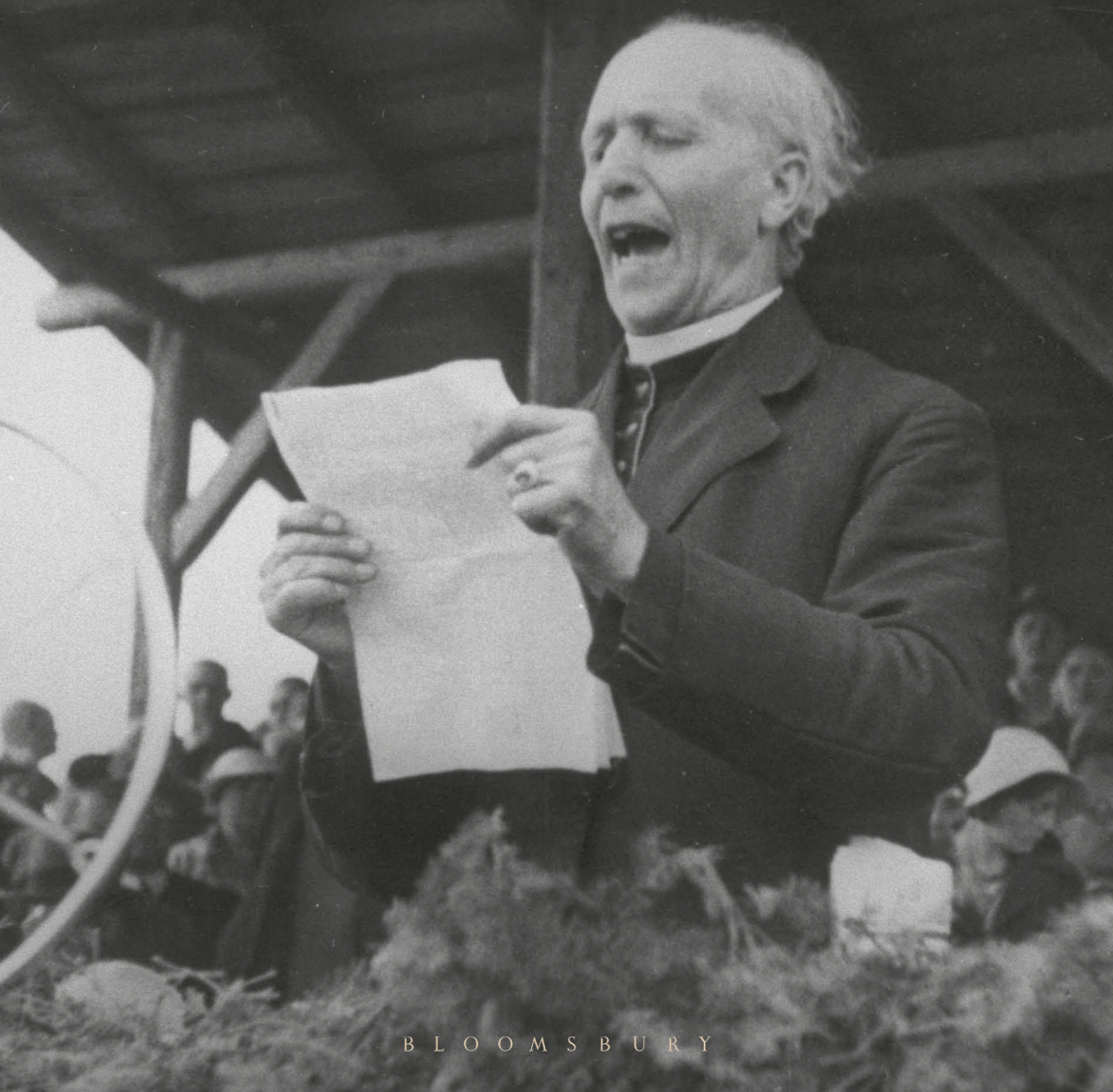


THE MAKING OF THE SLOVAK PEOPLE'S PARTY

Religion, Nationalism and the Culture War
in Early 20th-Century Europe

Thomas Lorman



BLOOMSBURY

The Making of the Slovak People's Party

International Library of Twentieth Century History

The International Library of Twentieth Century History comprises monographs for scholars and libraries focusing on historical events of the 20th century, with a special focus on World War II and European History. The series presents original research and as such aims to widen our knowledge of the period by publishing new voices in the field.

Published

Terrorism in Pakistan: The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Challenge to Security, N. Elahi

America's Forgotten Middle East Initiative: The King-Crane Commission of 1919, Andrew Patrick

The Hidden War in Argentina: British and American Espionage in World War II, Panagiotis Dimitrakis

Women, Antifascism and Mussolini's Italy: The Life of Marion Cave Rosselli, Isabelle Richet

Historians at the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial: Their Role as Expert Witnesses, Matthew Turner

Forthcoming

Armenia and Europe: Foreign Aid and Environmental Politics in the Post-Soviet Caucasus, Pål Wilter Skedsmo

Censorship and Propaganda in World War I: A Comprehensive History, Eberhard Demm

The Making of the Slovak People's Party

Religion, Nationalism and the Culture War in
Early 20th-Century Europe

Thomas Lorman

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo are trademarks of
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain 2019

Copyright © Thomas Lorman, 2019

Thomas Lorman has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and
Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

For legal purposes the Acknowledgements on p. vii constitute an extension
of this copyright page.

Cover design: Tjasa Krivec

Cover image: Andrej Hlinka (priest and politician) speaks at the state celebration in Nitra
Czechoslovakia on 12 August 1933, which he disrupted. (© CTK / Alamy Stock Photo)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted
in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission
in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for, any
third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given in this
book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher regret any
inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have ceased to exist, but
can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3501-0937-7
ePDF: 978-1-3501-0938-4
eBook: 978-1-3501-0939-1

Series: International Library of Twentieth Century History

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com
and sign up for our newsletters.

