

Nationalities and the Hungarian Parliament (1867-1918)¹

It is widely thought that the system of tensions between nationalities was one of the fundamental problems of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Scholars of this opinion believe that this could have been a reason for the Monarchy's death even without the cataclysm of World War I. We do not know if they are right, because the Monarchy did not die of this in the end. Nevertheless, it is sure that the tensive force of problems related to nationalities increasingly pervaded the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

I have no intention of reviewing the history of problems related to nationalities in this paper. I do not even wish to provide a detailed analysis of the Austrian and Hungarian parliamentary systems, or their place in the political structure of the part of the empire concerned.

It is my aim, however, to show what factors had a decisive role in the relationship of the Hungarian Parliament and the nationalities. I also aim to raise awareness: beside every truth there is another truth.

The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: area, population, ethnic ratios

The last form of existence of the Habsburg Empire, i.e. the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural empire.² The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a political structure was established by the Austria-Hungary Compromise in 1867.

¹ This essay is based on my book: András Gerő: *The Hungarian Parliament (1867-1918). A Mirage of Power*. Boulder, Colorado; ARP, New Jersey, Columbia University Press, New York 1997. It was presented at British Academy in London (The title of conference was: „Parliaments and Minorities: Ethnicities, Nations and Religions in Europe, 1848-1948”). The conference was held on 12-14. May, 2014.

² For the presentation of the data regarding the territory, population and ethnic ratios of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, I have made use of Kann, Robert A., *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1918*. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 1977; Reden, Alexander Sixtus von: *Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia. Történelmi dokumentumok a századfordulótól 1916-ig [The Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. Historical documents from the Turn of the Century to 1916]*. Budapest-Salzburg, Széchenyi Kiadó-Druckhaus Nonntal Bücherdienst, 1989. *The Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy (1867-1918)*. Eds.: Zsuzsa Gáspár, Paul Hanebrink, András Gerő. New Holland Publishers, London, 2008. (Hereafter Dual Monarchy, 2008.)

One half of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy consisted of the Countries of the Hungarian Holy Crown. At that time the area of the Hungarian state was 325 411 km², and according to 1910 data the number of inhabitants here was 20.8 million. The area of Austria, which formed the other part of the Empire, was 300 005 km², and also according to a 1910 survey the population of this territory amounted to 28.5 million.

36% of Austria's population was of German ethnicity. They were followed by the Czech, accounting for 23%, and the populations belonging to the Polish, Ukrainian and Slovenian nationalities with a ratio of 16%, 13% and 5%, respectively. The remaining percentage was shared among other nationalities. Apparently, a dominant part of the Austrian population was ethnically German, but it did not constitute a majority.

From an administrative viewpoint, the Countries of the Hungarian Holy Crown included the Kingdom of Hungary, the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, and the region of Fiume, a “separate body” (*corpus separatum*) of the Hungarian Holy Crown.³ There was a unique relationship between the Countries of the Hungarian Holy Crown. Similarly to Austria and Hungary, there was a Compromise between the Kingdom of Hungary and Croatia (1868) as well. The Hungarian Government had no say in Croatian internal affairs, and Croatia also had its own Parliament. Fiume was under the control of its own Governor, and with its 21.5 km² it was a free town. The city was mostly inhabited by Italians.

Being independent in its internal administration and having its own capital city (Zagreb), the 42.5 thousand km² area and the 2.6 million inhabitants (1910) of Croatia were not generally taken into account as part of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Under the aegis of the Hungarian Holy Crown, in 1878 the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy occupied and in 1908 annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, which had an area of 51 000 km² and a population of 1.9 million in 1910. Since it was directly under the control of the common Finance Minister, i.e. Vienna directly, its area and population were not reckoned in the Kingdom of Hungary.

I found all the above necessary to mention to make it clear that from now on I will speak about the Kingdom of Hungary, not the Countries of the Hungarian Holy Crown. Hereafter I will write “Hungary” when I refer to the Kingdom of Hungary for the sake of simplicity.

³ For Hungarian aspects and Hungarian data, see András Geró: *Dualizmusok. A Monarchia Magyarországa [Dualisms: The Hungary of the Monarchy]*. ÚMK, Budapest, 2010.

Hungary: area, population, ethnic ratios

The area of Hungary was 282 870 km² and in 1910 its population was 18.2 million. The Compromise and its consequences were of great significance from the aspect of Hungary's territory. In 1867 Transylvania became once again part of Hungary, and the Military Border Guard Region, established after the Ottoman Empire lost control over the southern part of the country, which was governed from Vienna, was also brought under the control of the Hungarian Government. In fact, the country's territorial unity, which had been broken in the 16th century, was restored. The administrative structure of the newly established state territory consisted of 63 counties and 27 municipalities.

