

In 1815 Metternich had pronounced dismissively that Asia began east of Vienna. Such a jibe was harder to sustain of late nineteenth-century Hungary. It appeared a land opening rapidly to the norms of modern bourgeois society. Four hours forty minutes by train brought visitors from the Austrian to the Hungarian capital, while the train journey from Budapest to Venice in 1888 was actually an hour shorter than a century later. From Budapest at least twelve major lines radiated out to different corners of the kingdom, enabling centralised bureaucracy to side-line the ancient system of county autonomy. Intensified state health provision had played a part in the down-turn in the death rate in the 1880s, so that while six years in the quarter-century up to the cholera epidemic of 1873-74 had shown an excess of deaths over births no such case recurred thereafter. By 1913, cholera and smallpox had been removed from the official list of fatal illnesses. A law of 1876 regulated doctor supply and the number of hospitals increased nearly ten-fold (44 to 427) over the period. Overall, Hungary's population grew from 13.6 to 18.3 million between the 1869 and 1910 censuses.<sup>1</sup> For all this the advance was strictly relative; 45% of children still died before the age of five in 1910 and the increase in life expectancy from thirty to forty still left Hungary behind any society known today.

This youthful population ... its average age was only 27 in 1910 ... was also much better educated. Less than a fifth of children by then failed to complete at least four years' schooling so that illiteracy had halved from 1867, to 33%. It was already under 10% in Budapest by 1900. The capital, by this time the sixth largest city in Europe, showed its modernity in many respects. Nearly all its houses were of stone or brick, against 21% in the country as a whole in 1910. The first electric street-lighting had been installed in 1878, the first telephone in 1881, the first electric tram in 1887. The beautiful new city was visited by six million people for the Millenary celebrations of the arrival of the Hungarians in the Danube basin (1896), far exceeding the still respectable figures for foreign tourists in Hungary, which rose from 130,000 in the mid-1890s to a quarter of a million before the war. With its 600 central-European-style cafés, its theatres, opera

house, twenty-four daily papers (1900), eight thousand printers and vibrant Jewish community in close touch with co-religionists in Vienna and Berlin, the capital reflected ostensibly the aspirations of a resurgent European nation. If regions like Transylvania to the east and Croatia to the south lagged far behind Budapest, this situation had parallels enough in the Austrian half of the Monarchy. Was not Dalmatian per capita income in the early twentieth century barely 40% that of Lower Austria?

Thus by 1900 the chief causes of Austro-Hungarian estrangement had to be cultural and political rather than social. A major factor was almost complete Austrian ignorance of the daunting Magyar language, related only to Finnish among European tongues. By contrast, virtually all well-educated Magyars had a command of German, but they associated their debt to German culture with the German world at large rather than the Austro-Germans, whom they tended to despise for failing to keep control of Gisleithania's Slavs. Here lay a neutralistic point in the Austro-Hungarian relationship: after 1867 many politically conscious Austro-Germans hoped initially for the resurrection of the unitary empire over the corpse of the Dualist experiment. Their resentment was deepened when the problems of Dualism revealed themselves first in Austria's nationality wrangles, not in Hungary as they had expected. Hungarians crowded over their discomfiture instead of showing the understanding Austro-Germans thought was due, in the interests of a common anti-Slav policy. The Croatian crisis of 1883, sparked off by Zagreb demonstrations against new bilingual (Magyar-Croat) public insignia, marked a turning-point. Though Austro-German hopes that a chastened Budapest might become more cooperative were not directly realised, the crushing of Croatian protest seemed to be a final consolidation of Dualism, a system the Austro-German upper bourgeoisie was now reconciled to as a bulwark against Slav federal claims.

But if Dualism became more acceptable to the likes of the *Neue Freie Presse* it became less so to the mass of ordinary Austrians. Hungarian agricultural interests pressed for higher protection of grain, which would enable them to dominate the Habsburg market at the expense of Austrian producers and consumers alike. Greater Magyar confidence led to more pressure for political concessions, while ethnopolitical division in Austria induced a humiliating sense of weakness. Austro-German opinion became fixated with an apparently triumphant Magyar ruling class, which combined the old state rights intransigence of the Magyar nobility with a novel economic weight.