

OFFICIAL NATIONALISM AND IMPERIALISM

Why the change? Doubtless dramatic events immediately preceding and following his coronation in November 1910 had their effect. The previous June the police had had to be called out to suppress a general strike by Bangkok's Chinese merchants (upwardly mobile children of early immigrants) and workers, marking their initiation into Siamese politics.³⁷ The following year, the Celestial Monarchy in Peking was swept away by a heterogeneous assortment of groups from which merchants were by no means absent. 'The Chinese' thus appeared as harbingers of a popular *republicanism* profoundly threatening to the dynastic principle. Second, as the words 'Jews' and 'Orient' suggest, the Anglicized monarch had imbibed the particular racisms of the English ruling class. But, in addition, there was the fact that Wachirawut was a sort of Asian Bourbon. In a pre-national era his ancestors had readily taken attractive Chinese girls as wives and concubines, with the result that, Mendelianly-speaking, he himself had more Chinese 'blood' than Thai.³⁸

Here is a fine example of the character of official nationalism – an anticipatory strategy adopted by dominant groups which are threatened with marginalization or exclusion from an emerging nationally-imagined community. (It goes without saying that Wachirawut also began moving all the policy levers of official nationalism: compulsory state-controlled primary education, state-organized propaganda, official rewriting of history, militarism – here more visible show than the real thing – and endless affirmations of the identity of dynasty and nation.³⁹)

The development of Hungarian nationalism in the nineteenth century

37. The strike was occasioned by the government's decision to exact the same head-tax on the Chinese as on the native Thai. Hitherto it had been lower, as an inducement to immigration. See Beavars D., Mabry, *The Development of Labor Institutions in Thailand*, p. 38. (Exploitation of the Chinese came mainly via the opium-farm.)

38. For genealogical details, see my 'Studies of the Thai State,' p. 214.

39. He also coined the slogan, *Chai, Siam, Kasat* (Nation, Religion, Monarch) which has been the shibboleth of rightwing regimes in Siam for the last quarter of a century. Here Uvarov's Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality appear in reversed Thai order.

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Indies, British Malaya, and the Raj.³⁵ Following these models meant rationalizing and centralizing royal government, eliminating traditional semi-autonomous tributary statelets, and promoting economic development somewhat along colonial lines. The most striking example of this – an example which in its odd way looks forward to contemporary Saudi Arabia – was his encouragement of a massive immigration of young, single, male foreigners to form the disoriented, politically powerless workforce needed to construct port facilities, build railway lines, dig canals, and expand commercial agriculture. This importing of *gastarbeiter* paralleled, indeed was modelled on, the policies of the authorities in Batavia and Singapore. And as in the case of the Netherlands Indies and British Malaya, the great bulk of the labourers imported during the nineteenth century were from southeastern China. It is instructive that this policy caused him neither personal qualms nor political difficulties – no more than it did the colonial rulers on whom he modelled himself. Indeed the policy made good short term sense for a *dynastic* state, since it created an impotent working class 'outside' Thai society and left that society largely undisturbed.

Wachirawut, his son and successor (r. 1910–1925), had to pick up the pieces, modelling himself this time on the self-naturalizing dynasts of Europe. Although – and because – he was educated in late Victorian England, he dramatized himself as his country's 'first nationalist.'³⁶ The target of this nationalism, however, was neither the United Kingdom, which controlled 90 per cent of Siam's trade, nor France, which had recently made off with easterly segments of the old realm: it was the Chinese whom his father had so recently and blithely imported. The style of his anti-Chinese stance is suggested by the titles of two of his most famous pamphlets: *The Jews of the Orient* (1914), and *Clogs on Our Wheels* (1915).

35. Battyé nicely shows that the purpose of the young monarch's visits to Batavia and Singapore in 1870 and to India in 1872 was, in Chulalongkorn's own sweet words, 'selecting what may be safe models.' See 'The Military, Government and Society in Siam, 1868–1910,' p. 118.

