inevitable that some minor concessions should be made to the non-Magyar social democrats in the field of internal party organisation, but the real significance of the national question was never seriously analysed and within the Hungarian party the influence of a man like Otto Bauer always remained limited. Arguably this type of thought and behaviour was convenient for party leaders who were influenced by Magyar nationalism themselves. But often they did not even have to be explicit about this, because the party's refusal to resist the trend of Magyarisation could be rationalised in terms of the 'Marxist' theory that the formation of large national units, including a modern and more homogeneous Hungary and Hungarian working class, promoted economic and social development and 'historical progress'. The final result was that in 1918 the Hungarian Social Democratic Party opposed the aspiration of 'national self-determination' of the Slovaks and other non-Magyar nationalities if this meant – which it did – complete state independence from Hungary.

In Chapters 5–8 the events in Pressburg during the revolutionary months of 1918–1919 will be analysed in detail. Chapter 5 will look at the reactions of the city's population to the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy and Historical Hungary and to the prospect of their incorporation into the Czechoslovak Republic. Probing the German-language press enables us to reconstruct the social, political, and ethnic consciousness and the shifting perspectives of Pressburg's predominantly German- and Magyar-speaking population in this situation of growing confusion and uncertainty.[27] During the increasingly chaotic revolutionary period after October 1918, the Wilsonian slogan of 'self-determination' was raised by practically all national and political groups and also led to a movement among the Hungarian Germans to assert their national identity and ethnocultural rights. In western Hungary there emerged a broad multiparty German national-democratic movement in which the social democrats played a prominent role and which demanded national-cultural, institutional, and even territorial autonomy for the relatively compact German-speaking region comprising parts of four Hungarian counties. The Pressburg Germans were part of this movement as well, but the impending Czechoslovak occupation of the city and county of Pressburg meant that they would be cut off from the rest of German West Hungary. The majority of the Germans eventually accepted the occupation as inevitable and began to support the idea of striving for cultural autonomy within the framework of the Czechoslovak State. Chapter 6 looks at how Pressburg was taken over by Czechoslovak troops, the important political role of the German social democrats – whose Workers' Council and armed guard controlled the city

during the interval between Hungarian and Czechoslovak rule – and political developments during the first weeks under the new regime. The German social democrats wanted a peaceful transition, rejected calls to put up resistance to the Czechoslovak army, and actually went so far as to suppress and disarm groups of Magyar Bolshevists, the so-called 'Red Guard', which said it wanted to fight for Hungary 'till the end'. The Czechoslovak authorities were happy with the 'constructive' attitude of the German social democrats and other German political groups and made promises to respect the position of the German language in Pressburg, to protect the jobs of former Hungarian government employees, etc. Unfortunately, some of these promises were not kept in the eyes of the German–Magyar labour movement, and in the course of January 1919 censorship measures and a number of other restrictive steps were taken culminating in the closing down of Pressburg's refractory Elisabeth University.

Chapter 7 describes how the initial atmosphere of hope turned into hatred as tension between the local Czechoslovak authorities and the 'non-Czechoslovak' population of Pressburg reached a climax during the first week of February. On 4 February 1919 the provisional Czechoslovak government administration, led by the Slovak political leader Vavro Šrobár, was transferred to Pressburg – which was to become the Slovak capital Bratislava – from the town of Žilina, and this historic event was to be accompanied by a series of festivities. The German and Magyar social democrats, however, as well as the bulk of the city's population, saw no reason to participate in these celebrations. Instead, a general strike was called by the Pressburg social democratic movement, which eventually led to the bloody incidents of 12 February. The strike was not supported by the Slovak social democrats and became another landmark in the mutual alienation between the different national and working-class groups. Chapter 8 follows the story after the February crisis by looking at the two elements of protest and pragmatism, both of which were characteristic of the attitude of the Pressburg social democratic movement. The German social democratic newspaper *Volksstimme* was severe in its condemnation of the local Czechoslovak authorities and the Czechoslovak State itself. It continued its campaign of moral rhetoric and political attacks on 'Czech Imperialism' and the 'anti-worker policies' of the government. But at the same time it was pragmatic enough also to seek some form of accommodation with the Bratislava authorities in order to survive as a relevant political factor and to make the best of what now had become a very difficult situation.

Chapter 9 addresses the further development of the multiethnic social democratic movement in Bratislava and Slovakia from 1919 to 1921. The first Czechoslovak general election in April 1920 showed that, among all national groups, the social democrats were the strongest political force. Czechoslovakia's democratic institutions and relatively liberalm national minority policies allowed the German, Magyar, and other minority social democrats to freely participate in political life and to seek cooperation with other groups, for example the Czechoslovak social democrats, if any political will in this direction could be developed. However, following the communist–social democratic split in the second half of 1920, which seriously

weakened the social democratic movement among all national groups, the German social democrats in Slovakia decided not to join the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party but the German Social Democratic Party of Bohemia and Moravia, which consistently refused to merge with the allegedly 'chauvinistic' Czechoslovak party. Thus the multinational and ethnocratic character of the Czechoslovak Republic continued to be reflected in the ethnic fragmentation of its social democratic parties and indeed of all other parties except (so it seemed) the communists. In the Czechoslovak parliament in Prague, German and Magyar social democratic MPs from Bratislava always displayed a critical attitude to the Czechoslovak State and its minority policies, but during the 1920s their political influence declined as a result of the rise of communist and nationalist movements, whose attitude was even more negative. Meanwhile, the Slovak social democrats in the Czechoslovak party were increasingly marginalised as well, losing much of their electoral support base after 1920 because of the communist defection and the negative reaction to their 'Czechoslovakist' pro-government and pro-centralist stance. With both the German and Magyar and the Slovak social democrats being relegated to the margins of political power in Slovakia, the importance of the social democratic movement in Czechoslovakia declined outside its major Czech, Bohemian-German, and a few Slovak strongholds. The Czechoslovak Republic itself remained a democratic state with an 'ethnocratic' dimension. This was the result of the Central European national revolution of 1918–1919, which transformed the interethnic power structure and deeply affected the social democratic movement across multinational Central Europe.