Hungary, just like Austria, formed a rather heterogeneous ethnical unit. Yet – despite its heterogeneity –, it showed a far more homogeneous picture than the other part of the Empire. After the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Hungarians became the majority nationality in Hungary. While they made up only 45-46% in the late 1860s, by 1910 they had grown to constitute 54.5% of the country's population. The fact that they became a majority resulted from the interaction of various factors. I would like to emphasize that a vast majority of the Jewish population, which amounted to 5% of the inhabitants, assimilated to the Hungarians, and another aspect not to be neglected is that non-Hungarian nationalities emigrated from Hungary in larger numbers than ethnic Hungarians.

However, the fact that the Hungarian nationality formed the majority in Hungary taken as a whole did not mean that other nationalities did not outnumber them in certain parts of the country. Looking at the country as a whole, the second largest nationality, i.e. the Romanians (16.1%), formed the majority population of Transylvania. The Slovaks constituting the third largest group (10.7%) were in the same position in Hungary's northern counties, i.e. the region that Hungarians call “Felvidék” (“Upper Hungary”, literally: “Uplands”). The fourth biggest nationality, that of Germans (10.4%), lived mostly in blocks rather than in coherent territorial zones. The Ruthenian (Ukrainian) population (2.5%) was mostly concentrated in the north-eastern counties, while Serbs (2.5%) and Croats (1.1%) lived in the Southern Region and in the south-western counties. The category “other” (2.2%) included Slovenians, the Bunjevac, Czech, Polish, etc. people. They were not characteristic of the country's ethnic map; they just made it more colorful.

Although the territorial distribution of the nationalities living in Hungary sometimes covered whole regions, they were often mixed or scattered, i.e. there could be a Romanian settlement next to a Hungarian one just as there were various nationalities mixed and living next to one another within the same settlement.

Representative parliament and suffrage

In Hungary, a representative parliament came into existence as a consequence of the ‘legitimate revolution’ of 1848.⁴ This political form replaced the feudal system. The introduction of the principle of the representative parliament made it necessary to regulate suffrage as well, and this took effect in Act V of 1848.

The 1848 Act was liberal.

Its liberalism lay in the fact that men aged at least 20, meeting the property or income qualification for voting, as well as members of the intelligentsia, were guaranteed a voting right and those above 24 could be elected representatives. The extent of the liberalism of the 1848 Act is clear if we look at England, which was considered the model state of liberalism at that time, as the qualifications for suffrage and candidacy to meet there were higher. England had a much larger population but only a few hundred thousand more voters than Hungary did, and if we compare the Hungary of the time with other European states we still get a highly positive picture, since this political right was held by some 7-8% of the population (or even 10% according to other – somewhat exaggerative – calculations). In sum, apart from Switzerland, Hungary had the lowest qualification for suffrage and candidacy in Europe in those days.

Better still, this Act meant a huge step forward relative to the former regime, because before 1848 only those who had feudal privileges had the right to vote. This group constituted not more than 2% of the population, despite the fact that compared to the size of its population Hungary was one of those European nations that had the largest number of noblemen.

⁴ For the history of the Hungarian Parliament in the era of the Dualism, see Adalbert Toth: *Parteien und Reichstagswahlen in Ungarn 1848-1892 [Parties and National Elections in Hungary from 1848 to 1892]*. R. Oldenbourg Verlag, München, 1973.; András Gerő: *The Hungarian Parliament (1867-1918). A Mirage of Power*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1997. (Original edition: Gerő András: *Az elsőpró kisebbség [A sweeping minority]*. Gondolat, Budapest, 1988.) (Hereafter Gerő, 1997.); Zsuzsanna Boros-Dániel Szabó: *Parlamentarizmus Magyarországon (1867-1944) [The Parliamentary System in Hungary (1867-1944)]*. Korona Kiadó, Budapest, 1999. (Hereafter Boros-Szabó, 1999.); Sándor Pesti: *Az újkori magyar parlament [The Modern Hungarian Parliament]*. Osiris, Budapest, 2002.; Jean Bérenger-Károly Kecskeméti: *Országgyűlés és parlamenti élet Magyarországon 1608-1918 [Parliament and Life in the Parliament in Hungary from 1608 to 1918]*. Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 2008. (Original edition: Jean Bérenger – Charles Kecskeméti: *Parlement et vie Parlementaire en Hongrie, 1608-1918*. Paris, Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2005.) (Hereafter Bérenger-Kecskeméti, 2008.). The data in this paper can be found in the works cited. Nevertheless, I primarily made use of my own book.