36. 'The inspiration of Vajiravudh's [Wachirawut's] nationalist program was, first and foremost, Great Britain, the Western nation Vajiravudh knew best, at this time a nation caught up in imperialist enthusiasm.' Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyoi King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism*, p. xiv. See also pp. 6 and 67–68.

of a small, but energetic, liberal intelligentsia all stimulated a popular Hungarian nationalism conceived very differently from that of the nobility. This popular nationalism, symbolized for later generations by the figure of Lajos Kossuth (1802-1894), had its hour of glory in the Revolution of 1848. The revolutionary regime not only got rid of the imperial governors appointed by Vienna, but abolished the supposedly Ur-Magyar feudal Diet of Noble Counties, and proclaimed reforms to put an end to serfdom and noblemen's tax-exempt status, as well as to curb drastically the entailment of estates. In addition, it was decided that all Hungarian-speakers should be Hungarian (as only the privileged had been before) and every Hungarian should speak Magyar (as only some Magyars had hitherto been accustomed to do). As Ignotus drily comments, "The 'nation' was, by the standard of that time (which viewed the rise of the twin stars of Liberalism and Nationalism with boundless optimism), justified in feeling itself extremely generous when it 'admitted' the Magyar peasant with no discrimination save for that relating to property,"⁴³ and the non-Magyar Christians on condition they became Magyar; and eventually, with some reluctance and a delay of twenty years, the Jews.⁴⁴ Kossuth's own position, in his fruitless negotiations with leaders of the various non-Magyar minorities, was that these peoples should have exactly the same civil rights as the Magyars, but that since they lacked 'historical personalities' they could not form nations on their own. Today, this position may seem a trifle arrogant. It will appear in a better light if we recall that the brilliant, young, radical-nationalist poet Sándor Petöfi (1823-1849), a leading spirit of 1848, on one occasion referred to the minorities as 'ulcers on the body of the motherland.'⁴⁵

After the suppression of the revolutionary regime by Czarist armies in August 1849, Kossuth went into life-long exile. The stage was now set for a revival of 'official' Magyar nationalism, epitomized by the reactionary regimes of Count Kálmán Tisza

43. The Kossuth regime instituted adult male suffrage, but with such high property qualifications that relatively few persons were in a position to vote.

44. Ignotus, *Hungary*, p. 56.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

shows in a different way the imprint of the 'official' model. We noted earlier the Latin-speaking Magyar nobility's enraged opposition to Joseph II's attempt in the 1780s to make German the sole imperial language-of-state. The more advantaged segments of this class feared losing their sinecures under a centralized, streamlined administration dominated by imperial-German bureaucrats. The lower echelons were panicked by the possibility of losing their exemptions from taxes and compulsory military service, as well as their control over the serfs and rural counties. Yet alongside the defence of Latin, Magyar was, quite opportunistically, spoken for, 'since in the long run a Magyar administration seemed the only workable alternative to a German one.'⁴⁰ Béla Grünwald sardonically noted that 'the same counties which (arguing against the decree of the Emperor) emphasized the possibility of an administration in the Magyar tongue, declared it in 1811 - that is, twenty-seven years later - an impossibility.' Two decades later still, in a very 'nationalistic' Hungarian county it was said that 'the introduction of the Magyar language would endanger our constitution and all our interests.'⁴¹ It was really only in the 1840s that the Magyar nobility - a class consisting of about 136,000 souls monopolizing land and political rights in a country of eleven million people⁴² - became seriously committed to Magyarization, and then only to prevent its own historic marginalization.