Notes

1. For the revolution, particularly its sociopolitical aspects, see F.L. Carsten, *Revolution in Central Europe 1918–1919*, Berkeley, 1972; Gábor Vermes, 'The October Revolution in Hungary: From Károlyi to Kun', in Iván Völgyes, ed., *Hungary in Revolution, 1918–19*, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1971, pp. 31–60; for its national- and state-political consequences, see Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, Seattle, 1977; for the specific character and meaning of the revolution in Slovakia, see Ismo Nurmi, *Slovakia – a Playground for Nationalism and National Identity. Manifestations of the National Identity of the Slovaks 1918–1920*, Helsinki, 1999; also Dušan Kováč, 'Rok 1918 v slovenských dejinách', in Stanislava Kučerová, ed., *Československtví – středoevropanství – evropanství. Úvahy, svědectví a fakta k 80. výročí vzniku Československa 1918–1998*, Brno, 1998, pp. 106–15.
2. See, for example, Marcel van der Linden and Lex Heerma van Voss, 'Introduction', in Lex Heerma van Voss and Marcel van der Linden, eds, *Class and Other Identities. Gender, Religion and Ethnicity in the Writing of European Labour History*, Oxford, 2002, esp. p. 21, where 'nation' as a sociopolitical factor, or an 'alternative' identity to class, is briefly mentioned but not systematically examined.
3. See, however, Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn, eds, *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870–1914: An International Perspective*, 2 vols, Leiden, 1990, in particular Jiři Kořalka in collaboration with Berthold Unfried, 'The Czech Workers' Movement in the Hapsburg Empire', pp. 321–46; Keith Hitchins, 'Hungary', pp. 347–66; Keith Hitchins, 'Rumania', pp. 369–92; Mira Bogdanović, 'Serbia', pp. 421–38. In this work contributions on the labour movement among the Slovaks and the non-Serb nationalities of the former Yugoslavia – the Croats, Slovenes, and others – are unfortunately not included.

4. It must be feared that this contrast in terms of 'sensitivity to the national question' helps to perpetuate the relatively limited degree of historiographic communication and coordination between historians from 'Western' and 'Eastern' Europe.
5. I do not want to engage in a general theoretical discussion of 'the origins and meaning of nationalism' detached from the concrete historical context I am concerned with. This is not relevant for the purpose of this study, which tries to describe how, and explain why, national consciousness and national aspirations were a principal factor in the evolution of the social democratic movement in Slovakia, Hungary, and East Central Europe; within this context some interpretative perspectives are examined. In fact, it is a legitimate question how far a 'theoretical' treatment of 'nationalism' in general is useful at all.
6. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1986, pp. 26–28, 30, 154–57 for the quotations and arguments; for a similar perspective, see J. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, 1982; see Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2nd edn, London, 1983 for an attempt to make sense of different theoretical perspectives on 'nationalism'.
7. Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 3, 98–106; see for the Slovak intelligentsia Ján Hučko, *Sociálne zloženie a pôvod slovenskej obrodeneckej inteligencie*, Bratislava, 1974. Hugh Seton-Watson has argued that in Eastern Europe the intelligentsia, both secular and clerical, constituted a special social stratum that played its own, highly important, political role, the Slovak clergy being a good example of this; see Hugh Seton-Watson, '"Intelligentsia" und Nationalismus in Osteuropa 1848–1918', *Historische Zeitschrift* 195 (1962), p. 334 for the Slovaks. In this sense, of course, the 'ideological constructionism' – but even more the cultural, political, and practical organisational role – of ethnic nationalists was crucial, and many of them, especially those who stressed the 'folkish' element and the importance of cultural and educational advancement of the people, had a profound influence on small-nation socialists as well. However, they could never have been successful without the existence of real cultural and historical foundations to their agitation work.
8. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, p. 7.
9. Hroch, *Social Preconditions*, pp. 184–85; Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication. An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966.
10. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, p. 163. Although Deutsch refers to Otto Bauer (see pp. 19–20), he does not mention Bauer's (indeed little-known) analysis of national assimilation among the working class, only his concept of the nation as a 'community of fate', i.e. of character and culture, which he criticises for its alleged failure to explain the nation's origin (in language and communication). However, for Bauer, both a Marxist and a Central European, to understand the nation as a historical community of language and communication was a matter of course.
11. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States. An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, London, 1977, p. 148 for 'official nationalism', pp. 157–69 for the Hungarians/Magyars, pp. 169–74 for the Slovaks.
12. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1991, pp. 101–10 for his discussion of Hungarian 'official nationalism', which was partly rooted in the Magyar opposition to the Habsburgs, however, not only in the desire to denationalise the non-Magyar nationalities. Remarkably enough, Karl W. Deutsch is not mentioned in Anderson's book at all, nor are other proponents of a more 'objectivist' approach to nationalism, such as Hroch. The need for an analysis of real social, political, and cultural positions of ethnic groups, not just of nationalist 'myth-making', is, however, especially relevant in the context of studies that are concerned with conflicts between actors like governments and mature social and political mass movements (including both nationalist and social democratic movements).
13. Otto Bauer, 'Die Bedingungen der nationalen Assimilation', *Der Kampf* 5, no. 6 (March 1912): 246–63; see also Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie*, Vienna, 1907.