The 1848 Act was meant to be a temporary regulation. Nevertheless, this law remained in effect for five successive election terms, i.e. all through 1848, 1861, 1865, 1869, and 1872.

In 1874 suffrage was subject to a review, and it was Act XXXIII of 1874 on the basis of which all the elections in the Dualist era took place. The impact of the law over a longer time span is demonstrated in the following table:

The number of voters and their ratios to the total population between 1869 and 1910⁵

Year	Population in millions	Number of voters in thousands	Population as a percentage
1869	13.2	902	6.7
1874	13.5	846	5.5
1881	13.7	821	6.0
1884	14.3	842	5.9
1887	14.6	847	5.6
1892	15.3	870	5.7
1896	15.9	890	5.6
1901	16.8	1025	6.1
1905	17.6	1057	6.0
1906	18.0	1085	6.2
1910	18.2	1162	6.4

As a result of the law the number of voters decreased, in fact, it stagnated. By the turn of the century, the rate of this decline was so high that the regulation according to which those who had tax arrears were to be removed from the list of voters had to be cancelled. Act XV of 1899 abolished this restriction, which resulted in 118 thousand more voters. The available figures show that the 1874 qualification for voting, which was predominantly based on taxable income, could hardly let the newcomers in. Therefore, the law was not simply too rigorous and restrictive with respect to the conditions that prevailed in 1874, but – and perhaps this is even more important – it proved to be incapable of any development. There are two points of comparison: first, as we have seen, it showed no improvement compared to itself and, second, in international terms, i.e. compared to the development of contemporary Europe. While in 1906 6.2% of the population of Hungary had the right to vote, at the turn of the century this ratio was 22% in Germany, 28% in France, 16% in England and even in Italy, where a rather high qualification for voting was applied, it was 8%. In Austria, i.e. the other

⁵ Gerő, 1997, p. 50.

part of the Monarchy, 27% of the population had the right to vote, although it is true that in Austria it also was possible to govern by decrees irrespective of the Parliament.

Other calculations presenting the results in a different way (with rounded figures) support this same fact: taking the Hungarian ratios as a basis, 2 million of England's population of 40 million would have belonged to the electorate, while in reality there were 7 million voters; Germany would have had 2.7 million voters out of its population of 52 million, while, in fact, there were 11 million people who had the right to vote. Instead of the 870 000 voters that Hungary had in 1892 there would have been 2.7 million according to the English system, 3.9 million according to the German system, and 4.5 million according to the French system.

Here and now I do not wish to detail the other anomalies of suffrage, the uneven demographic distribution of constituents, or the fact that during the entire period voting took place openly, not by secret ballot. All things considered, this brief review shows that in the second half of the 19th century the scope of suffrage was increasingly restricted in Hungary.

Ethnic ratios

As regards voting rights, the ratios of nationalities relative to the total population were as follows. According to 1906 data Hungarians constituted 54.4% of the total population, and 56.2% of them were represented in the electorate. Ethnic Germans, who made up 10.4% of the population, gave 12.7% of the voters. With their ratio of 10.7% within the total population, Slovaks contributed 11.4% of the voters. 16.1% of the population of Romanian nationality, but only 11.2% of these people had voting rights. With their ratio of 2.5% within the entire population, the Carpathian Ukrainians (Ruthenians) held 2.9% of the votes. Croats made up 1.1% of the population and 1.2% of them were members of the electorate. In the case of other nationalities the ratios within the population and the electorate were more or less equal.

These figures show that ethnic Germans were significantly overrepresented, while Romanians were underrepresented to an even larger extent. Compared with their ratios within the total population, it was more characteristic of the rest of the nationalities to be overrepresented, even if to a negligible degree, than to be underrepresented. This was also true of ethnic Hungarians, who were only slightly overrepresented relative to their ratio within the total population.

If we compare this with the ratio of nationalities in the various National Assemblies, we get a rather weird result.⁶

In period concerned – and let me ignore the minor changes now – the democratic Parliament of Hungary consisted of 413 representatives.