At the same time, slowly increasing literacy (by 1869 one third of the adult population), the spread of print-Magyar, and the growth

40. Ignotus, *Hungary*, pp. 47-48. Thus in 1820 the *Tiger im Schlafrock* (Tiger in a Nightgown), Emperor Franz II, made a fine impression with his Latin address to the Hungarian magnates assembled in Pest. In 1825, however, the romantic-radical grand seigneur Count István Széchenyi 'staggered his fellow-magnates' in the Diet by addressing them in Magyar! Jászi, *The Dissolution*, p. 80; and Ignotus, *Hungary*, p. 51.

41. Translated citation from his *The Old Hungary* (1910) in Jászi, *The Dissolution*, pp. 70-71. Grünwald (1839-1891) was an interesting and tragic figure. Born to a Magyarized noble family of Saxon descent, he became both a superb administrator and one of Hungary's earliest social scientists. The publication of his research demonstrating that the famous Magyar gentry-controlled 'counties' were parasites on the nation evoked a savage campaign of public obloquy. He fled to Paris and there drowned himself in the Seine. Ignotus, *Hungary*, pp. 108-109.

42. Jászi, *The Dissolution*, p. 299.

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there remained only one refuge for the dispossessed: the administrative network of national and local government and the army. For these, Hungary needed a tremendous staff; and if she did not she could at least pretend to. Half the country consisted of 'nationalities' to be kept in check. To pay a host of reliable, Magyar, gentlemanly country magistrates to control them, so the argument ran, was a modest price for the national interest. The problem of multi-nationalities was also a godsend; it excused the proliferation of sinecures.

Thus 'the magnates held their entailed estates; the gentry held their entailed jobs.'⁴⁹ Such was the social basis for a pitiless policy of enforced Magyarization which after 1875 made the Nationalities Law a dead letter. Legal narrowing of the suffrage, proliferation of rotten boroughs, rigged elections, and organized political thuggery in the rural areas⁵⁰ simultaneously consolidated the power of Tisza and his constituency and underscored the 'official' character of their nationalism.

Jászi rightly compares this late-nineteenth-century Magyarization to 'the policy of Russian Tsardom against the Poles, the Finns, and the Ruthenians; the policy of Prussia against the Poles and Danes; and the policy of feudal England against the Irish.'⁵¹ The nexus of reaction and official nationalism is nicely illustrated by these facts: while linguists Magyarization was a central element of regime policy, by the end of the 1880s only 2 per cent of the officials in the more important branches of central and local governments were Romanian, although Romanians constituted 20 per cent of the population, and 'even then 2 per cent are employed in the lowest grades.'⁵² On the other hand, i

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 81 and 82.

50. The thuggery was mainly the work of the notorious 'pandoors,' part of the army put at the disposal of the county administrators and deployed as a violent rural police.

51. *The Dissolution*, p. 328.

52. According to the calculations of Lajos Mocsáry (*Some Words on the Nationalist Problem*, Budapest, 1886), cited in *ibid.*, pp. 331-332. Mocsáry (1826-1916) had in 1848 established a small Independence Party in the Hungarian parliament to fight Kossuth's ideas, particularly on the minorities question. His speeches denounced Tisza's blatant violations of the 1868 Nationalities Law led first to his physical extrusion from parliament and then expulsion from his own party. In 1888, he w

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(1875-1890) and his son István (1903-1906). The reasons for this revival are very instructive. During the 1850s, the authoritarian-bureaucratic Bach administration in Vienna combined severe political repression with a firm implementation of certain social and economic policies proclaimed by the revolutionaries of 1848 (most notably the abolition of serfdom and noblemen's tax-exempt status) and the promotion of modernized communications and large-scale capitalist enterprise.⁴⁶ Largely deprived of its feudal privileges and security, and incapable of competing economically with the great latifundists and energetic German and Jewish entrepreneurs, the old middle and lower Magyar nobility declined into an angry, frightened rural gentry.