14. 'Provisorische Nationalversammlung für Deutschösterreich. Stenographisches Protokoll zur 7. Sitzung (Berichterstattung). Wien, 4. Dezember 1918 … Staatssekretär Dr. Bauer', in Klaus Koch, Walter Rauscher, and Arnold Suppan, eds, *Aussenpolitische Dokumente der Republik Österreich 1918–1938 (ADÖ). 1. Selbstbestimmung der Republik: 21. Oktober 1918 bis 14. März 1919*, Vienna, 1993, document 65, p. 252.
15. *Robotnícke noviny* (RN), 17 October 1918; see also Vladimír Lehotský, 'Prvá svetová vojna (1914–1918)', in Darina Lehotská and Ján Pleva, eds, *Dejiny Bratislavy*, Bratislava, 1966, p. 326; Pavel Hapák, 'Robotnícke hnutie a otázka rozpadu Uhorska', in Pavel Hapák, ed., *Dejiny Slovenska IV (od konca 19. stor. do roku 1918)*, Bratislava, 1986, pp. 475ff.
16. For an interesting essay on Bratislava and its different historical names in the German, Magyar, and Slovak languages, see Ľubomír Lipták, 'Bratislava as the Capital of Slovakia', in Ľubomír Lipták, *Changes of Changes: Society and Politics in Slovakia in the 20th Century*, Bratislava, 2002, esp. p. 95.
17. Dušan Provazník, 'V prvom desaťroči v ČSR', in D. Lehotská and J. Pleva, eds, *Dejiny Bratislavy*, p. 350; see Chapter 3 for further statistical data and analyses.
18. Miloš Gosiorovský, *Dejiny slovenského robotníckeho hnutia (1848–1918)*, Bratislava, 1958, p. 153.
19. The image of Pressburg as a city with a 'German spirit' was widespread in Budapest and caused the Hungarian parliament to have its doubts on the wisdom of supporting the project of a second railway line between Pressburg and Vienna, which might strengthen the German cultural influence of Vienna and the German character of Pressburg and weaken the position of Magyardom; on this, see Eleónora Babejová, 'Obraz Bratislavy v diskusii uhorského parlamentu o elektrickej dráhe do Viedne', *Historický časopis* 51, no. 1 (2003), pp. 101–12.
20. Gosiorovský, *Dejiny*, p. 222.
21. Thus for a number of years the Slovak social democratic newspaper *Slovenské robotnícke noviny* (Slovak Worker News), established in 1904, and the Slovak section of the Pressburg Workers' Educational Society, formed in 1905, were housed in the German-dominated Arbeiterheim, and significantly the suggestion made by the Hungarian Social Democratic Party leader Manó Buchinger in 1910 that the Slovak Nationality Committee should be removed from Pressburg to Budapest was rejected by the Slovaks. See Fraňo Ruttkay, *Robotnícka žurnalistika v sociálnom a národnom hnutí Slovákov (1897–1918)*, Martin, 1980, pp. 213, 216.
22. Eleónora Babejová has a similar approach with regard to ethnic relations in the city as a whole. See Eleónora Babejová, *Fin-de-Siècle Pressburg. Conflict and Cultural Coexistence in Bratislava 1897–1914*, New York, 2003.
23. A crossroads can be understood as an intersection of two or more roads (ethnic influences, ethnic territories), as well as a critical point where a decision has to be made (the political future and identity of Pressburg).
24. While on the German labour movement in Bohemia and Moravia there are at least a few major and minor studies, this is not the case with regard to the history of the German labour movement in Hungary and Slovakia. See, for example, Stanislav Sikora, Viliam S. Hótar, Ivan Laluha, and Boris Zala, eds, *Kapitoly z dejín sociálnej demokracie na Slovensku*, Bratislava, 1996, where almost no attention is paid to the important German social democrats of Pressburg. Another group whose historiography is very incomplete – and, needless to say, for similar and even more tragic reasons – is the Jews of Pressburg/Bratislava; their history partly overlaps with that of the city's old German population.
25. The Czech historian Jiří Kořalka, for example, has noted that an important problem of Central European historiography is its practitioners' insufficient knowledge of the various regional languages – 'How many Czech historians can read Hungarian?', he asks – and that in all Central European countries the development of broader historiographic perspectives beyond one's own national history must be accompanied by obtaining a wider knowledge of the different Central European languages. See Jiří Kořalka, 'Probleme einer böhmischen, tschechischen oder tschechoslowakischen Geschichte', in Herwig Wolfram and Walter Pohl, eds, *Probleme der Geschichte Österreichs und ihrer Darstellung*, Vienna, 1991, p. 243.
26. The topic of labour history itself is often associated with communist ideology and studied by only a handful of people. For some observations on the state and development of

sociohistorical research in Slovakia, see Dušan Kováč, 'Probleme der sozialhistorischen Forschung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in der slowakischen Historiographie', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 34 (1994), esp. pp. 126–29, where the author notes that the 'disproportion' between the amount of literature and the level of knowledge in the field of labour history is the 'greatest paradox' in Slovak historiography, and that 'in society the history of the working-class movement is strongly compromised' and that 'it does not enjoy a great popularity in the scientific community'. See also Dušan Kováč, 'Die Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung und die Sozialgeschichte in der slowakischen Historiographie seit 1945', *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen* 23 (2000): 100–10, where this 'paradox' is mentioned again, even with regard to social history in general. See further Stanislav Sikora, 'Die Sozialdemokratie in der Slowakei: Ein Forschungsbericht', *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen* 23 (2000): 111–20; Gabriela Dudeková, 'Sociálne dejiny 19. a 20. storočia na Slovensku – bilancia a nové impulzy', *Historický časopis* 52, no. 2 (2004): 331–46.