Contents

List of Illustrations	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Note on Terminology	viii
 Introduction: <i>In the Name of God</i>	 1
1 The Liberal Onslaught	9
2 A New Opposition	51
3 The Birth of the Party	103
4 Purging the Party	125
5 Turning against Hungary – Turning against Czechoslovakia	149
6 A Path to Fascism?	187
Conclusion: The Other Culture War	219
 Notes	 231
Bibliography	282
Index	299

Illustrations

Map

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Former Hungarian counties that were incorporated into interwar Slovakia | ix |
|---|---|----|

Figures

- | | | |
|---|---|-----|
| 1 | František Skyčák, the first leader of the SLS | 50 |
| 2 | A party meeting in northern Hungary | 102 |
| 3 | A caricature of Slovak nationalists attempting to be parliamentarians | 147 |

Acknowledgements

As this book has been over a decade in the making, I have depended on the help and the patience of many people. My first thanks must go to the staff of the marvellously efficient British Library in London, the staff of the National Széchényi Library in Hungary who provided such a fruitful place to work, the staff of the Slovak National Library in Martin who went out of their way to make me feel welcome, the ever-helpful staff of the library of UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies and the staff of the Bodleian Library in Oxford who were always attentive and efficient. In addition, the staff of the Slovak National Archive in Bratislava, the Slovak State Archives in Bytča and Nitra, the National Archive of Great Britain in London, and the Primate's Archive in Esztergom, Hungary were all invaluable in promptly providing me with the materials from which this book is partly woven.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the many colleagues who have given their time and knowledge. In particular, I owe a debt of gratitude to Philip Barker, Thomas Croft, Simon Dixon, Andrew Gardner, Rebecca Haynes, Philip Howe, Katya Kocourek, Kati Lacey, Daniel Miller, Árpád Popély, Martyn Rady, David Short and Trevor Thomas. I am especially grateful for the advice provided by the anonymous readers of I.B. Tauris, and the combination of guidance and patience offered by my commissioning editor which also helped bring this book to fruition.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends whose company over the years provided refreshment when the struggle to do justice to the topic of this book seemed overwhelming. It is for them, and especially for G and for D, that this book is dedicated.

Note on Terminology

Labelling any group of people by an ethnic category is problematic. The nationalist politicians with whom this study is concerned were convinced that all the peoples of Central Europe could be squeezed into narrow ethnic boxes. Nevertheless, defining who belonged in which box was always a contested process, riddled with generalizations and intolerant of ambiguities. The debate about who was a Slovak, and what it meant to be a Slovak, has continued throughout the past two centuries. Official statistics for the period examined in this book provide little assistance. For example, no official census prior to 1939 recorded the number of Slovaks. In Hungary, censuses in this period simply asked respondents to list their mother tongue (except practising Jews who were defined according to their religion) while censuses in interwar Czechoslovakia asked people to declare their national identity, but did not accept that a separate Slovak nationality existed.

Nevertheless, a long campaign to persuade speakers of Slovak (a branch of the Slavonic language family) that they were members of a Slavic or Slovak nation, the so-called Slovak national awakening, had achieved considerable success by the end of the nineteenth century. Even the Hungarian government accepted by that point that there was a Slovak 'nationality' although not a Slovak or Slavic nation. In spite, therefore, of the fact that this 'nation building' project remained incomplete in the first half of the twentieth century, for the sake of simplicity these Slovak speakers will be called Slovaks.

This book will also follow a useful convention and distinguish between 'Hungarian(s)', when referring to the entirety of Hungary's inhabitants and state institutions, and 'Magyar(s)' when referring to the specific ethnic group and their language. Place names will be given in the version that can be easily located on a modern map, although their Magyar equivalent will usually also be provided. As, however, the counties were abolished shortly after Hungary collapsed, their names will first be given in Magyar.



Map 1 Former Hungarian counties that were incorporated into interwar Slovakia.

Introduction: *In the Name of God*

In the early afternoon of 14 March 1939 church bells rang out across Slovakia to celebrate the destruction of interwar Czechoslovakia and the creation of the first Slovak state in recorded European history. It was a triumphant moment for Slovak nationalists and specifically for the Slovak People's Party (Slovak: *Slovenská ľudová strana*, hereafter SLS) which, during the previous thirty-four years of its existence, had struggled against a series of governments that had officially denied the existence of a separate Slovak nation. During this time, the SLS had become the most popular Slovak party in pre-1918 Hungary and the most popular party in interwar Slovakia. Electoral success, however, occurred in tandem with a long process of radicalization. The SLS repeatedly claimed that it alone had the right to represent the Slovak nation. It also incessantly denounced its opponents as a threat to the survival of the nation and the morality of the people. Moreover, the party leadership was prepared to circumvent the electoral process in order to advance its objectives. For example, in 1918, it helped break the Slovaks away from Hungary with the help of the invading Czechoslovak army, and in 1939 it helped break the Slovaks away from Czechoslovakia in tandem with the invading Wehrmacht.

A useful starting point to understand why the SLS flourished within, and then turned against, both Hungary and Czechoslovakia, is the first series of radio broadcasts by party leaders that heralded the declaration of independence on 14 March 1939. The first broadcast was given by Alexander 'Šaňo' Mach, the chief of the propaganda office of the Slovak government, shortly after the Slovak parliament had unanimously hailed the formal declaration of independence. A brief interlude of patriotic music had not completely died away when the thirty-six-year-old leader of the radical wing of the party, who had once dreamed of becoming a priest, but had eschewed clerical vestments in favour of a jet-black paramilitary uniform, came over the radio waves. The state broadcaster had promised that Mach would bring 'joyful news' for the 'entire Slovak nation', but his high, melodious voice struggled to provide sufficient gravitas. He began his broadcast by addressing those he considered his only true compatriots: 'Slovak men, Slovak women ... from the will of the Slovak nation and in the name of God,' he proclaimed, 'we have, in the last half hour, proclaimed an independent

Slovak state.' Presenting Slovak independence as the triumphant culmination of a centuries-long struggle, he would later reminisce that this was 'the happiest day of my life'.¹

That evening the new head of state, Jozef Tiso, a portly fifty-one-year-old parish priest who had briefly obtained the rank of monsignor and who had spent the previous twenty-one years climbing the ranks of the party, took to the radio to affirm Mach's momentous announcement.² His speech was short, repetitive and uncompromising. Addressing his 'dear Slovak nation', Tiso affirmed that 'the unanimous decision of the Slovak parliament' had, on 14 March 1939, 'brought to life an independent Slovak state', which he insisted had 'fulfilled the yearnings of our national ambition'. He also promised that 'our Slovak state will never give up its independence', that it would act 'not with hatred, passion, coarseness, and crudeness, but in a Christian way (Slovak: *po kresťanský*)', and that his government would soon enact antisemitic legislation. Tiso then concluded his speech with the rousing call, 'let the spirit of the Lord hover over our state, and let the spirit of Christianity guide all of us in all our calculations so that the Slovak nation will grow, become mighty and flourish in an independent Slovak state'.³

It is tempting to dismiss both Mach's and Tiso's speeches as a self-serving blend of nationalist and religious hyperbole that concealed the real reasons why they, and their colleagues, had decided to declare independence. Neither man, for example, mentioned that Slovak independence allowed them to resume their positions in the Slovak government, from which they had been dismissed by the central government in Prague four days earlier. In addition, neither man mentioned that the previous evening Adolf Hitler had personally warned Tiso that if Slovakia did not immediately declare independence it would be dismembered by its neighbours. Hitler was determined to occupy the western, 'Czech' half of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, and Slovak independence, which dissolved the common state of the Czechs and Slovaks and nullified the international guarantees of its territorial sovereignty, gave him the legal pretext to finally launch his invasion. Nevertheless, a close reading of Mach and Tiso's speeches that day reveals that Slovakia's declaration of independence was not merely an act of political expediency and self-serving opportunism. A genuine idealism, forged from a blend of intense nationalism and religious conviction, also inspired both men, and their party, to place their faith in national independence and Nazi Germany.⁴

Both men began their radio broadcasts by addressing only their fellow (ethnic) Slovaks. Clearly, Mach and Tiso had no interest in speaking to, or for,

the Czechs, Germans, Jews, Magyars, Roma (Gypsies) and Rusyns, who also lived in Slovakia. Their nationalism was narrow and exclusive, forged by the internecine ethnic conflicts that had convulsed Central Europe for the past century. Slovak independence was, according to these men's reading of history, the glorious fulfilment of the 'Slovak national awakening' that had taken place in earlier centuries, and that had launched the long struggle against Magyar and then Czech rule.

