

Hungarian History

Long form

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Settlement: A Land of Many Peoples

The **Carpathian basin** has been home to many different peoples. Around 50,000 B.C. hunter-gatherers arrived from the southeast. There is compelling evidence to suggest that the cultivation of crops began around 5,000 BC. Around 2,000 BC this Neolithic period was succeeded by the copper age, and at the same time the horse, a key feature of the history of the region, was introduced.

Around 1,000 BC the Illyrians, Thracians and the Scythians introduced the use of iron. In the first century BC the Celts and Dacians dominated the area.

As a result of the Roman conquest of **Transdanubia** and **Transylvania** these areas become the Roman provinces of **Pannonia** and **Dacia**. This resulted in the building of administrative and cultural centres, such as Aquincum- where today one can visit impressive Roman remains. Roman culture dominated the region for some 400 years, with the Danube effectively becoming the demarcation line between Rome and the 'barbarians'.

After Rome

A succession of peoples dominated the region in the wake of the Roman retreat. Foremost amongst these were the **Huns**, a Turkish speaking people from north central Asia, famous for inventing the stirrup and for their military prowess. There is evidence to suggest close links between the Huns and the **Magyars**. Certainly the **Szkelers**, a Hun, tribe, joined with the Hungarians. By the 5th century the Huns had united the three main areas of the Carpathian basin- **Transdanubia**, the **Great Plain** and **Transylvania**. Following the decline of the Huns the area was fought over by Ostrogoths, Gepids and Lombards. In 568 AD the **Avars**, another central Asian, grouping arrived to begin a 200 year period of domination. There is some archaeological evidence that these settlers had links with the Hungarians, but there is no evidence that they spoke a **Finno-Ugric** language.

Hungarians

The Hungarians are part of the **Finno-Ugrians** (or Uralic) and were thought to originate between the **Volga** and **Urals**, but recent evidence suggests they have a more easterly origin. Around 200 BC the Finnish branch migrated to the Volga and then to the Baltic, but the Ugrics moved south mixing with Persian and other groups. At this point they adopted farming and livestock rearing. Linguists point to **Persian** and **Slavonic** words in Hungarian as indicating the influence of their near neighbours.

In 895, in response to Pecheneg incursions into the Don area, the Magyars were taken by surprise and forced westward. Regrouping under the military commander **Árpád** they drove the **Bulgars** from the great plain and evicted the **Franks** from Transylvania and then defeated the **Bavarians**.

This was a tribal society based on the rule of a religious leader the **Kende** and a military chief **Gyula**. These were supported by the **Jobbágy** or warrior class.

Magyar horseman and bowmen presented a challenge to European princes, hence the prayer '**From the arrows of the Magyars, Lord, save us**'

Magyar incursions into Italy, France and Germany terrified Europe at least until defeated by the German King Henry in 933. This was followed in **955** by a catastrophic defeat at Augsburg by **Otto 1st**, founder of the **Holy Roman Empire**.

The Reign of Stephen

Stephen was the first **King of Hungary (AD 1000.)** The later St Stephen - who had the pagan name **Vajk** until he was baptised in his teens - was in his early twenties when he succeeded his father **Duke Géza** (970-997). He asserted his supremacy over the nation and several obstreperous elder relatives, who disputed his right to the succession (supreme leadership had hitherto been elective by seniority within the ruling family, not by primogeniture). He asked for and received a royal crown from **Pope Sylvester II** and with it he was crowned the first King of Hungary in the year 1000.

Next he set about converting all his people to Western (Latin) Christianity, founding and endowing two Archbishoprics - Metropolitan Sees directly under the jurisdiction of Rome - and eight Bishoprics, as well as a number of Benedictine monasteries (which introduced the vine alongside the Gospel). Parish churches were built in towns and larger villages and, to encourage the populace to attend, Stephen decreed that markets be held in places with a church, on Sundays (still **vasárnap**, market-day, in Hungarian).

His ruthless campaigns against the remnants of paganism resulted in the Pope granting him the title Apostolic King - not that different from the Byzantine Emperors' title 'Equal of the Apostles' (and five centuries older than Defender of the Faith) - and the right to use the **Apostolic double cross**. All Kings of Hungary styled themselves Apostolic until 1918, and the double cross is still part of Hungary's coat of arms to this day. When his tomb was opened in 1083, on the occasion of his canonisation, his right hand was found to be uncorrupted - it is venerated as a relic to this day.

St Stephen was equally energetic in dealing with secular matters, dividing Hungary into Counties - governed by royal officials - that disregarded clan boundaries, and organised defensive fortifications around the country's borders. On the other hand, he carefully avoided creating territorially based feudal fiefs, then fashionable in most of Europe. Land was merely held by freehold under the Crown, not by feudal vassalage. Moreover, large estates were not single blocks of territory, but numerous small packets of land scattered all over the country. No office, title or dignity - other than the Crown - was hereditary.