27. Unfortunately, the year 1918 of the German social democratic newspaper *Westungarische Volksstimme* is missing among the historical newspaper collections in Bratislava and elsewhere, which makes it more difficult to reconstruct some of the details of the role played by the social democrats during the critical last months of 1918. But the fact that some other German newspapers for these months have survived enables us to follow developments among the Pressburg population as a whole, including the activities of the local German social democrats.

CHAPTER 2

IN 'DARKEST HUNGARY'

In 1944 an intriguing little book entitled *In Darkest Hungary* was published in the series Left Book Club Editions in London. Its author was the little-known G. Pálóczy-Horváth, but the introduction was written by none other than Michael (Mihály) Károlyi, the exiled former president of the short-lived democratic republic of Hungary that existed from November 1918 to March 1919. Károlyi explains that the book was written by Pálóczy-Horváth in collaboration with a Hungarian peasant and that the author 'unfolds before us the history of the disinherited Hungarian peasantry, thus shedding light upon a sombre landscape. Indeed, in this book the Chinese wall is blasted behind which the world of feudal Hungary lay hidden.'[1] The style and manner of presentation of the book does indeed suggest that it is a man of the common people who is speaking to us, informing the reader about the social, economic, and political conditions in the Hungarian countryside. But there is also a general understanding of the course of Hungarian and European history, which betrays the hand of a Hungarian intellectual or educated political figure. The book is written more or less from the standpoint of 'agrarian socialism', in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Hungary a political rival of social democracy, and also from a Magyar (ethnic-Hungarian) perspective. Among other things, mention is made of strikes of Magyar agricultural labourers in central Hungary in 1897 and 1905–1906, which were defeated by the landowners with the help of Slovak, Romanian, and Serb strike-breakers. 'These foreigners were actually paid the wages we were asking for,' says the unknown peasant co-author of *In Darkest Hungary* – 'Do *you* understand our lords? We don't.'[2] Perhaps it would be wrong to say that the book is characterised by Magyar chauvinism, given the sense of injustice, social exclusion, and class antagonism transpiring through its pages. However, it is suggested by the author himself that there existed a strong national consciousness among the Magyar agricultural proletariat and poor peasantry, indeed, that these social classes were suffering from a kind of wounded pride because of their political exclusion from a nation that was entirely dominated by the gentry and aristocracy.[3] The Hungarian ruling class ('our lords') is even

accused of 'treason' for their constantly importing 'foreign workers' (in fact, fellow-Hungarian workers from other ethnic groups, mostly poor migrants and seasonal labourers) and for having 'chased to America … 1,500,000 Hungarians'. It is argued that, if they had not done this, 'there would not have been a mixed population problem in Hungary, or at least the problem would have been much smaller'.[4] This claim is rather bizarre, because among the emigrants leaving for America from Hungary there were disproportionately large numbers of Slovaks, Ruthenians, and other non-Magyars.[5] If these statements by the authors of *In Darkest Hungary* reflected the true feelings of a significant section of the Magyar proletariat, it must be concluded that in Hungary exploitation and class oppression by no means eliminated national pride and national consciousness among the poor and the working class.[6] Indeed, even less than among the Magyars was this the case among workers and peasants belonging to 'nationalities' (national minorities) like the Slovaks or the Romanians, who were constantly made aware of their national identity by the Hungarian policy of harsh national oppression.

In Darkest Hungary illustrates the complex relationship between social, ethnic, and political factors in multinational Hungary during the era of Austro-Hungarian 'Dualism' following the Compromise of 1867. In this chapter I shall try to identify some of the principal features of the 'semi-feudal' society of Dualist Hungary in order to understand the social and political conditions in which the Hungarian social democratic movement emerged. I shall pay attention to questions of social structure and political regime and, in particular, to the consequences of national inequality, forcible assimilation and denationalisation ('Magyarisation'), and political repression. I shall try to show how these problems influenced both the Magyars and the subordinate 'nationalities' and how they helped to shape the outlook and political strategy of Hungarian social democracy. The course of developments during the period 1867–1918 culminated in the revolutionary crisis of 1918. Although it is possibly too simplistic to say that the political crisis and national revolution of 1918 were the inevitable outcome of a half-century of escalating national and social conflicts, the final collapse of multinational 'Historical Hungary' would never have happened without these earlier events. The last year of the First World War was the crucial moment when the manifold social and political contradictions in Hungary came inexorably to a head, making revolutionary upheaval almost predictable. When investigating the trend of developments during the decades preceding the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy and Historical Hungary, I found it especially useful to look at the material in the still highly instructive work of R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (1908), as well as other publications of this remarkable Scottish contemporary historian of early twentieth-century Eastern Europe. The undiminished importance of Seton-Watson's book on Hungary is shown, among other things, by the fact that a new Slovak translation was published in the 1990s. Another important contemporary analyst of the complexities of old multinational Hungary who still deserves our attention is the critical Hungarian social scientist (and politician) Oszkár Jászi, whose publications cannot fail to inform any serious student of the subject.[7]