The number of representatives belonging to non-Hungarian nationalities in Hungary and their proportion in the National Assembly (1867-1918)

Year	Number of representatives belonging to nationalities other than Hungarian	Proportion relative to the total number of representatives
1869	3	1.4
1872	9	2.2
1875	24	5.8
1878	9	2.2
1881	14	3.4
1884	16	3.9
1887	9	2.2
1892	0	0
1896	0	0
1901	16	3.9
1905	10	2.4
1906	26	6.3
1910	8	1.9

⁶ Béranger-Kecskeméti, 2008, p. 424.

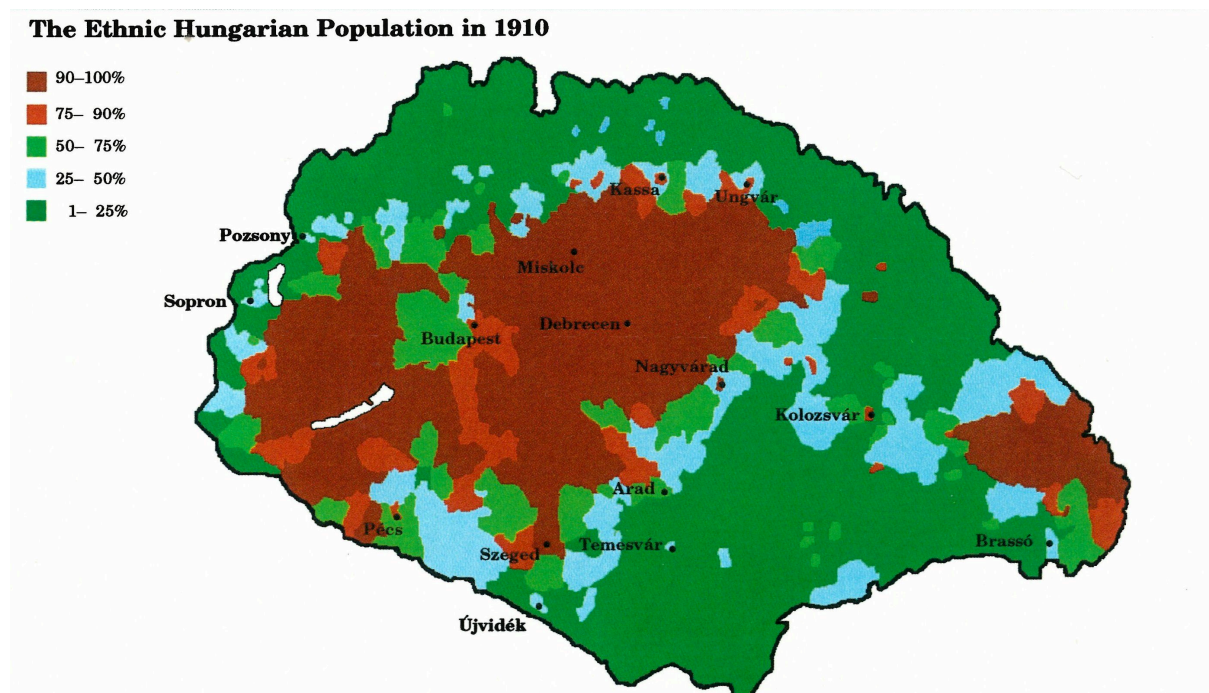
It is surprising.

It is surprising that while voters belonging to nationalities other than Hungarian are represented within the suffrage, even if somewhat disproportionately, their ratio is rather low among the Members of Parliament. If we add that at that time Hungary had several ‘compact’ ethnic regions, i.e. constituents where non-Hungarian nationalities formed the majority of the population, this fact is even more surprising.

Ethnic ratios and election results

If even those electoral districts where non-Hungarian nationalities make up the majority elected such a small number of ethnic representatives, the question arises: who did they vote for? The following maps⁷ illustrate the ethnic and political characteristics of the various areas at elections during the Dualist era.