Luck, however, was on their side. Humiliatingly defeated by Prussian armies on the field of Königgrätz in 1866, Vienna was forced to accede to the institution of the Dual Monarchy in the Ausgleich (Compromise) of 1867. From then on, the Kingdom of Hungary enjoyed a very considerable autonomy in the running of its internal affairs. The initial beneficiaries of the Ausgleich were a group of liberal-minded high Magyar aristocrats and educated professionals. In 1868, the administration of the cultivated magnate Count Gyula Andrássy enacted a Nationalities Law which gave the non-Magyar minorities 'every right they had ever claimed or could have claimed - short of turning Hungary into a federation.'⁴⁷ But Tisza's accession to the premiership in 1875 opened an era in which the reactionary gentry successfully reconstituted their position, relatively free from Viennese interference.

In the economic field, the Tisza regime gave the great agrarian magnates a free hand,⁴⁸ but political power was essentially monopolized by the gentry. For,

46. Ignóus observes that Bach did provide the noblemen with some financial compensation for the loss of their privileges, probably neither more nor less than they would have got under Kossuth' (pp. 64-65).

47. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

48. As a result, the number of entailed estates trebled between 1867 and 1918. If one includes Church property, fully one third of all land in Hungary was entailed by the end of the Dual Monarchy. German and Jewish capitalists also did well under Tisza.

Later than almost anywhere else, the dynasty clung to vanished conceptions. In his religious mysticism, each Habsburg felt himself connected by a special tie with divinity, as an executor of the divine will. This explains their almost unscrupulous attitude in the midst of historical catastrophes, and their proverbial ungratefulness. *Der Dank vom Hause Habsburg* became a widely spread slogan.⁵³ In addition, bitter jealousy of Hohenzollern Prussia, which increasingly made off with the plate of the Holy Roman Empire and turned itself into Germany, kept the dynasty insisting on Franz II's splendid 'patriotism for me.'

At the same time, it is interesting that in its last days the dynasty discovered, perhaps to its own surprise, affinities with its Social Democrats, to the point that some of their common enemies spoke sneeringly of 'Burgsozialismus [Court Socialism]'. In this tentative coalition there was doubtless a mixture of Machiavellism and idealism on each side. One can see this mixture in the vehement campaign led by the Austrian Social Democrats against the economic and military 'separatism' pressed by the regime of Count István Tisza in 1905. Karl Renner, for example, 'chastized the cowardice of the Austrian bourgeoisie who began to acquiesce in the separatistic plans of the Magyars, though "the Hungarian market is incomparably more significant for Austrian capital than [the] Moroccan is for the German," which German foreign policy defends so energetically. In the claim for an independent Hungarian customs territory he saw nothing else than the clamouring of city sharks, swindlers, and political demagogues, against the very interests of Austrian industry, of the Austrian working-classes, and of the Hungarian agricultural population.'⁵⁷ Similarly, Otto Bauer wrote that:⁵⁸

oversophisticated as the French. One went in for sport; but not in madly Anglo-Saxon fashion. One spent tremendous sums on the army; but only just enough to assure one of remaining the second weakest among the great powers, Robert Musil *The Men Without Qualities*, I, pp. 31-32. This book is the great comic novel of our century.

56. Jászi, *The Dissolution*, p. 135. Author's emphasis. When Metetrnich was dismissed after the 1848 insurrections and had to flee, 'nobody in the whole court asked him where he would go and how he could live.' Sic transit.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 181. Emphases added.

58. Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (1907), 2

the Hungarian parliament prior to World War I, there was 'not a single representative of the working classes and of the landless peasantry (the great majority of the country) . . . and there were only 8 Romanians and Slovaks out of a total membership of 413 in a country in which only 54 per cent of the inhabitants spoke Magyar as their mother-tongue.'⁵³ Small wonder, then, that when Vienna sent in troops to dissolve this parliament in 1906, 'not even a single mass-meeting, a single placard, or a single popular proclamation protested against the new era of "Viennese absolutism." On the contrary the working masses and nationalities regarded with malicious joy the impotent struggle of the national oligarchy.'⁵⁴