Features of multinational Hungary

Multinational post-Compromise Hungary was a peculiar social and political formation in which an essentially traditional social class, the Magyar middle nobility ('gentry') and aristocracy, who claimed to represent the historical interests of the state and of the dominant Magyar nation, ruled supreme. The Hungary ruled by this gentry class has often been defined as 'semi-feudal'.[8] This definition may seem somewhat vague and unsatisfactory, but should convey the crucial fact that the country's social structure and political order were a strange mix of the atavistic and the quasi-modern. Apart from a small number of large aristocratic landowners who successfully modernised their agricultural production, the traditional nobility – a sizeable stratum representing more than 5 per cent of the total Hungarian and almost 12.5 per cent of the Magyar population, including the numerous impoverished lower nobility – was an economically declining class that during the nineteenth century developed a modern 'national-liberal' ideology associated with the revolution of 1848 and the name of the Hungarian revolutionary leader Lajos Kossuth.[9] The virtual absence of a modern middle class among the Magyars – many important urban social positions and modern economic activities were controlled by German-speakers and Jews – meant that the Magyar middle and lesser nobility, the traditional champion of Hungary's political autonomy, took on the task of fighting for constitutional reform and national independence instead of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, those among the nobility who lost their economic basis looked to national politics for an alternative career. As a Hungarian-American historian described it: 'After the Napoleonic wars the lesser nobility was rapidly losing its foothold in the agrarian economy, and the offspring of declining landed families began to look to the administrative and political institutions of the national state as instruments that might save their ranks from economic ruin and social degradation.'[10] The revolution of 1848–1849 brought a formal liberation of the peasants (much against the will of many landowners), short-lived Hungarian independence from the Habsburg rulers, and above all bloody conflicts with the non-Magyar nationalities, who resisted the Magyar refusal to recognise their cultural and national rights. The fact that the dominant Magyar gentry, which by the mid-nineteenth century had absorbed almost all non-Magyar noble elements, refused to grant the other nations what it claimed for the Magyar nation itself led to a natural alliance between the non-Magyars and the Habsburgs.

However, in 1867 Austria, which had been seriously weakened by the lost war of 1866 against Prussia, was forced to accept a restructuring of the Habsburg Empire, known as the *Ausgleich* (Compromise). This made the Kingdom of Hungary – whose institutions had never been fully brought under control by the Habsburgs – an autonomous and equal partner to the Austrian Crown Lands, which were directly controlled by Vienna. It was the end of the Habsburg attempts to create a centralised state, which now became a 'Dual Monarchy'. It soon became clear that this arrangement, even if it did not go far enough in the eyes of the more extreme advocates of Hungarian independence, created favourable conditions for the Magyar project of

transforming multinational Hungary into a unified Magyar national state. While the social position of the majority of the peasantry remained almost as bad as it had been before their official liberation in 1848, the leaders of the non-Magyar nationalities could be relentlessly attacked now that Vienna had effectively withdrawn from the Hungarian domestic political arena. The so-called 'liberal gentry' of Hungary – 'liberal' on account of its long history of struggle against Habsburg absolutism and for Hungarian 'constitutional freedoms' – now was to show itself in its true colours of an arrogant and short-sighted ruling class that had adopted the modern phraseology of nineteenth-century nationalism in order to legitimate its claims to class domination and national supremacy. This does not mean that the chauvinistic language and often megalomaniac rhetoric of Hungarian 'patriotism' expressed by the Hungarian ruling and middle classes were not a matter of deep conviction. Indeed, Magyar nationalism was inculcated in the broader population by the chauvinist press and the culture of 'patriotic education' so vigorously that also many ordinary Magyar workers and peasants were influenced by it. Even Magyar democrats, radicals, and socialists found it difficult not to believe that the Magyars were a more civilised and advanced nation than the other nationalities in multinational Hungary. By the second half of the nineteenth century, it was generally accepted by the great majority of those belonging to, or identifying with, the dominant Magyar nation that in Hungary there could be only one politically recognised nation – the Magyar nation. What remained to be done was to make the whole of Hungary coincide with the Magyar nation by assimilating the non-Magyar 'nationalities', who were seen as essentially non-political ethnolingual ('ethnographic') minorities whose historical fate it was to become part of the greater Magyar nation.[11]

After the Compromise of 1867, the relatively liberal atmosphere of the 1860s began to give way to a more repressive climate. It is true that in 1868 the Hungarian government was forced to reconfirm the autonomous status of Croatia-Slavonia in the so-called 'Croatian Mini-Compromise'. For historical, constitutional, and linguistic reasons, Croatia was the only part of multinational Hungary where a policy of Magyarisation and complete Magyar control was acknowledged to be impossible. The number of Magyars in Croatia-Slavonia was too insignificant, the tradition of Croatian constitutional autonomy too strong; the Croats had their own parliament and, in contrast to the other 'nationalities', even an independent Social Democratic Party. However, the Hungarian government did all it could to reduce the political leverage of the Croats to a minimum and to influence the legal and political decision-making process in the country. In the same year, 1868, the autonomous status of Transylvania was liquidated, and thereafter the policy of Magyarisation was relentlessly pursued in all regions of 'Hungary proper' (i.e. unified Hungary exclusive of Croatia-Slavonia) where national minorities were living, that is, with regard to the Slovaks, Germans, Ruthenians, Romanians, and Serbs. The Hungarians were fond of producing highly optimistic statistical figures showing the progress of assimilation and Magyarisation. By omitting Croatia from the picture and only looking at Hungary proper, the Hungarian statisticians could boast a Magyar majority by 1900. The census of that year

showed that 51.4 per cent of Hungary's population of 16,721,574 was made up of Magyar-speakers (i.e. people who reported that they regarded Magyar as their mother tongue); by 1910 this had risen to 54.6 per cent, which apparently led to great enthusiasm in some Hungarian patriotic circles. But in the Kingdom of Hungary as a whole, that is, including Croatia, the Magyars were not even a majority in 1910; the census of that year showed that they represented only 48.1 per cent of the total population of Historical Hungary.[12] In the urban centres, however, the policy of Magyarisation was more successful than in the country as a whole.