Both Mach and Tiso also claimed to speak for the 'entire nation'. They discounted the possibility that any Slovak could favour the preservation of what remained of Czechoslovakia or oppose their decision to create an independent Slovak state. The implication that rival points of view were always illegitimate was not, however, merely theoretical. The government that Tiso headed, and in which Mach served, had already, in the previous six months, banned all rival political parties, eliminated all critical publications, and eviscerated civil society and the autonomy of local government.

Both speeches were also clearly animated by the conviction that Slovak independence had a spiritual as well as a national purpose. Both Mach and Tiso presented Slovak independence to their listeners as a triumph that had taken place with God's help and would receive God's blessing. In doing so, both men sought to affirm the long-standing belief among Catholic Slovak nationalists that the defence of Slovak national culture was an integral part of the wider struggle to defend the Catholic faith. This belief had animated the men who founded the first incarnation of the SLS in 1905. They also claimed to speak 'in the name of God' and insisted that they spoke for the 'entire Slovak nation'.⁵

Nevertheless, in spite of all the ideological certitude on display in Mach and Tiso's rhetoric, both speeches were also imbued with deliberate ambiguity. Both men, for example, studiously avoided any mention of what Slovak independence would actually mean in practice. Aside from Tiso's brief comment that 'the government has already prepared a law concerning the Jewish question, which only recent events have prevented from being approved by our parliament' there was absolutely no discussion of policy either domestic or foreign. Even the deal that permitted the German army to occupy a strip of territory along Slovakia's western border, euphemistically termed a 'zone of protection', the following morning was understandably left unmentioned.⁶

An additional layer of ambiguity was created by the decision to allow Mach to give the first speech announcing Slovakia's declaration of independence. As Mach was an outspoken admirer of Adolf Hitler, his role as the herald of Slovakia's independence suggested that the radical wing of the SLS was in the

ascendancy. Yet at the same time Mach was denied a ministerial post in the reshuffled cabinet which implied that more moderate men would remain in charge of the new Slovakia. Tiso's vague assertion that the 'trappings of the past' still needed to be 'eliminated' was, however, an ominous sign that the leaders of the new Slovak state were intent on carrying out a brutal transformation of the country. That transformation became evident the following month when the country opened its first concentration camp and culminated with the mass deportation of most of the country's Jews in 1942. At the time, however, even critics of the new regime greeted the declaration of independence with public apathy, although a growing number of far-sighted Jews made their way to the various foreign consulates in the hope of being given refuge outside Slovakia.

Both Mach and Tiso's speeches were, therefore, not only the product of the tumultuous events that redrew the map of Central Europe in the months before the outbreak of the Second World War. They were also animated by profound beliefs and ingrained ambiguities that had been at the core of the SĽS's ideology since its foundation at the very beginning of the twentieth century. A thorough explanation of the making of the party requires, therefore, an exploration of both its nationalism and its religiosity, as well as the use it made of ambiguity which maximized its appeal, but also made it susceptible to repeated bouts of radicalization.

The nationalism that animated the SĽS was evident throughout the party's existence. It always presented itself as the defender of the Slovaks, and only the Slovaks, first in pre-1918 Hungary and then in interwar Czechoslovakia. It also made no attempt to attract the support of non-Slovaks and rarely entered into a formal coalition with non-Slovak parties. Nevertheless, as was the case with nationalists throughout Central Europe, the SĽS did not seek only to defend their nation's identity, but also to mobilize or 'awaken' the nation. In practical terms that meant developing a new type of political party that could mobilize the population and achieve electoral success.

The results were remarkable. Within less than six months of its establishment at the end of 1905, the SĽS had obtained six of the 413 seats in the Hungarian parliament and had become the most successful Slovak political party in Hungarian history. In spite of intense pressure from the government and an electoral system that was marred by a narrow franchise and ingrained corruption, it still retained three of these seats in the 1910 parliamentary elections. Then, after the introduction of universal suffrage and proportional representation by the new Czechoslovak government, it obtained thirteen of the 281 seats in the national assembly in the 1920 elections and increased this to 23 of the 300 seats

in the 1925 elections. That made it the most popular party in Slovakia where it had won almost half of all the possible parliamentary mandates. It then retained its position as the most popular party in Slovakia in the 1929 elections, when it won nineteen seats, and the 1935 elections, when it won twenty seats. Finally, in January 1939, after the party had taken control of the autonomous Slovak administration, it imposed a new electoral system which gave it sixty-one of the sixty-three seats in the Slovak parliament. It was this SLS dominated parliament that endorsed the declaration of national independence on 14 March 1939.⁷

To explain this record of electoral success this book will examine the broader context that inspired the creation of a new Slovak political party. It will examine the reasons for Slovak Catholic opposition to the Hungarian government's 'liberal' ideology and their embrace of what Carl Schorske called the 'sharper tone' of populist rhetoric. It will also examine how these Slovak Catholic critics disseminated their ideas through a proliferating array of publications and how they organized their fellow Slovaks in a mass of organizations. A particular focus will be the wide range of Catholic associations that were founded before the First World War in northern Hungary from parochial sodalities to nationwide cultural associations. This book will then demonstrate how this Catholic Slovak civil society provided a launchpad for the creation of a new Slovak nationalist party and made possible the series of electoral breakthroughs that both emboldened and, paradoxically, frustrated the SLS.⁸

To fully explain the party's organizational success and ideological radicalization this book will also give due weight to the central role that the Catholic faith played in the making of the party. The two men who led the party from 1913 onwards, Andrej Hlinka and Jozef Tiso, both of them parish priests, have received considerable attention from scholars. This book will, however, also explain how a much larger group of Catholic clergymen played a key role in building and popularizing the party and many of its associated publications and organizations. They always made up a significant proportion of the party's local activists and MPs.⁹ Attention will also be paid to the party's ideological roots that reached back to the reinvigoration of Catholicism in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and propelled the Slovak People's Party onto its path to power.¹⁰