The triumph of the reactionary Magyar gentry's 'official nationalism' after 1875 cannot, however, be explained solely by that group's own political strength, nor by the freedom of manoeuvre it inherited from the Ausgleich. The fact is that until 1906 the Habsburg court did not feel in a position to assert itself decisively against a regime which in many respects remained a pillar of the empire. Above all, the dynasty was incapable of superimposing a strenuous official nationalism of its own. Not merely because the regime was, in the words of the eminent socialist Viktor Adler, '*Absolutismus genindert durch Schlimpererei* [absolutism tempered by slovenliness].'⁵⁵

returned to parliament from a wholly Romanian constituency and became largely a political outcast. Ignotus, *Hungary*, p. 109.

53. Jászi, *The Dissolution*, p. 334.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 362. Right into the twentieth century there was a spurious quality to this 'national oligarchy.' Jászi reports the diverting story of one correspondent of a famous Hungarian daily who during World War I interviewed the wounded officer who would become the reactionary dictator of Hungary in the inter-war years. Horthy was enraged by the article's description of his thoughts 'winging back to the Hungarian fatherland, home of the ancestors.' 'Remember,' he said 'that, if my chief warlord is in Baden, then my fatherland is also there!' *The Dissolution*, p. 142.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 165. 'And in the good old days when there was still such a place as Imperial Austria, one could leave the train of events, get into an ordinary train on an ordinary railway-line, and travel back home. . . . Of course cars also drove along those roads—but not too many cars! The conquest of the air had begun here too; but not too intensively. Now and then a ship was sent off to South America or the Far East; but not too often. There was no ambition to have world markets and world power. Here one was in the centre of Europe, at the focal point of the world's old axes; the words 'colony' and 'overseas' had the ring of something as yet utterly untried and remote. There was some display of luxury, but it was not, of course as

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empires.⁵⁹ As we have noted earlier, the new imagined communities (including the still-born, but still imagined USGA) conjured up by lexicography and print-capitalism always regarded themselves as somehow ancient. In an age in which 'history' itself was still widely conceived in terms of 'great events' and 'great leaders', pearls strung along a thread of narrative, it was obviously tempting to decipher the community's past in antique dynasties. Hence a USGA in which the membrane separating empire from nation, crown from proletariat, is almost transparent. Nor was Bauer unusual in all this. A William the Conqueror and a George I, neither of whom could speak English, continue to appear unproblematically as beads in the necklace 'Kings of England'. 'Saint' Stephen (r. 1001-1038) might admonish his successor that:⁶⁰

The utility of foreigners and guests is so great that they can be given a place of sixth importance among the royal ornaments. . . . For, as the guests come from various regions and provinces, they bring with them various languages and customs, various knowledges and arms. All these adorn the royal court, heighten its splendour, and terrify the haughtiness of foreign powers. For a country unified in language and customs is fragile and weak. . . .

But such words would not in the least prevent his subsequent apotheosis as the First King of Hungary.

In conclusion, then it has been argued that from about the middle of the nineteenth century there developed what Seton-Watson terms 'official nationalisms' inside Europe. These nationalisms were historically 'impossible' until after the appearance of popular-linguistic-nationalisms, for, at bottom, they were *responses* by power-groups - primarily, but not exclusively, dynastic and aristocratic -

59. Surely they also reflect the characteristic mindset of a well-known type of leftwing European intellectual, proud of his command of the civilized languages, his Enlightenment heritage, and his penetrating understanding of everyone else's problems. In this pride, internationalist and aristocratic ingredients are rather evenly mixed.