In 1900, when the 8,588,834 Magyars represented 51.4 per cent of the population of Hungary proper, there were 2,784,726 Romanians (16.7 per cent), 1,991,402 Slovaks (11.9 per cent), 1,980,423 Germans (11.8 per cent), and smaller groups of Serbs, Ruthenians, and others. The number of Jews, many of whom were understandably keen to embrace the Magyar nationality in order to enhance their social acceptability and upward mobility, was 851,378, i.e. more than 5 per cent of the total Hungarian population. This was an important source the Magyarisers could draw on, especially in the expanding cities. In the urban centres indeed no less than 74.8 per cent of the population was reported to be of Magyar nationality in 1900, although there were some important exceptions to the overall picture of Magyar dominance. The Magyar preponderance had a lot to do with the seemingly successful assimilation of urban Germans and Jews, traditionally important social groups in the towns of Hungary. In Budapest, which in 1900 had a population of 716,476, of whom 79.3 per cent were Magyars, there were nevertheless 101,682 German-speakers and 24,720 Slovaks. In Pressburg (61,527 inhabitants in 1900) more than 50 per cent were German-speakers. The same held true for the west Hungarian town of Ödenburg (Sopron), with its 30,628 inhabitants, and for the south-eastern city of Temeschburg (Temesvár/Timisoara), which had a population of 49,624.[13] The criterion for establishing nationality in Hungary was based on a flexible definition of mother tongue, namely (in 1910) 'the language the person in question considers his own, the language he masters best and uses most willingly'. This rather subjective criterion – almost as subjective as the criterion of 'language of communication' used in the Austrian census – meant that many people whose mother tongue was actually not Magyar, but who deemed it wise to 'acknowledge' it to be (especially those who were employed by the government, or who were otherwise economically dependent or easily intimidated), were reported to be of Magyar nationality. There were tens of thousands, perhaps several hundred thousand Slovaks, Germans, and others who could be regarded as so-called 'statistical Magyars', people whose mother tongue was Slovak, German, or Romanian, but who were registered as Magyars because in addition to their native language they had a relatively good knowledge of the Magyar language and were in one way or another pressurised to declare that they 'preferred' to speak it.[14] This does not change the fact that there was also a good deal of sociologically 'natural' or 'spontaneous' assimilation of non-Magyars who wanted to rise on the social scale, especially in the cities.[15] Indeed, there were those – Jews, Germans,

Slovaks (who were denounced as 'renegades' or 'Magyarones' by nationally conscious Slovaks) – who voluntarily, even enthusiastically, embraced Magyardom and the Magyar language.

It is likely, therefore, that a significant number of 'Magyars' in the Hungarian statistics were by no means people of clear-cut Magyar nationality or Magyar loyalty. That many people in multilingual Hungary spoke two, sometimes even three, languages was another interesting sociological fact defying simple classifications – even if the growing politicisation of national identity increasingly encouraged people to define themselves in terms of one national identity to the exclusion of others. On the one side, Magyarisers tried to turn bilingual people into Magyars; on the other, non-Magyar patriots tried to win (or keep) them for the Slovak, the Croat, or the Romanian national movement. In circles of the Hungarian administration, the Magyar ruling strata, and all 'patriotic Hungarians', wishful thinking was a well-known phenomenon. The very fact that the Magyar language – in contrast to Slovak or German – did not distinguish between 'Hungarian' as a state-political or territorial concept and 'Magyar' as an ethnonational or linguistic concept (both being referred to as *magyar*), may have encouraged Magyar politicians to think in terms of the two being, or at least having to be, identical and conterminous. The exaggerated Magyar urge to prove the success of the assimilation policy was also an indication of uncertainty, of feelings of political insecurity on the part of the Hungarian State and many individual Magyars, who felt they were surrounded by large masses of people belonging to the Slav, Romanian, and German nations.[16] If in Historical Hungary as a whole the Magyars were not even a majority by 1910, it was clear that a lot of assimilatory work remained to be done and that ruthless policies would have to be pursued in order to achieve the great unitary mono-ethnic Magyar State that Magyar nationalists were dreaming of.

Awareness of the need for drastic measures had already been acute by 1870, when the 'softer' attitude of old-style Hungarian liberals like József Eötvös and Ferenc Deák was becoming less popular. These two men were the principal authors of the 'Law on Equal Rights of the Nationalities' (afterwards known as the 'Nationalities' Law') of 1868, which in theory granted Hungarian citizens belonging to the non-Magyar nationalities certain cultural and linguistic rights. The 'nationalities' were not recognised as corporate national entities, but even the modest 'concessions' made by the law to ethnolingual minorities of citizens were only made on paper and never put into practice. Like almost all Magyar politicians, Eötvös and Deák strove for assimilation of the non-Magyar nationalities, but unlike others they wanted to accomplish this by 'humane methods' of social persuasion, by making the embracing of Magyar culture and nationality an attractive option, and by making certain tactical concessions to some of the linguistic demands of the non-Magyars. The Nationalities' Law emphasised the political unity of Hungary and defined the concessions that could be made to the minorities in such a way that this unity was not endangered. The two most important concessions were the right of non-Magyar nationalities to enjoy primary and secondary education through the medium of their own mother tongue and