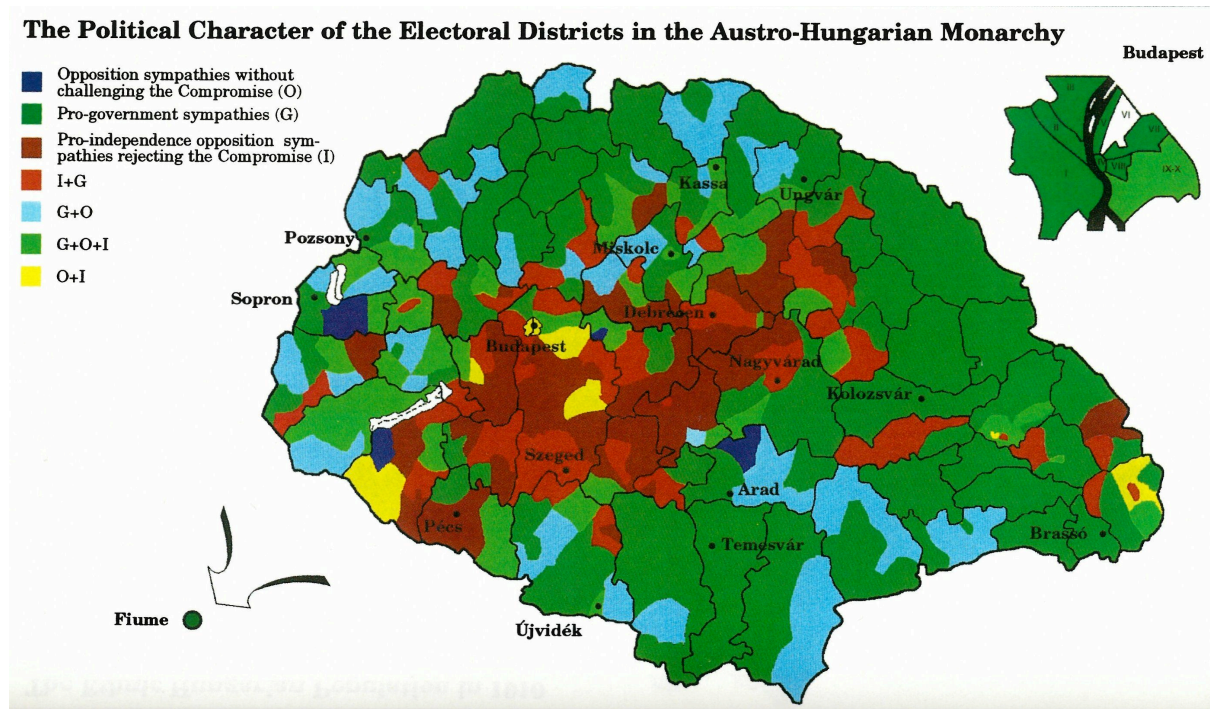
The first map shows the regions where there was a large ethnic Hungarian population and those where the number of ethnic Hungarians was gradually decreasing.



As it can be seen on the map, the ethnic Hungarian population was concentrated along the north-eastern – south-western axis of Hungary at that time (with the exception of Székely Land, which is located at the edge of Transylvania). This axis is surrounded by a “horseshoe” comprising several nationalities.

⁷ Gerő, 1997, pp. 188-189.

And now let us see how these regions voted at the elections held between 1869 and 1910:



Apparently, while the regions inhabited by Hungarians showed a political attitude that strongly objected to the Compromise, the regions with a non-Hungarian ethnic population represented a political approach in support of the current political structure and the governing party.

Taking account of the above, we can state that a vast majority of the firm supporters of the political world that was based on Hungarian supremacy were from districts where the majority of voters belonged to non-Hungarian nationalities. I might as well say that a moderate form of Hungarian nationalism was legitimized by these ethnic voters, thus indirectly supporting the maintenance and survival of the dual structure of the Habsburg Empire established in 1867.

It seems – at least on the basis of the election results – that the above statement can be justified. However, this may not be the entire truth.

Hungarian supremacy

In the new Hungary that was formed as a result of the Compromise the Hungarian political elite was divided, as some members of it supported this compromise and this type of monarchy while others did not. In political terms, one of the main bones of contention of this

whole era was whether to maintain the Monarchy or to have an independent Hungarian State sharing only the monarch with the other part of the empire.

Of course, the question here is not to decide which position was realistic or unrealistic from a political viewpoint. Here and now the only important fact to highlight is that the Hungarian political elite were divided. This division was reflected in the way Hungarian political life was taking shape along this kind of 'public' separating line: there were parties in favor of the Compromise and there were 'autonomy' groups rejecting it.

This was the difference.

But there were similarities as well.

The similarity lay in the fact that all Hungarian political forces thought Hungary belonged to ethnic Hungarians, so they were entitled to political supremacy. Already in 1868 they declared⁸: "... also according to the fundamental principles of the Constitution, in political terms all citizens of Hungary constitute one nation, the single and indivisible Hungarian Nation, with each and every citizen of the country being an equal member, irrespective of which ethnicity he or she belongs to...". The single Hungarian political nation also meant that the official language of the country was the Hungarian language; consequently, the sole language to be used by the Hungarian National Assembly in all discussions and administrative affairs was Hungarian. In applying the idea of the single political unit in practice, it was the Hungarian elite that decided about the country's fate. In addition to the supremacy of the Hungarian language and Hungarian culture, this also conveyed the following message to non-Hungarian nationalities living here: the country belongs to the Hungarians, so they are entitled to cultural supremacy. This atmosphere is demonstrated well by the millennial celebration of the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin in 1896.