60. Jasz, *The Dissolution*, p. 39.

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In the era of the Russian revolution [of 1905], no one will dare to use naked military force to subjugate the country [Hungary], rent as it is by class and national antagonisms. But the inner conflicts of the country will provide the Crown with another instrument of power which it will have to exploit if it does not wish to suffer the fate of the House of Bernadotte. It can not be the organ of two wills and yet still intend to rule over Hungary and Austria. Hence it must take steps to ensure that Hungary and Austria have a common will, and that it constructs a *single* realm [*Reich*]. Hungary's inward fragmentation offers her the possibility to achieve this goal. She will dispatch her army to Hungary to recapture it for the realm, but she will inscribe on her banners: Uncorrupted, universal and equal suffrage! Right of coalition for the agricultural laborer! National autonomy! She will counterpose to the idea of an independent Hungarian nation-state [*Nationalstaat*] the idea of the *United States of Great Austria* [sic], the idea of a federative state [*Bundesstaat*], in which each nation will administer independently its own national affairs, and all the nations will unite in one state for the preservation of their common interests. Inevitably and unavoidably, the idea of a federative state of nationalities [*Nationalitätenbundesstaat*] will become an instrument of the Crown [sic. - *Werkzeug der Krone*], whose realm is being destroyed by the decay of Dualism.

It seems reasonable to detect in this United States of Great Austria (USGA) residues of the USA and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (one day to be ruled by a Labour Party), as well as a foreshadowing of a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics whose stretch is strangely reminiscent of Czardom's. The fact is that this USGA seemed, in its imaginer's mind, the necessary heir of a particular dynastic dominion (Great Austria) - with its enfranchised components exactly those produced by centuries of Habsburg 'hucksterings'.

Such 'imperial' imaginings were partly the misfortune of a socialism born in the capital of one of Europe's great dynastic

found in his *Verbaugabe*, I, p. 482. Italics in the original. Comparison of this translation with that of Jasz, given in the original version of this book, offers food for thought.

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threatened with exclusion from, or marginalization in, popular imagined communities. A sort of tectonic upheaval was beginning, which, after 1918 and 1945, tipped these groups towards drammages in Estoril and Monte Carlo. Such official nationalisms were conservative, not to say reactionary, *poésies*, adapted from the model of the largely spontaneous popular nationalisms that preceded them.⁶¹ Nor were they ultimately confined to Europe and the Levant. In the name of imperialism, very similar policies were pursued by the same sorts of groups in the vast Asian and African territories subjected in the course of the nineteenth century.⁶² Finally, refracted into non-European cultures and histories, they were picked up and imitated by indigenous ruling groups in those few zones (among them Japan and Siam) which escaped direct subjection.

In almost every case, official nationalism concealed a discrepancy between nation and dynastic realm. Hence a world-wide contradiction: Slovaks were to be Magyarized, Indians Anglicized, and Koreans Japanified, but they would not be permitted to join pilgrimages which would allow them to administer Magyars, Englishmen, or Japanese. The banquet to which they were invited always turned out to be a Barmecide feast. The reason for all this was

61. Half a century ago Jászi had already suspected as much: 'One may ask whether the late imperialist developments of nationalism do really emanate from the genuine sources of the national idea and not from the monopolistic interests of certain groups which were alien to the original conception of national aims.' *Ibid.*, p. 286. *Emphasis added.*

62. The point is nicely underlined by inversion in the case of the Netherlands Indies, which in its last days was still to a large extent ruled through a language which we know today as Indonesian. 'This is, I think, the only case of a large colonial possession in which to the end a non-European language remained a language-of-state. The anomaly is primarily to be explained by the sheer antiquity of the colony, which was founded early in the seventeenth century by a corporation (the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie) — long before the age of official nationalism. Doubtless there was also a certain lack of confidence on the part of the Dutch in modern times that their language and culture had a European cachet comparable to that of English, French, German, Spanish, or Italian. (Belgians in the Congo would use French rather than Flemish.) Finally, colonial educational policy was exceptionally conservative: in 1940, when the indigenous population numbered well over 70 millions, there were only 637 'natives' in colleges, and only 37 graduated with BAs. See George McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, p. 32. For more on the Indonesian case, see below, Chapter VII.