the right to use their language in local administration. But these 'rights' were not upheld in practice, because it was always argued by the Hungarian government of the day that the implementation of these minority language provisions would jeopardise the fundamental and more important aim of maintaining the unity of Hungary. The Nationalities' Law of 1868 was merely used as a piece of decorum to make the outside world believe in Hungary's liberal intentions. The reality was that shortly after 1868 there followed a series of repressive measures aimed at non-Magyar educational, cultural, and political institutions, which shocked the victims as well as the small number of critical observers reporting on them. The nature of Magyar 'liberalism' and of the Hungarian political order was such that R.W. Seton-Watson felt urged to write that 'the non-Magyar nationalities are the victims of a policy of repression, which is without any parallel in civilised Europe'.[17]

Growing national oppression

The Slovaks were among the first victims of the new brutal denationalisation and repression policies of post-Compromise Hungary. In 1874 the three Slovak gymnasiums established by the Slovak Lutheran and Catholic Churches in the 1860s were closed down by the Hungarian authorities, followed in 1875 by the Slovak cultural institute Matica slovenská, whose property was simply confiscated. Hungarian Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza of the ruling Liberal Party responded to the request that at least the Matica's property be returned to its rightful owner, the Slovak nation, with the memorable statement: 'There is no Slovak nation.' During the 1870s, even voluntary associations like Slovak temperance leagues and Slovak choral societies were dissolved. The argument for the government's arbitrary behaviour was that the Slovaks were under the influence of dangerous 'pan-Slav' activities, which had become a standard allegation that may have resulted in part from a genuine Magyar fear of Slav nationalism, both in Hungary and in the rest of the Monarchy, and in part from the increasing tendency to justify political repression with arguments bordering on paranoia. In 1879, a law was passed prescribing that Magyar was a compulsory subject in all primary schools. A law from 1891 laid down that non-Magyar kindergartens had to teach elementary Magyar to the children. The ultimate objective of Hungarian school policy was that Magyar should become the sole language of instruction at all secondary and primary schools; this was gradually implemented in the course of the following years. While Slovak-language secondary schools were liquidated almost at one blow, the network of Slovak primary schools was slowly strangled. The first to go were the state primary schools with Slovak as a language of instruction; this was followed by the gradual reduction to a pitiful minimum of the number of church schools where Slovak children had found a last refuge. By 1905 the number of primary schools where Slovak was a language of instruction had fallen to 241, down from 1,821 in the year 1869, and this was even before the infamous Education Act of 1907. This law, by further restricting the use of non-Magyar languages in the lower classes of primary schools and demanding

that non-Magyar children master the Magyar language after four years at school, represented the epitome of the forcible Magyarisation of the Hungarian school system – a system that also included political control of teachers and headmasters.[18]

One cannot overestimate the importance of education as a means of promoting the objective of Magyarising Slovak, German, Romanian, Serb, and Ruthene children, even if the most significant result was anti-Magyar hatred instead of assimilation of entire ethnic groups. When in 1887 another Education Bill was discussed by the Hungarian Parliament, an exceptional Magyar MP, Lajos Mocsáry of the oppositional Independence Party, had the courage to protest against the prevailing chauvinist atmosphere. He criticised the expulsion of Slovak students from Hungarian gymnasiums (usually for 'pan-Slav activity', but even reading Slovak books or speaking Slovak in public could be defined as such), the artificial Magyarisation of ancient Slav and Romanian place names, and the fact that the Hungarian courts rejected all petitions (often the only means of protest left to non-Magyar citizens) drawn up in non-Magyar languages, which he said was a contravention of the Nationalities' Law. Mocsáry described the complete Magyarisation of Hungary as a 'Utopian idea'. He said: 'The Government must never forget that it is governing a polyglot country, that it is equally a Government for Magyars, Slovaks and Serbs, that … there are citizens of various races among whom not only the burdens but also the rights must be divided equally.' He knew that the government preferred to forget this.

> But the Government sees a strong power in the Chauvinist movement, and therefore dares not oppose it … No wonder, then, that in this country every man takes upon himself to infringe and exploit the law, and that we in this house can say in the very face of Government and Parliament, that the laws are not observed, that the Act of 1868 exists solely on paper and is not executed in any single point.

Prime Minister Tisza replied that Mocsáry was making himself the prophet of those who 'are filled with hatred against the Magyar race and the Magyar state'. The fact that in 1886 eleven Slovak students had been expelled from a gymnasium at Leutschau/Levoča in eastern Slovakia Tisza explained by saying that they were guilty of reading a Slovak newspaper that 'agitated against the State' and singing a song that 'fostered hatred of the Magyars' – such a spirit 'could not be tolerated' in Hungarian institutions.[19] Similar cases of expulsions of Slovaks from various high schools in Hungary occurred in 1894, 1896, 1900, and 1907. As a result of his criticism, Mocsáry was forced to resign from the Independence Party and ostracised from Hungarian politics. His comments on Hungarian national-minority policy and state repression are an important piece of evidence on the trend of Magyar politics in the late nineteenth century. It is also obvious that the oppositional Independence Party – which advocated complete Hungarian independence from Vienna – was no less chauvinistic than the ruling Liberal Party.