This rethinking, which had a transformative impact on Catholic parties across Europe, was endorsed by a series of papal encyclicals that began to be issued during the pontificate of Leo XIII and his immediate successors. These encyclicals inspired both the clergy and the laity to mobilize the faithful against what they regarded as the mortal threat posed by liberal governments, secular

intellectuals, and the worldwide growth of the socialist movement. This 'culture war' unleashed a new spirit of Catholic 'activism' in central Europe and infused the SLS with a conviction that the Slovaks were at the epicentre of a great struggle to preserve the Catholic faith in Central Europe. That larger struggle necessitated the creation of a new activist politics, a new political party, and ultimately a new independent Slovak state. As this book will demonstrate, the history of the SLS up until 1939 explains how the party blended together a religious conflict against the enemies of Catholicism with an ethnic conflict against the enemies of the Slovaks to provide not only the vision, but also the passion that assured its eventual success.¹¹

Nevertheless, the party's obsession with mobilizing the nation and defending the faith was always accompanied by layers of ambiguity that played a crucial yet underappreciated role in ensuring its eventual seizure of power.¹² Partly, the SLS relied on ambiguity to present itself as both a nationalist and a Catholic party, when almost a third of Slovaks were Protestants and Slovak national identity was still a contested concept. Partly it relied on ambiguity to present itself, in both pre-1918 Hungary and post-1918 Czechoslovakia, as an implacable opponent of each successive government, while simultaneously seeking to cut deals, extract concessions, and affirm its loyalty, first to the Kingdom of Hungary, and then to the Czechoslovak Republic.

For example, the party leadership repeatedly made deals with Hungarian politicians it openly despised. It also joined, from 1927 to 1929, a Czechoslovak coalition government while continuing to vote against its coalition partners.¹³ The ambiguity that enveloped the SLS also manifested itself, both before and after 1918, in a tendency to avoid putting forward concrete and realistic demands, preferring repetitive catch phrases, sloganeering, and hyperbole that was rarely taken seriously. So much uncertainty, for example, surrounded the party's ultimate objectives that Slovakia's declaration of independence on 14 March 1939 surprised not only the Czechoslovak government which had up to that point governed Slovakia, but most of the party's own MPs. This book will, therefore, explain precisely why and how the SLS used deliberate ambiguity to bind together the disparate factions and rival personalities whose cooperation was necessary to transform it into a mass party.

Finally, this book recognizes that political parties are not just organizations, but also collections of personalities. The following chapters will, therefore, give due weight to all of the leading men who helped make the SLS. This book will, therefore, break new ground in taking both the ideology of the party and all of its leading persons seriously. In doing so it will provide new insights into why even

an electorally successful and devoutly Catholic political party could partially succumb to the fascist appeal that had revolutionized politics throughout Central Europe by the end of the interwar period.¹⁴

It should, therefore, be obvious that to explain why the SLS allied itself with Adolf Hitler in 1939 to create an independent Slovak state, this book must begin with the origins of the party in the years leading up to its founding in 1905. In Chapter 1 this book, therefore, explores how the ideology of the party was forged in opposition to the 'liberalism' of the pre-First World War Hungarian government. In Chapter 2 it will consider how the groundwork for a new party was created through the establishment of a network of associations and institutions that mobilized Slovak society and gave the party its first electoral successes. In Chapter 3 it will trace the precise factors that led to the formation of a new Slovak Catholic party in pre-1918 Hungary, and in Chapter 4 it will examine how this party tried and failed to turn its anti-liberal ideology into a viable political programme before 1918.

In Chapter 5 this book will examine how the impact of the First World War led the SLS to break away from Hungary and become both a supporter and critic of the new Czechoslovak state. This chapter will also look at how the party's efforts to curb Czechoslovak 'liberalism' turned it into a mass party, but also provided fertile ground for the radical wing of the party to emerge and flourish. Finally, in Chapter 6 it will examine the personalities and organizations that made up this radical wing of the party. This book also examines how the wider party was radicalized by the emergence of new leaders who were contemptuous of democracy, inspired by Nazi Germany, and imposed their authority upon Slovakia to create an independent Slovak state.

The Liberal Onslaught

The term ‘culture war’ is now employed to describe conflicts throughout the world that have little to do with the state and nothing to do with the Catholic church, but the term itself also has a specific historical meaning and a specific historical context. As Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser explain,

There had always been intermittent institutional friction between church and state in central and western Europe, but the conflicts that came to a head in the second half of the nineteenth century were of a different kind. They involved processes of mass mobilization and societal polarization. They embraced virtually every sphere of social life: schools, universities, the press, marriage, and gender relations, burial rites, associational culture, the control of public space, folk memory, and the symbols of nationhood. In short, these conflicts were ‘culture wars,’ in which the values and collective practices of modern life were at stake.¹

The most famous of these conflicts was initiated in Prussia, later Germany, by Otto von Bismarck who ‘launched a salvo of laws intended to neutralize Catholicism as a political force’ and in doing so triggered what one of his supporters called a ‘struggle of culture’ (German: *kulturkampf*). Other states in Europe also launched their own assaults, notably France, where ‘anti-clericalism,’ the desire to reduce the privileges and influence of the Catholic clergy, had periodically burst forth since the 1789 revolution and reached fever pitch during the third republic from 1871. Likewise, unified Italy had expropriated the Papal States from the Pope and ‘imprisoned’ him within the walls of the Vatican.²

Hungary had also witnessed its own anticlerical outbursts, notably during the reign of Joseph II, 1780–1790, and again during the ‘Age of Reform’ from 1825 to 1848 when an earlier generation of liberals had launched what Gabriel Adriányi has described as ‘a battle against the church.’ The bishops’ refusal to permit the blessing of ‘mixed marriages’ or allow any of the offspring of such marriages to be raised outside the faith evoked particular ire, but no practical

solution.³ It was not, however, until the 1890s that the culture war burst forth in Hungary when the government made clear its determination to curb the power of the Catholic church and impose its authority on the private lives of all of the country's inhabitants by reforming marriage, regulating the religious upbringing of children and assuming the responsibility to record all births, deaths, and marriages. Confronted by furious resistance, Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle twice felt compelled to submit his resignation. Fresh elections were also required to firm up the government's support and dissuade the Habsburg emperor, Franz Joseph, from wielding his veto. Ultimately, however, the government's determination to enact reform proved irresistible and laws XXXI-III were placed on the statute book in the spring of 1894.⁴

From that point on the state made civil marriage obligatory. It authorized all marriages (and divorces), with the bridal couple required to visit the office of a local official prior to the now optional religious ceremony. Likewise, the state would, from this point on, prevent children being automatically instructed in the Catholic faith if only one of their parents adhered to the Church of Rome. Finally, the responsibility for recording all births, deaths, and marriages would no longer be the responsibility of clergymen, but would instead be carried out by trained and supposedly impartial state officials.

