

Work-time was conventionally from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset, all day every day, with a free period on Sunday afternoons, inducing an animal-like torpor in men who had lived thus all their lives. Farm-servants' wretched conditions gained them at least more security than landless labourers, who were lucky if they could secure a contract, partly in kind, from, say, April to September (the *szalma*) or a ploughman's contract of two or three months. Their willingness to accept such terms seems to have earned them at best patronising contempt: 'Their moral character is of course inferior, and they are very little to be relied upon', wrote a government publicist in 1909.<sup>17</sup>

It was the third category, the labourers, who were eventually mobilised in ploughing strikes of 1891-92, 1897 and 1905-06 in three different regions of Hungary. The 1897 movement, which involved some 15,000 ploughmen, led on to the foundation of the Independent Socialist Party by a dissident socialist and former farm labourer, István Várkonyi, whose programme of compulsory letting out of estate land in small leaseholds was interpreted by poor and landless peasants as a step to the division of the land. Prime Minister Bánffy replied by outlawing agricultural strikes, imprisoning Várkonyi and banning his paper. Later would-be peasant leaders, the journalist Vilmos Mezőfi and rich peasant András Áchim, who both founded their own parties (1900/1905), gave their movements a less idealistic direction, incorporating elements of Magyar nationalism in place of Várkonyi's stateless vision. Both won seats in the 1905 election, in which the official Social Democratic Party failed to break its duck, though it was the best organised movement in Hungary.

Hungarian Social Democracy's travails were perhaps the clearest reflection of Dualist Hungary's peculiarities, hoist between an advanced *Mittel Europa* and the Balkans. There was ample basis for a socialist movement in the Budapest metropolis, the most crowded of European cities after St Petersburg, where the average working day at the start of the period was at least twelve hours and deaths exceeded births. But industrial legislation of 1872 and 1875, while abolishing guilds, also forbade the organising of strikes (though not strikes themselves) and limited craft unions to educational and relief functions. Moreover, the multi-national work-force was hard to organise; the workers' movement was originally as much German as Hungarian. This meant it went through very similar stages to its Austrian counterpart: the initial general organisation in the capital, with printer antecedents, in the form of the General Workers' Society

(1868); its early government suppression (1871); struggling attempts to establish a workers' party in the 1870s and 1880s, dogged by persecution and internal quarrels; eventually, a more solid organisation, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (HSDP), set up in 1890 in response to the founding Congress of the Second International the previous year.

Trade unions, emerging from the craft stage in the 1890s, helped the new party overcome legal constraints on organising, but since strike activity was restricted the actual base of the socialist movement, even more than in Austria, lay in the 'free associations'. Existing ostensibly to support newspapers or various organisational functions, in fact they provided the link between the party leadership and the unions, and the brains of both. The real role of the free associations in the nascent socialist movement was no secret to the authorities, but they resisted calls to modernise trade union law because this would remove the pretext for government harassment whenever desired. By 1905 the Trade Union Council numbered 71,000 members and the chief party organ, *Népszava*, now a daily, had 25,000 subscribers. Ethnic subordination made non-Magyars open to messages of exploitation and the development of a socialist press in their languages was particularly promising. Though Christian socialism was also in the field and the striking railway workers of 1904 had links with the Independence movement, the greater weight of the Marxist HSDP was reflected in the interest taken in it by the radical fringe of the intelligentsia. The title this tendency selected for its flagship journal, *Twentieth Century* (1900), like that of the Social Science Society founded in 1901, was symptomatic of its turn from an outworn liberal-national romanticism towards positivism, influenced by Herbert Spencer's sociology. There was a touch of the histrionic, though, in the embrace of modernity and rejection of Hungary's 'Asiatic' conservatism by the brilliant young poet Endre Ady (1877-1918), whose response to Rodin's sculpture, *The Thinker* - 'Never has Plato's two-legged, featherless animal lived in a more complicated, more confusing and more demanding world' - encapsulated the restlessness of many young intellectuals in what they felt to be a stuffy and hypocritical backwater.<sup>18</sup> The strongest mind in the bourgeois radical tendency and editor of *Twentieth Century* was Oszkár Jászi, son of Jewish converts to Protestantism in Transylvania, who was willing to cooperate with the socialists. Jászi did not mind that his own reform programme (land reform, universal suffrage, concessions to the nationalities) would be seen by socialists as