During the 1890s Magyar chauvinism and political repression reached new heights. Slovak and other non-Magyar meetings were usually prohibited and

the Slovak and Romanian press was actively persecuted. In 1896 Hungary celebrated its so-called 'Millennium' in commemoration of the fact that one thousand years earlier, allegedly in the year 896, the original Magyars had arrived in the Carpathian Basin and not long after had founded the Hungarian state. In 1895 the new Hungarian Prime Minister Desző Bánffy declared that 'without Chauvinism it is impossible to found the unitary Magyar national state', and that assimilation of the non-Magyars was essential for the future of Hungary; he advocated pushing 'blindly forward' with this project.[20] Here we have an example of a leading Magyar politician taking pride in using the term 'chauvinism', which was not at all regarded as negative. Interestingly, the 'liberal' Bánffy was afraid not only of the national minorities and the socialists, but also of the new Hungarian People's Party, a movement of Political Catholicism advocating social and political reforms. In a letter to the foreign minister of Austria-Hungary he wrote that the party was even more dangerous than the Christian socials in Austria, because its ideology led to 'agrarian socialism' and would encourage 'nationalist tendencies' among the nationalities.[21] The Millennium of 1896 enormously enhanced Magyar self-confidence and national arrogance, but also led to animosity between Magyars and non-Magyars and a strengthening of non-Magyar resistance in several parts of Hungary. In the southern city of Novi Sad, for example, the Serb population openly refused to participate in the celebrations, and the political leaders of the different non-Magyar nationalities began to seek closer cooperation to make their opposition to Hungarian repression policies more effective.[22] The year 1896 also witnessed a general election that surpassed all previous elections as far as the level of administrative corruption, violence, and intimidation was concerned, practices that were normal in Hungarian elections. Another policy enthusiastically pursued was the Magyarisation of family names and place names, official policy since the 1880s. After 1896 this policy was more systematically enforced, with the Hungarian Minister of the Interior instructing county and municipal authorities in 1898 to 'invite' all local officials to adopt Magyar names. Similar pressure was brought to bear upon headmasters, post office employees, railway officials, etc., whereby promotion was made dependent on their compliance.[23] Growing numbers of people with German, Jewish, or Slovak names, at first mainly government employees and those belonging to the middle class but increasingly also people belonging to the lower middle classes, the 'labour aristocracy', and even ordinary workers, adopted brand new Magyar names, which were usually a Magyar 'translation' or bastardisation of their original names. The compulsory Magyarisation of all Hungarian place names, many artificially fabricated, was another example of what has been described as 'historical vandalism' and 'Magyaromania'.[24] Some people in Hungary dared to protest against these measures, for example a delegation of Germans ('Saxons') from Transylvania, otherwise not known for their oppositional inclinations, who met with abuse on the part of the government and the Hungarian Parliament.

At the end of 1904 a protracted political crisis began, due to the escalating conflict between the ruling Liberal Party and a 'Coalition' of Hungarian opposition parties led by the Independence Party. In the general election of

January 1905, the liberals, who had ruled Hungary for more than three decades and who were confronted with accusations that they were too soft on defending Hungarian national interests vis-à-vis Austria, suffered a historic defeat. The principal demand of the opposition parties was the introduction of Magyar instead of German as the language of command and communication in all army units in Hungary. Forced on the defensive and faced with the nationalist demands of the Coalition parties, which he knew Emperor Franz Joseph and the Austrian government would never accept, the liberal Prime Minister Géza Fejérváry – who led an 'unconstitutional' minority government after the lost election – and the new Minister of the Interior József Kristóffy, in alliance with Franz Joseph himself, put forward a proposal for the introduction of universal suffrage in Hungary. It was similar to the scheme soon to be carried out in Austria, which in 1907 experienced its first general election on the basis of universal manhood suffrage. In July 1905 Kristóffy even received a delegation of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, some of whose leaders were willing to support him if he proved serious about introducing universal suffrage, a crucial social democratic demand. The minister gave a speech to the visiting social democrats, explaining his belief that the introduction of universal suffrage was the only way for Hungary to get out of its social and political deadlock. However, when the Coalition leaders withdrew their more extreme nationalist demands – including the introduction of Magyar as the army's language of command in Hungary – and made peace with Franz Joseph in secret negotiations, the emperor withdrew his support for the scheme of universal suffrage in Hungary. The threat of introducing universal suffrage had fulfilled its purpose of intimidating the Coalition parties, to whom the idea was apparently even more distasteful than to the liberals. In April 1906 a Coalition-dominated interim cabinet was formed, and the next month there followed another general election, which again resulted in a victory of the Coalition parties, foremost among whom was the Independence Party.[25]

Since expectations of franchise reform had been raised in Hungary, the new Coalition Government made promises to introduce it in the future and submitted a Universal Suffrage Bill. However, neither the government nor parliament accomplished anything in the following years, which led to a fragmentation of the Independence Party, with only the left wing seeming to be serious about franchise reform. The final passing of a new franchise bill in 1913 by the liberals, who had returned to power in 1910 under a new name, only meant a minor broadening of the franchise, which remained restricted to about one-third of adult men.[26] In July 1910, a prominent member of the Hungarian parliament expressed a widespread ruling-class opinion when he said: 'If we (Magyars) let the sovereignty out of our hands, we can never recover it. No serious man in this country can be a supporter of Universal Equal and Secret Suffrage.'[27] Indeed, the post-1906 Coalition Government soon surpassed the liberals, several of whom went over to the Coalition parties, in the intensity of its suppression of the political activities of the national minorities as well as the socialists. It was clear that both Magyar political camps, with the exception of a few Independence Party democrats, agreed on