It is tempting to dismiss these reforms as merely symbolic. The obligatory visit to the mayor's office on the day of the wedding was easily incorporated into the series of rituals that still invariably included the solemnization of the marriage ceremony in church and temple. Marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics also remained exceedingly rare, particularly in rural areas, and it made no practical difference to most people whether the details of their life were stored in their local church or a government office.

Such dismissiveness would, however, miss the larger point and ignore the larger context. The Catholic church had always relied on the state to preserve its supremacy, and when the state turned against the church, as the culture wars that had already broken out elsewhere in Europe once again demonstrated, the consequences for the faithful could be horrendous. Moreover, the Wekerle government's reforms came at a time when the established denominations of Europe were convulsed by a 'crisis of religion,' provoked by doubts about whether the Christian picture of God was believable. A persuasive re-dating of the history of the world, the widespread acceptance of Darwin's (and others') theory of evolution, as well as radical reinterpretations of the Bible that described much of its content as symbolism rather than fact, together raised the disturbing question of whether the faith was actually supported by evidence.⁵

Some Christian churchmen responded by adapting their theology, the Vatican did not. Its Syllabus of Errors issued in 1864 insisted that 'a great war is being waged against the Catholic church' and included among the enemies of the faith not only such obvious targets as 'pantheism, naturalism and absolute rationalism', and the 'pests' of 'socialism [and] communism', but also the claim that 'the civil authority may interfere in matters relating to religion, morality and spiritual government'.⁶ Likewise, in 1893, as the Wekerle government's reforms were making their way through parliament, the Vatican informed the local hierarchy in Hungary that 'considering the direction in which your country is going ... it is greatly to be feared that there is impending evil far more harmful to religion'. Indeed, as Robert Nemes has observed, 'Liberals and Catholics alike rapidly turned the dispute ... into a referendum on the liberal vision of progress and patriotism'.⁷ Encouraged by the magnitude of the stakes involved, as well as the uncompromising and alarmist rhetoric of the dispute's chief protagonists, it is understandable that Catholics throughout Hungary responded to the new legislation with a fury that now seems exaggerated.

Thus, even if the reforms were largely symbolic, symbolism mattered, particularly in a country where illiteracy was rife and gesture politics predominated. The above reforms replaced the church with the government office as the place where Catholics in Hungary got married, where the faith of their offspring was to be determined, and where the details of their lives would now be recorded, stored, and potentially exploited. Just as the intellectual authority of the clergy was sapped by an onslaught of scepticism and criticism, the new legislation ensured that temporal authority had visibly begun to seep away from the priest to the politician and the government official.

That seepage was particularly problematic in northern Hungary, where both the local population and the local clergy tended to be Slovak speakers, while local officials, whether elected or appointed, were invariably Magyars, either by birth or inclination. According to one contemporary source, of the 46,449 officials in Slovakia, no more than 300 were ethnic Slovaks, and only 132 openly proclaimed their Slovak identity.⁸ Not surprisingly then, Slovak Catholic publicists reacted to the new legislation with particular vitriol, as power was perceived to have been ceded from the Slovak-speaking priest to the Magyar-speaking official. Even Slovak Protestants condemned the new legislation, for they also noted what even Catholic Magyars who criticized the government's legislation ignored: that the Wekerle government's reforms constituted an assault on both the Catholic faith, and Slovak language and culture.⁹

For example, the rather staid *Katolícke noviny*, which served as the in-house journal of the Slovak-speaking Catholic clergy, responded to the new legislation with a passion it had never previously displayed. Among the broadsides that the paper directed against the new legislation were a series of twelve articles that denounced not only the government's reform of marriage policy, but also its entire governing philosophy. That philosophy was summed up in a single word that served as the title of the entire series: 'Liberalism'.¹⁰

Revealingly, the author of these articles, Juraj Gogolák, a Slovak priest best known for his publications aimed at children, and who contributed to various periodicals under the pen name Irievič, placed his criticisms of the marriage reform within a far broader condemnation of the government's policies. In particular, he denounced their impact on the faith, morals and culture of Hungary's Slovak-speaking minority. Gogolák singled out the supposedly new-found popularity of taverns and the scourge of drunkenness, the growing influence of 'liberal-Jewish and freemason newspapers', the rise of socialism, materialism and atheism, the spread of 'unnatural' technological innovations and urbanization, the apathy of the clergy, and 'the destruction of the maternal, native languages of one's fathers'.¹¹

In the concluding lines of his final article, Gogolák also spelled out to his Slovak Catholic readership that this assault on both the Catholic faith and Slovak culture demanded a political response. 'We must', he proclaimed, 'drive liberalism out of the church and out of politics. We demand that in politics Christian doctrines are asserted and not liberal mumbo-jumbo. Whoever, therefore, is in good conscience with the Catholic church must join the ranks against liberalism. And may God help us in this struggle'.¹²

Gogolák's impassioned call heralded a remarkable half-century of Slovak Catholic activism. Four years prior to Gogolák's articles a meeting of senior government officials who oversaw the Slovak-populated counties of the north of Hungary concluded that Slovak Catholics were reassuringly immune from all forms of agitation.¹³ In 1894, however, the territory which would, after 1918, become Slovakia, and which was then referred to in the Magyar language as the 'highlands' (Magyar: *felvidék*), became one of the centres of resistance to the new legislation and one of the most bitterly contested fronts in Hungary's own version of the pan-European culture war. Mass meetings that were held in protest at the new laws attracted in excess of 10,000 attendees. By the end of the year a new opposition party, the Catholic People's Party (Magyar: *Katolikus Néppárt*, hereafter KNP), had been established with the Slovak highlands as one of its bastions of support and Gogolák's *Katolícke noviny* as one of its loyal

journals. Then, ten years later, as the KNP prepared to enter into a government coalition with many of the politicians who had supported the earlier anticlerical legislation, dissident Slovak Catholics formed a new party to carry on their culture war against Hungarian liberalism. That party, the SLS, over the forty years of its existence remained, in essence, an anti-liberal party driven by the same anger that had inspired Gogolák's fury in 1895. Its leadership was convinced that it was fighting an ongoing culture war against each successive government, first Hungarian and then – after 1918 – Czechoslovak to defend both the Catholic faith and Slovak culture.

