

Liberal ranks, however, the hankering for further autonomy gains *vis-à-vis* Austria was not absent and led to periodic secessions of Liberal 'dissidents' into opposition.

The famous conservative historian Szekfű commented between the wars on the confusion of thought in Dualist Hungary over the 1867 Compromise. Ostensibly, Hungarian politics divided into those who supported this Compromise (the 1867ers) and those who opposed it (the 1848ers) – rather as modern Irish party politics have been dominated by attitudes to the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1922. But while elements among the 1867ers increasingly moved towards an 1848 stance, thinking sufficient Hungarian pressure could win a 'rounding out' of the autonomy offered by the Compromise, 1848ers who claimed to recognise only the 1848 laws as a valid basis for Hungary operated *de facto* within the 1867 framework, which their leaders eventually accepted *de jure* through oaths of office to the Crown. The exiled Kossuth further muddied the waters, Szekfű maintains, by deliberately blurring the distinction between 1848 and 1849 in his constant declarations and letters home, thus lending his supporters in Hungary the aura both of the April laws, concluded at a time of national consensus, and the 1849 Independence War, in which many dignitaries of Dualist Hungary had fought in idealistic youth.<sup>6</sup> The fact that 1867ers could be disguised 1848ers and vice versa contributed to an artificiality and fissiparousness in Hungarian politics, as parties constantly split and realigned over patriotic symbols rather than concrete issues. Thus a high point in the campaign to 'round out' the Compromise was the concession won in 1889 whereby common Austro-Hungarian institutions were to be entitled imperial *and* royal instead of imperial-royal. While the two anti-Dualist parties united as the faction-ridden '1848 and Independence Party' in 1884, to the right of the liberals a conservative grouping under aristocratic influence existed from 1875, periodically reinforced by dissident liberals to form loose coalitions under such names as the United Opposition (1878) or Moderate Opposition (1881).

It is thus possible to speak of a three-fold party structure in which the governing liberals were flanked by anti-Dualists and conservatives/dissidents. The last group, though ultimately ineffective because of its internal divisions (centralist/decentralist; clerical/liberal) had a role as a safety-valve for periodic disaffection in a system which really amounted to one-party rule, because an anti-Dualist majority was unacceptable to the powers that be. Since, however, anti-Dualists would have won truly free elections – a contemporary remarked

that Kossuthite arguments sounded to ordinary Magyar voters like a popular song and Deákist ones like chamber music<sup>7</sup> – electoral manipulation, concerted between Tisza and his county high sheriffs, was central to the system. Nonetheless, over the whole Dualist period the opposition still won 60% of all Magyar constituencies contested.

Thus Hungarian constitutionalism was not just charade. Tisza faced successive crises in his early years, over the renegotiation of the economic compromise with Austria (1876-77), then the Eastern crisis and the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1877-79), in which defections or abstentions sharply reduced an ostensibly large majority; the economic compromise, where he had failed to secure Hungary a separate state bank, was passed by nineteen votes. Tisza himself was defeated in the east Hungarian Calvinist city of Debrecen in the parliamentary elections of August 1878. On the other hand, the fact that he won this election with a majority of 77 at the height of the military occupation of Bosnia, which was expensive, bloody and added Slavs to the Monarchy, shows ultimate government control when it mattered. In the 1880s Tisza was able to perfect his system of close administrative control, winning majorities of 225, 242 and 261 in successive elections before making them five-yearly instead of three-yearly affairs. Further centralisation of local government in 1886 (county high sheriffs could veto any decision of autonomous bodies); reform of the Upper House (1885) which introduced appointed life peers; above all, assertion of government control over the nationalities, could all be presented as liberal, in favouring modern expertise over traditional sectors, and as national, in terms of strengthening the Hungarian state. In the 1880s, too, Sándor Wekerle, as minister for finance, established a pattern of balanced budgets, largely by transferring the tax burden from direct to indirect taxation and giving it a markedly regressive trajectory. But the very success in stabilising an initially shaky polity fed a destabilising nationalism. Massive demonstrations against perceived concessions to imperial centralism in Tisza's 1889 army bill (modestly raising the common army's annual recruiting quota to 103,000) presaged his fall on an issue of national sentiment the next year. Dualism was damaged. Count Albert Apponyi transformed the Moderate Opposition into the National Party, supplementing agrarian conservatism with a campaign for the 'fulfilment' of the Compromise by concessions from Vienna – the same illusory attempt to have one's Dualist cake and eat it that Tisza had abandoned in 1875.