

the minimum programme to their Marxist maximalism. At the same time, he still had contact with elite figures of more conservative stamp who also desired Hungary's modernisation, if not on those lines. István Tisza was a member of the Social Science Society. Gentry Hungary may not have been the liberal-conservative England of noble dreams, but neither was it Tsarist Russia. Polarisation was not total.

This was the complex situation into which József Kristóffy threw his universal suffrage bombshell, gaining the support of a hundred thousand socialist-organised demonstrators before the parliament building on 'Red Friday', 15 September 1905. Like Austrian socialists at this time the HSDP had from its 1903 congress made the democratisation of public life through universal suffrage the focal point of its strategy. But fraught with factionalism and dogmatism its vision was less clear on the issues a democratic Hungary would confront. Its failure to mobilise peasants, compared with dissident socialists like Várkonyi and Mezőfi, owed much to its rejection of peasant dreams of more land as petit bourgeois individualism. Its views on the national question did not advance essentially beyond the position of a Magyar participant in its 1905 Congress: 'We do not know a national question but only a question of exploiters and exploited.'¹⁹ Hence it approved mother-tongue propaganda and even national organisations within the common party (approved in 1905), but rejected a Serb proposal that the autonomy promised in the party programme should also specify national-territorial autonomy. Basically, the HSDP falsely assumed that modernisation would mean the erosion of ethnic difference.

Ultimately, the Social Democrats were a stage army in the wings; only 2-3% of the population was industrially organised. The Fejerváry programme would go through only if the Emperor and his advisers stuck to it and were willing to fight a general election on a progressive platform against virtually the whole Hungarian establishment, and incidentally the Austrian prime minister Gautsch, who feared universal suffrage in Cisleithania. The alternatives were military action against the Hungarians, for which plans existed, or a deal with the Independence coalition. Not surprisingly, a Crown Council on 22 August 1905 decided for the last option. The fact of the matter was that an Independence coalition containing life-long 1867ers like Apponyi and Andrássy did not have the stomach for a long fight on the lines of Deák's famous tax-withholding campaign of the 1860s, much as they invoked it. In February 1906 the

Hungarian parliament was dissolved to much reduced protest, and early in April Franz Joseph reached an agreement which brought the opposition to power but on the terms Andrássy had rejected a year before: the customs union and common army would remain substantially unchanged. The fact that the premier of the Independent coalition government was to be the wily Wekerle, an 1867 Liberal who had jumped ship, underlined how far the Hungarian nationalist camp had moved from 1848 positions.

The crisis of 1905-06 in Hungary highlights several bizzarries of the country's political system. The independentist opposition, which had called over a generation for the democratisation of Hungary, sabotaged the most far-reaching proposals ever put forward to that end and accepted office to implement policies they had vehemently obstructed at the cost of the parliamentary traditions they professed to love. Half the MPs of the Liberal Party, all-powerful for thirty years, had defected within months of losing the January 1905 election and the whole party simply dissolved itself days after the king's deal with Wekerle. The Fejerváry government for a time made its chief negotiating partner a party, the HSDP, which had never returned a single member of parliament, though it was undoubtedly the best organised in the country; and later abandoned its possibly beneficent proposals just as its opponents were on their knees. In all this commotion socialists and bourgeois intellectuals were able to have only a negative influence on the course of events, in that fear of popular radicalism getting out of hand no doubt facilitated the eventual deal among the elites.

Probably this summary is too harsh. It is the substantial progress made by Dualist Hungary in many spheres which causes its political defects to stand out the more. Political crisis was not the result of stagnation but of lop-sided development. In this, early-twentieth-century Hungary may stand for the Monarchy as a whole. But as an autonomous Hungary was the defining characteristic of Dualism, so that Hungary's plunge into crisis in 1905-06 is the most telling portent of the growing difficulties of the late Dualist system as a whole.