Clearly, the liberalism which Gogolák, the *Katolícke noviny*, and later the SLS struggled against was not one akin to Western models of liberalism. Classical liberalism was led by the middle classes, extolled the value of meritocracy, and was wedded, (at least theoretically) to the principle of free speech. Hungarian liberalism was none of these things. As elsewhere in Central Europe, liberalism in Hungary before 1918 was grounded in a distinct historical tradition: it was enacted by a narrower social elite, and it was driven by a larger nation-building project. It was led by the nobility, upheld hereditary privileges, and was prepared to silence its critics with censorship and imprisonment for 'agitation against the state'. At times it degenerated into crude chauvinism and blatant self-interest. Some scholars have even rejected the term 'liberal' being applied to the regime which governed Hungary up until 1918. The disgruntled émigré historian Oszkár Jászi, for example, set the tone for much later scholarship when he declared in his book on the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire that the ruling party in Hungary 'had nothing liberal in its character except its benevolent attitude towards Jewish finance and big business'.¹⁴ As László Katus has also pointed out, in pre-First World War Hungary 'liberal equality remained a fiction even within the traditional elite', which retained a nationalist, hierarchical even messianic outlook that some scholars have termed 'conservative liberalism', 'revisionist liberalism' or even 'the illusion of liberalism'.¹⁵

There are, however, scholars who have recognized the expansiveness of the liberal project in Central Europe, and the fear it could arouse in more militant Catholics. As Michael Gross has put it, liberalism in this part of Europe was 'not simply ... a political movement and set of economic principles but more broadly ... a body of cultural attitudes and social practices' characterized by an 'affinity for the new, an orientation towards the future, a belief in progress', as well as a hostility to 'feudalism, absolutism and religious orthodoxy'.¹⁶ Writing almost forty years before Gross, Hugh Trevor-Roper also highlighted the polarizing power of the European liberal project, pointedly noting that the

triumph of liberalism had 'victims as well as victors, and the victims did not surrender quietly'.¹⁷

Successive governments in Hungary from the 1860s onwards certainly showed little concern for the victims of their policies. Instead, they revelled in their ability to impose their authority and their values upon the country, which included curbing the privileges of the Catholic church. Gogolák was, therefore, correct, when he asserted that the government's 'anti-clerical' legislation was merely the latest manifestation of the government's ongoing project to transform the country. Prime Minister Wekerle made exactly the same point when, in introducing the draft legislation in parliament, he declared that 'twenty-five years of experiences and – dare I say it – successes speak in favour of these laws'.¹⁸

The historical context

In reality, Hungarian liberalism was inspired by a longer history, one which fuelled not only the government's determination to transform the country, but also made Slovaks such as Gogolák so apprehensive about that transformation. The conquering Magyar tribes that arrived in the Carpathian basin by the end of the ninth century had granted the Slovaks neither separate rights nor separate duties. The Slovaks' homeland was fully integrated into Hungary's political structures, their prominent families were gradually assimilated with only the rarest of exceptions, and waves of immigrants arrived including Germans, Jews, and the Roma. Towns were granted local privileges and prospered, but the great mass of the Slovaks eked out their existence in the impoverished mountain valleys north and northeast of the Danube.

When necessary, the Magyars called a Slovak a 'tót'. Usually, however, they ignored their northernmost compatriots. As Béla Grünwald, one of Hungary's great nineteenth-century historians, and the first to publish a serious study of the Slovak national movement, noted in 1878, 'Our politicians and statesmen have not paid attention to the Slovak highlands. ... The botanists, geologists, and historians criss-crossed and researched [this region], but not the politicians'.¹⁹ The Hungarian political elite's refusal to take Slovak nationalism seriously was compounded by the inchoate nature of Slovak national identity. The name 'Slovakia' (Slovak: *Slovensko*) had only been invented in the seventeenth century. The first maps which purported to show the borders of Slovakia as a region of Hungary were not published until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the codification of the Slovak language remained a (contested) work in progress into the interwar

period.²⁰ Moreover, although a Slovak 'cultural awakening' had gathered pace since the eighteenth century, the Slovak intelligentsia remained relatively small. Many Slovak speakers were appallingly ill-educated, and Slovak nationalism, when it finally made its belated appearance, struck much of Hungary's social and political elite as almost comical. The Slovaks did not, they insisted, constitute a nation or even, reputedly, 'a person' (Magyar: *a tót nem ember*).

Yet for men like Gogolák the isolation of the Slovak speakers of northern Hungary had its advantages, for it had preserved their language, their culture, and their devotion to the Catholic faith. Approximately three-quarters of Slovak speakers in Hungary at the end of the nineteenth century still spoke no other language but their mother tongue. Moreover, about three-quarters of all Slovak speakers were Catholics and renowned for their religiosity. Having endured what they regarded as Magyar rule for a millennium, Gogolák and his allies were convinced that both the culture and the faith of their people in northern Hungary could still resist the liberalism of the government if Slovak Catholics were motivated and mobilized.²¹

Their conviction that Slovak culture was the vehicle by which the intensity of the faith was passed on to each new generation drew particular inspiration from a long line of nineteenth-century Slovak writers, who popularized the idea that the Slovaks were, like all Slavs, a uniquely moral people. Gogolák and his fellow clergymen, who founded and led the SES, simply updated this myth when they argued that this moral character derived not only from the Slovaks' racial identity, but also from their Catholic identity. From this foundation they proceeded to argue that a 'holy struggle' against liberalism was necessary to defend both the Slovak culture and the faith of their people.²² As Alexander Maxwell has, however, persuasively argued, the anger that men like Gogolák felt towards the liberalism of their political overlords was always tempered by a long-standing loyalty to Hungary that endured in the broader population until the very end of the First World War. This loyalty was encapsulated by the *Hungarus* idea, which emerged in the eighteenth century, when the traditional belief that only the (multi-ethnic and multilingual) nobility constituted the *natio hungarica* was replaced by nationalist claims that the *plebs* were also part of the nation, and Hungary was exclusively the land of the Magyars.

Hungarus Slovaks, concerned that Hungary's inhabitants would be ranked not by class but by ethnicity, extolled their own variant of civic nationalism which called for the old *natio hungarica* of the nobility to be expanded to include not only the Magyar plebs but all of the country's ethnic inhabitants in a new Hungarian nation (Slovak: *Uhorský národ*). In practical terms, *Hungarus*

Slovaks wanted Hungary to remain a community of peoples, and believed that the replacement of Latin by Magyar as the language of officialdom and public discourse could, perhaps paradoxically by today's standards, coexist with the preservation of regional/minority cultures, languages and distinct identities.²³ This *Hungarus* loyalty to Hungary was felt so strongly by some Slovaks that, even after the collapse of the country in 1918, an estimated 1400 Slovak-speaking intellectuals chose to remain in Hungary rather than become part of the new Czechoslovak republic.²⁴

Traditionally, the Slovak-speaking Catholic clergy had played a key role in bolstering the *Hungarus* idea among their parishioners. They emphasized that the House of Habsburg was a Catholic family which upheld the primacy of the faith throughout the entire empire and they stressed that Hungary was itself the Kingdom of Mary (Latin: *Regnum Marianum*) in which all of her Catholics could feel at home. Such ties were, however, fraying even before the Wekerle government affirmed with its marriage reform in 1894 that even in the 'Kingdom of Mary' the interests of the state took precedence over the traditions of the church.