1896 intended to raise awareness of three main values. These values have equal significance.

First of all, they wanted to make people aware that the Hungarian State had found its place, and after so many unfortunate historical eras it finally settled in a permanent and reassuring situation. One proof of this was that in the gallery of kings, which forms part of the Millennium Monument, Franz Joseph was "designed" to be the last one of the fourteen

⁸ Act 44 of 1868. On the legal equality of nationalities. In: *Magyarország történet a 19. században. Szöveggyűjtemény [The History of Hungary in the 19th Century: A Collection of Texts]*. Ed.: Gábor Pajkossy. Osiris, Budapest, 2003. pp. 525-529.

statutes. Another sign of this was that the term ‘Historical Hungary’ (‘Saint Stephen's Empire’) was referred to as an eternal status in the various manifestations despite the fact that half of the country’s inhabitants belonged to nationalities which had serious ethnic and national backgrounds beyond the border. A further indication was that ceremonialism was conceived under the aegis of historization: the contemporary situation was a positive accomplishment in history.

Second, the 1896 Millennium claimed that the supremacy of Hungarians was inherent in Hungary. Hungarians had an economic, cultural and political superiority, and this was a genuine and justifiable supremacy. This is manifested in the mythicization of the Conquest itself, such as in the Feszty Cyclorama, which is available for visitors again, and which, among others, features how the conquering Hungarian men ‘fetched’ Slavic women.⁹ The Millennium Exhibition was another indication, where all the requisites of the well-deserved supremacy were showcased, and where non-Hungarian nationalities were only represented in an artificial village resembling an open-air museum.

Third – and this element legitimized the previous two ones – the millennium pronounced: the country was capable of a modernization-civilizatory breakthrough, adopting the mainstream European values of industrialization and civilization. This was the message also conveyed by the investments in public administration and infrastructure development, as well as the cultural investments which – as a museum – attested the country's ability to accumulate cultural wealth. They made the 19th-century ideology of ‘progress’ obvious, perceivable, and clear for everyone. And once progress was undoubtedly evident, the political position and the superiority of Hungarians gained legitimacy as a resting point and an accomplishment. As Mór Jókai, the most widely read writer of Hungarian literature of that era, now a classical writer, put it: “*The task of Hungary is not to expand but to rise.*”¹⁰

Non-Hungarian nationalities had to acknowledge this political and cultural framework, and this is how they conceived “Hungary”. Basically, they had two options concerning the Hungarian side: they either supported the more rigorously nationalistic concept of autonomy

⁹ The Feszty Cyclorama was restored as a result of several years of work. It can now be seen in Ópusztaszer. For its history, see: Árpád Szűcs - Malgorzata Wojtowicz: *A Feszty-körkép [The Festy Cyclorama]*. Helikon Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1996.

¹⁰ Mór Jókai: Utószó [Afterword]. In: Sándor Szilágyi (ed.): *A magyar nemzet története [A History of the Hungarian Nation]*. Athenaeum, Budapest, 1898, vol. 10. p. 840.

or accepted the less nationalistic policy supporting the indivisible Habsburg Monarchy. They opted for this latter alternative.

Of course, it did not necessarily mean that they identified with it.

Alternative ethnic attitudes

This non-identification took various forms.¹¹ Some of the ethnic intellectuals and politicians – and let me skip the details now – wanted territorial autonomy within the country. They never gained it.

Some nationalities kept to the attitude that they would respond with passivity and refuse to take part in the elections. In Naszód County, which was predominantly inhabited by Romanians, there was a constituency where a representative was elected by no more than 2 votes. A similar reaction – although a more moderate one – was shown by Serbs and Slovaks.

They were looking for areas where they could avoid the legitimization of the political structure. Cultural and union activities as well as alternative politics became more intensive both among the Slovaks and the Serbs. They tried to make use of the opportunities granted by the provisions of the above-cited 1868 law on ethnic languages, and from time to time they made sure that the law was observed.

One of the areas of ethnic activity, which was intertwined with the ones mentioned above but formed a partially independent area, was the conscious, nationality-based economic activity, which focused – among others – on the establishment of various cooperative systems.