As Peter Brock has sketched out in his own study of the Slovak national awakening, the *Hungarus* idea was already under sustained assault by the 1840s by a series of writers (notably Ján Kollár). These critics were inspired in particular by German philosophers, such as Herder and Fichte, who argued that all nations possessed a distinct linguistic or ethnic identity. Writers following these ideas thus implicitly rejected the *Hungarus* ideal of a multilingual and multi-ethnic Hungary. Kollár, for example, claimed that Slovak speakers had more in common with the larger Slavic nation, with whom they shared a commonality of language and cultural traits, than they did with the other inhabitants of Hungary such as the Magyars. This 'panslavism' had the additional benefit of encouraging the Slovaks to imagine themselves as part of a powerful nation (the Slavs) with a serious culture, and it enabled them to refute jibes about Slovak backwardness (and drunkenness). By incorporating the Slovaks into a larger nation, panslavism also allayed the fear, widespread among Central European intellectuals, that the smaller nations of Europe were inevitably doomed to assimilation and extinction.

One variant of panslavism that gained currency among Slovaks was the theory that the Slovaks constituted one nation with the Czechs. The two peoples had, it was claimed, formed a common state in the eighth and ninth centuries called the Great Moravian Empire, a Christian state that was destroyed by the invading pagan Magyars. The similarities between the languages spoken by the Slovaks and the Czechs, as well as their common history in the Habsburg Empire since 1526, were also seen as tangible evidence that the two peoples constituted

a single Czechoslovak nation, and contacts between Czechs and Slovaks were facilitated by the abolition of border controls, tariffs, and better transport links between the two peoples in the decades before 1914.

These competing claims about the national identity of Slovak speakers encouraged a growing number of Slovak speakers to define themselves in ethnic nationalist terms. Older local, regional, and confessional identities, which John Swanson has termed ‘tangible belonging’, remained evident, but for a growing number of Slovak speakers they were superseded by a sense of belonging to a larger nation for, as Martyn Rady has emphasized, this was ‘one of the ways by which the peoples of the Habsburg Empire made sense of their world’. He notes that this process was reinforced by the censuses which were held in every decade from the 1860s onwards and required all the inhabitants of Hungary, apart from practising Jews, to define themselves according to their ‘mother tongue’ (Magyar: *anyanyelv*). Even ardent *Hungarus* Slovaks were, therefore, likely to refer to themselves on the census as ‘of Slovak mother tongue’ (Magyar: *tót anyanyelv*), which could easily be (mis)read as a claim to membership in a Slovak or Slavic nation. The efforts of cartographers, ethnographers, and artists among others, Rady continues, also ‘impressed the idea that people had a single linguistic and cultural identity’ and he concludes that these identities ‘once impressed acquired potency’.²⁵

For the Slovaks, a sign of that potency had come in 1848 when Ludevít Štúr, who had won election to the Hungarian Diet, led a failed revolt against the government in Budapest. Inspired by the nationalist revolutions that had broken out elsewhere in Europe and in Hungary, he and his allies adopted a similar revolutionary rhetoric. They denounced the ‘Magyar tyrant’ who had oppressed the Slovak nation for ‘a thousand years’, and employed a language that had been embraced by nationalists across Europe, insisting that the Slovaks were now ‘awake’. Confronted by bands of insurgents who were willing to use armed force to obtain their ‘historic rights’, the Hungarian government had to launch a major military operation that gave Slovak nationalists a new set of romantic heroes and enduring grievances. Štúr, himself, withdrew from politics after his failed revolution and consoled himself with dreams of a Slovak–Russian alliance before his untimely death in 1856, but he continued to inspire generations of Slovak nationalists inspired by his nationalist idealism and his capacity to be both a man of letters and a man of action.

In 1861 in the small town of Martin, previously Turčianský Svätý Martin (Magyar: *Turócz Szent Marton*) located in the far north of today’s Slovakia, another gathering of Slovaks tried a different tack. They drew up a memorandum

which was sent to the Hungarian authorities, and to their king and emperor, Franz Joseph. This audacious document endorsed the *Hungarus* idea, that the Slovaks and Magyars had shared a harmonious common Christian homeland for almost a millennium. It nevertheless also insisted that Slovak speakers constituted a nation, distinct from the other inhabitants of Hungary, and other Slavic speakers, which was endowed with rights including the right to territorial autonomy.²⁶ Once again, however, Slovak nationalist demands proved fruitless. The memorandum was dismissed by both the Hungarian government and Franz Joseph who were aware that the nascent Slovak nationalist movement was small and powerless. Nevertheless, the memorandum affirmed that Slovak nationalism had survived military defeat in 1848, and the imposition of Habsburg martial law in the wake of the failed revolutions. Moreover, the demand for autonomy would remain a rallying call of the Slovak nationalist movement for the remainder of the nineteenth century, and would be re-employed to dramatic effect by the SLS in interwar Czechoslovakia.

After 1861 the Slovak nationalist movement was clearly split into two streams, the one remained wedded to the 'panslav' idea that the Slovaks were part of a wider Slavic nation, the other insistent that the Slovaks (and perhaps the Czechs) constituted their own nation. Confessional differences tended to map onto this divide. Panslavism was largely espoused by the Lutheran leadership, who could more easily overlook the Russian state's brutal treatment of its (Slavic but also Catholic) Polish and Uniate minorities. In contrast, the belief that the Slovaks had their own unique national identity tended to be more evident among Slovak Catholics, including all of the men who founded and led the SLS. It is, nevertheless, important to note that the distinctions between these inchoate and competing notions of what it meant to be a Slovak were often blurred, malleable, and transitory, shaped by a larger process of discovery and debate rather than a simple awakening,²⁷ in which the *Hungarus* idea that Slovak speakers were Slavonic Hungarians existed alongside claims that Slovaks were actually part of a wider Slavic nation, or a narrower Czechoslovak nation, or comprised their own distinct nation.²⁸

The greatest threat to the *Hungarus* idea before 1918 was, however, those Magyar nationalists who were convinced that Slovak speakers could be, and gradually would be, absorbed into the Magyar nation. They appeared to affirm Slovak nationalists' claims that *Hungarus* Slovaks were servile to the Magyars, or had self-magyarized which led to them being dismissed as *magyarones* (Slovak: *madáron*), a pejorative term for magyarized Slovaks who were unable or unwilling to defend their language and culture. As a result, by the beginning of

the twentieth century, Slovak speakers were being forced, in increasing numbers, to choose between the arguments of Slovak and Magyar nationalists.

Magyar nationalism

Magyar nationalism, like all European nationalist movements, owed much to the obsession with 'national identity' that emerged in the wake of the Enlightenment, but it can also be traced directly back to the loss of Hungary's independence in 1526, when the last 'Magyar' king Lajos II was killed at the Battle of Mohács by the advancing Ottoman army. The House of Habsburg, which formally took possession of the Hungarian crown and all of its various peoples after this catastrophe, never managed to, and rarely even sought to, Germanize the population. Nevertheless, it always remained a foreign dynasty (although it grew a patriotic Magyar branch), with whom Hungary's nobles cooperated, bargained, and occasionally battled.

Hungary under the Habsburgs retained, therefore, its own body of laws, customs, and layers of government. These privileges were jealously guarded by the Hungarian Diet, later parliament (Magyar: *országgyűlés*), and by the local assemblies that oversaw the affairs of each county and the kingdom's largest settlements. Hungary's jurists, historians, and politicians were also instilled with the conviction that their own distinct body of law and custom that had accumulated since the eleventh century represented the ultimate check on royal (Habsburg) centralization. Most Habsburg emperors felt, therefore, compelled to respect what came by the end of the eighteenth century to be known as Hungary's 'ancient' constitution, and generally worked with Hungary's elite rather than against them. For example, each Habsburg emperor underwent a separate coronation in order to become the king of Hungary. Only Joseph II, who ruled from 1780 to 1790 and became known in Hungary as the 'hatted king', refused.²⁹

The Habsburgs' usual deference to Hungarian law and custom did not, however, prevent rebellions, first to stymie Habsburg centralization (1604–06; 1703–11), later to obtain complete independence (1848–49). The last of these revolts, the brutal 'revolution and war of independence' that coincided with the Slovaks' own failed 'national uprising', was finally crushed by the combined force of the Habsburg and Russian armies after seventeen long months at the Battle of Világos. After this defeat, Hungary endured over a decade of direct and occasionally harsh rule from Vienna. In 1867, Emperor Franz Joseph made

one final effort to placate Hungary with a 'settlement' (German: *Ausgleich*) that granted what can best be termed autonomy or 'home rule'.

With the 1867 settlement the Habsburg Empire was transformed into a dualist state, one-half of which was clumsily termed 'the kingdoms and lands represented in the imperial parliament' (German: *Reichsrat*). This 'Austrian' half of the empire was governed by the emperor and his directly appointed ministers who were very much his men. In contrast, the other half, formally called 'the lands of the Hungarian Crown', was governed by men who were technically appointed by the emperor (on the grounds that he was also King of Hungary), but who actually derived their authority by belonging to the largest party in the Hungarian parliament. In consequence, Hungary's government was repeatedly prepared to clash with their 'king' when, for example, he asked for more taxes or opposed the institution of civil marriage.

The emperor still retained direct control over foreign affairs, the army, as well as enjoying sundry rights and privileges as both Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary (although he delegated most of his authority over the Catholic church in Hungary to the authorities in Budapest). Delegations from the two parliaments in Budapest and Vienna, meeting under the auspices of the emperor, were also tasked with resolving common financial matters. Although they proved incapable of agreeing on the appropriate level of taxation necessary to preserve the Habsburg Empire's status as a Great Power, and Austrian and Hungarian politicians occasionally seethed at the other's obstinacy, the settlement endured.

The first thing to note about the men who were entrusted with the government of Hungary after 1867 was they tended to belong to the noble class that had always constituted the ruling elite in Hungary and, up until the nineteenth century, claimed to be the sole members of the *natio hungarica* (along with a small number of burghers). A significant number were titled aristocrats, but their influence was slowly shrinking. The dominant group, however, comprised the gentry, who were often well-educated in law, and who managed their land holdings or enjoyed a successful career in the service of the government.³⁰ They were also, almost without exception, at least in sentiment, Magyars.³¹ While some of the great noble Catholic families remained loyal to the Habsburg family (German: *kaisertreue*) rather than any national ideal, and while a smattering of parliamentarians proudly asserted their German or Slavic heritage, the vast majority of the political class regarded themselves as the natural leaders and the natural guardians of Hungary who had been entrusted with defending the Magyar national interest.³²

The second thing that must be noted about Hungary's political elite in this period is that they were divided not by class or ethnicity, but by their differing attitudes towards the 1867 settlement. On what was referred to as 'the Left' in parliament sat a hard rump of men, who belonged to the Independence Party (Magyar: *Függetlenségi Párt*) later Independence and Forty-Eighter Party (Magyar: *Függetlenségi és Negyvennyolcas Párt*), who became known as the 'Forty-Eighters'. They publicly clung to the romantic ideals of the failed revolution of 1848 and passionately denounced Vienna, the home of the Habsburgs. It was not until 1906, when they briefly became the new governing party, that they moderated their anti-Habsburg rhetoric. Up to that point, power was held by the so-called 'Sixty-Seveners' who proudly defended the *Ausgleich* while constantly attempting to extract fresh concessions from Vienna.³³ Under the utterly cynical guidance of the long-serving Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza, most of the Sixty-Seveners were bound together in what was known as the Liberal Party (Magyar: *Szabadelvű Párt*) in which internal party discipline appeared to trump all other considerations, and in which the Catholic church and non-Magyars were viewed as an obstacle to the authority of the government and the reform of the state. Those who found such slavish obedience intolerable, either to ministers or to manifestos, formed a series of 'conservative' opposition parties including the 'United Opposition', 'Moderate Opposition' and, from 1892, the 'National Party' (Magyar: *Nemzeti Párt*), but along with the 'Forty-Eighters' they, too, remained firmly ensconced on the opposition benches until 1906.

Until then, the 'Sixty-Sevener' Liberal Party was in charge and thoroughly deserving of its nickname of the 'government party' (Magyar: *kormánypárt*), as a result of both its lengthy time in government and its total control of the government apparatus. In the eight elections held from 1875 to 1901 it never won less than 56 per cent of the seats in parliament. As regards its actual policy, as Andrew Janos has astutely argued, the Liberal Party upheld the *Ausgleich* 'not as an act of subservience or loyalty to the [Habsburg] dynasty, but as an act of pragmatism and shrewd calculation'. It 'jealously guarded the country's constitutional autonomy and prerogatives', and dreamed of the day when 'the centre of power in the monarchy would shift from Vienna to Budapest'.³⁴ In the meantime, the Liberal Party endeavoured to create what László Kontler has called 'the mirage of greatness'.³⁵

The 'Sixty-Seveners' were also imbued, almost as a matter of course, with a conservative temperament that inspired their support for the Settlement but they too were also susceptible to either tub-thumping patriotism or nationalist paranoia. They were certainly aware that Hungary remained, at the beginning of