After the turn of the century non-Hungarian nationalities increasingly switched from passivity to direct political activity, also reflected in the number of ethnic representatives in the Parliament, which was the highest (26) in 1906. This revival was not too long-lasting – at least from the aspect of parliamentary representation – but the activity of non-Hungarian nationalities was becoming more and more intensive as the outbreak of the world war was approaching.

So as far as the ethnic groups were concerned, there were two simultaneous truths to consider. On the one hand, they accepted the political system that was based on Hungarian supremacy as legitimate while, on the other hand, they were constantly questioning it through other activities.

¹¹ Boros-Szabó, 1999, pp. 28-39.

In addition, apart from the world of politics, they lived in a relatively peaceful and normal coexistence model. In fact, the atmosphere in which the nationalities of Hungary lived together was not characterized by hatred or program logics. The peoples that shared their place of residence adopted each other's eating culture, habits, and folk music. There were no massive ethnic commotions. It is safe to say that they were fundamentally characterized by peaceful co-existence, which often turned into a kind of natural assimilation process. To find evidence it is enough to take a look at any 20th century telephone directory, where subscribers with Slavic surnames are listed as Hungarians.

The Hungarian government made some more violent attempts at assimilation only when – for a short period of time (1906-1910) – the opposition, which supported autonomy, became part of the governing powers.

Voters belonging to non-Hungarian nationalities felt their attitude had been justified retroactively for decades.

The mythology of “internal colonization”

Most of the historiography and political discourse of the successor states viewed the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a structure that suppressed non-Hungarian nationalities. This approach did not seem to acknowledge the fact that – at least in the case of Hungary – voters belonging to non-Hungarian nationalities had legitimized the structure and the regime over a series of elections. The discourse clearly indicated that both German-speaking Austrians and Hungarians oppressed their ethnic minorities. Reviewing narratives that take their munitions from nationalism,¹² one gets the overall impression that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was an exclusive ground for ethnic suppression, as German Austria and Hungary were concerned in a kind of internal colonization.

As it is well-known, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was a great power, yet without any colonies.¹³ Its imperialistic nature and its refusal of colonial expansion led to a number of consequences.

¹² This is especially true of the Czech, Slovak and Romanian historiographies. Nevertheless, there is also a nostalgic and euphemistically aesthetic approach to the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. See: Gergely Romsics: *Myth and Remembrance. The Dissolution of the Habsburg Empire*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2006.

¹³ András Gerő: *Birodalom gyarmat nélkül [Empire without Colonies]*. In: András Gerő: *Szétszakított múlt [Past Torn Apart]*. Habsburg Történelmi Intézet, Budapest, 2012. pp. 145-170.

One of those consequences was that the Empire was weaker than it could have been if it had had colonies. Historiography on World War I makes mention of this.¹⁴ In my point of view, this possible connection is not so relevant – I think the fate of the war did not depend on it. As for me, it is more important to see what the lack of the Empire's missionary aims resulted in or what it could have caused.

The cohesion of Belgium, which suffered from the burden of the Flemish-Walloon conflict and which came to existence in 1830, was significantly increased by its missionary civilizatory efforts, which gave good reason for its appetite for colonization. Until the 1910s, this small European state scrounged some 2.3 million km² of colonies with nearly 20 million inhabitants.

Founded in 1871, Germany gained incredible self-confidence by creating, within a very short time, an empire of colonies that made its status as a world power undisputable, endowed with magnitude and glory. The British and the French wanted to force their own cultures and norms upon the peoples they had brought under their control, not only turning themselves into world powers but also making world languages out of their mother tongues.

The states acquired some kind of a missionary attitude as a result of colonization, which developed into a cohesive force for their own societies. Despite their manifold conflicts, they could set a common (and ethnically justified) goal for their people. Of course, after some time they did induce counter-interpretations and/or aversion.

The Monarchy was unable to present such a cohesive goal and ethos for its own diversely divided society, ragged by conflicts. From another viewpoint this meant that outside Europe the Habsburg Empire had no enemies, and no uprising was provoked against it. However, instead of being despised from outside, internal hatred was increasingly ingrained in people's minds, and it could be disseminated to many other European states.

This is because if the Monarchy did not intend to colonize outside, it was obviously doing it inside. Its imperialism was manifested in internal colonization, as the reality and idea of colonization were inherent in all empires.

The mythology of internal colonization probably permeated among the elite of each people of the Monarchy. It was a myth, because we can hardly find any real evidence: there had been some failed attempts, but no signs of success in internal colonization. No ethnic group or religion had been able to force its own language or norms on the others. Obviously,

¹⁴ József Galántai: *Az első világháború [The First World War]*. Gondolat, Budapest, 1980.

this was an achievement rather than an endowment, since the reformation and counter-reformation movements taking place in the previous centuries and the germanization efforts made prior to 1867 had come to a standstill, leading to a liberal breakthrough in the separation of the state and the church. Quite often it turned out that there was no point in violent national assimilation. Also, no ethnic groups were relocated or deported intentionally and coercively.

The unique mythology of internal colonization is well reflected in the way it was perceived by Hungarians and German-Austrians.¹⁵

The status of Hungarians within the Habsburg Empire showed some kind of duality – at least from a cultural-political perspective – and it was in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy that this duality proved to be truly viable. On the one hand, Hungarians constituted one of the dominant nations of the Empire, and this vested them with the ethos that characterized all other imperialist peoples. There was ground for so-called ‘cultural supremacy’ or civilization superiority over other non-Hungarian nationalities living here under the pretext of ancient historical privileges. On the other hand, it was due to the Habsburgs and German influence identified with them that could cause the Hungarians to interpret their own situation as subjection, i.e. as oppression by Vienna, and that may be the reason why the idea of independence became a major opposition force during the era. The duality of Hungarian perception became part of our interpretations and memory; in fact, it is part of our culture. This duality is present in all areas from folklore to history. This dual – although not always coherent – presence has formed one of the main backbones of Hungarian public culture.

What the German-Austrians saw – especially after the establishment of Germany - was that the Hungarians possessed 50% of the rights but bore only 30% of the costs within the Empire. It was widely believed that they were threatened by the continuous upsurge of the Czechs, or the 'Slavs', and sooner or later they would demand everything. They hated the Czechs, the Hungarians and, of course, the Jews alike. Hatred became part of their self-definition, and thus it was convertible. Karl Lueger, the mayor of Vienna between 1897 and 1910 called Budapest, the Hungarian capital “Judapest” and the Hungarians “Judeohungarians”. With this he meant to strike a simultaneous blow on the Hungarians and

¹⁵ On issues regarding perception, see András Gerő: The Heritage of the Empire. In: Dual Monarchy, 2008. pp. 208-237. On the Austrian perception separately, see András Gerő: *Neither Woman Nor Jew. The Confluence of Prejudices in the Monarchy at the Turn of Century*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2010. (Original edition: (Original appearance: András Gerő: *Se nő, se zsidó. Előítéletek találkozása a századforduló monarchiájában*. ÚMK, Budapest, 2010.

the Jews. He thought they were the ones who wanted to suppress German-Austrians and who were actually “colonizing”.

The Czechs resented the German-Austrian domination, while the Romanians and Slovaks objected to Hungarian oppression, and so on. Everyone blamed the other for wanting to deprive them of their life chances, rights, and freedom, acting as colonists.

After a while the Monarchy was viewed as some sort of “peoples' prison”. The Habsburgs were the heads of the prison and the Austro-Germans and the Hungarians were the prison guards, who did not at all enjoy this role.

Indeed, the British and French public mostly believed in this view,¹⁶ whilst in 1910 there were 351 million people living in the 29 million km² area of Britain's colonies and 39 million people in the 6.8 million km² French colonies who had no civil, political or self-expression rights at all.

The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Hungary itself have done much to make the picture seem even worse than it was. But we would make a mistake if we believed this picture to be true because – as I mentioned – beside every truth there is another truth.

As Stephen Howe wrote: *“In comparison with most of its rival imperial systems, and certainly compared to the dictatorship, war, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide which many of its subject peoples suffered after it had gone, it deserves some retrospective applause, even a small sigh of regret for its passing.”*¹⁷

¹⁶ The British picture is described by: Géza Jeszenszky: *Az elvesztett presztízs [The Lost Prestige]*. Magyar Szemle Alapítvány, Budapest, 1994. The French picture can be found in: Ferenc Fejtő: *Requiem egy hajdan volt birodalomért. Ausztria-Magyarország szétrombolása [Requiem for a Onetime Empire. The Destruction of Austria-Hungary]*. Atlantisz Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1997. (Original appearance: *Réquiem pour un Empire défunt. Histoire de la destruction de l'Autriche-Hongrie*, Paris, 1988.)

¹⁷ Stephen Howe: *Empire. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2002.