The acceptance and integration of persons of non-Hungarian stock - whether already in situ or new immigrants - was encouraged; 'a nation of one race is feeble', he wrote for his son's guidance. By his death the decrees issued during his reign - many informed by Carolingian precedents, regulated every aspect of the administration, revenues and defence of the realm, as well as the rights (notably regarding property and inheritance) and obligations of his subjects- filled two volumes. Many were still cited in lawsuits in the 19th century.

The earliest Hungarian coins, the silver **denarii**, date from his reign. The Western Emperor was his brother-in-law, and he had concluded a treaty of friendship with **Byzantium**.

There can be little doubt that but for St Stephen's successful efforts to transform the country into a Christian monarchy, endowed with administrative structures and a legal code that stood the test of time, there might be no nation and state called Hungary in Europe to this day.

The House of Árpád. 1030-1235

Stephen's heir **Prince Imre**, tutored by a learned Venetian monk, the later martyred **St Gellért** (Gerard) had been carefully groomed for the throne, but died leaving open the succession question. In the course of four decades Hungary had had no less than six Kings - brothers, cousins, uncles and nephews fighting one another for the throne - and had suffered a final and bloody anti-Christian uprising, supported by one of the claimants. During the same period, taking advantage of internal strife, the Western Empire tried to subdue the country and there were frequent wars with **Byzantium**.

Thus when **László I (1077-95)** ascended the throne the country was in a poor state. Canonised a century later, he is known in Hungarian history as **St László**. He fended off repeated incursions of the **Cumans** from the east, and joined the Crowns of **Croatia** and **Slavonia** to that of Hungary, and founded the **Bishopric of Zagreb** in 1094. His main achievement was to restore peace and order to a country that had been racked by civil wars over the succession during the four decades preceding his reign. He was also known for his attempts to produce a codex of laws to end the power of arbitrary authority. For this he was known as László the legislator. One of the new laws stipulated that in the case of adultery a woman was to be put to death while a man found guilty in this respect was to pay 50 bullocks to his wife's family!

Earlier in the century relations with Byzantium had often been strained, largely due to repeated wars over Dalmatia. There were also frequent tensions with Hungary's powerful western neighbours, the Hohenstaufen Emperors (in particular **Frederic I Barbarossa**), as Hungary repeatedly allied itself with the Papacy in its struggle with the Empire.

The remaining monarchs of the dynasty were somewhat of a mixed bag. The most notable are dealt with here.

Coloman (1095-1116) - known as the Bookish since he had originally been intended for the Church. He is mainly memorable for the extensive legislation of his reign - including a decree that forbade the persecution of witches. By his marriage to the Norman Brusilla of Sicily, he took possession of the Dalmatian coastline of the Adriatic for Hungary (wisely permitting the trading cities of the littoral to retain their self-governing status).

Béla III (1172-96) thoroughly reorganised the country's government, in line with Byzantine administrative practice. In particular, he expanded the Royal Chancellery, upgraded the post of Chancellor, and made written documents compulsory in all dealings with the Crown, as well as in all contracts and legal proceedings between private individuals. His revenues - listed in a document now in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, probably compiled when he married Margaret, a daughter of Louis VII of France - would appear to have equalled or even exceeded the revenues of the contemporary Kings of France or England. Hungary was rich, in part, because it

accounted for a significant proportion of the gold, silver, and copper mined in Europe throughout most of the Middle Ages.

Andrew II (1205-35), was a singularly weak and incompetent King, who mismanaged and impoverished the country, indulged in pointless campaigns in Galicia, depreciated the coinage, and made excessive grants to favoured courtier-barons. On several occasions - at the request of his son - Béla IV his closest councillors were excommunicated and the Court placed under interdict.

This was after he had already been forced to issue a charter of rights, the **Golden Bull**, in **1222**. This Charter was the response of the nobility to the first exceptional tax in the country's history, imposed by Andrew II to pay for debts he had incurred by going on a Crusade (the Fifth) in 1217. Enacted as a statute by the Diet during the reign of Louis I, many of its articles remained in force until 1848.

Andrew's weaknesses had already been cruelly exposed after he had been forced to pardon the slayers of **Queen Gertrude**, and her German relatives by some of the leading dignitaries of the realm (apparently including the Palatine Bánk), who wished to rid the country of her influence.

The House of Árpád 1235-1301

Béla IV, (1235-1270) had to rebuild a country devastated by the invasion of the **Mongols in 1241-42**. During this invasion between one quarter to one third of the population is estimated to have perished. Towns and villages were left in ruins (some to vanish forever), fields remained untilled for several years. Most of Hungary's properly fortified castles and towns - including the new town of **Buda** (today's Castle Hill, Vár, in Budapest), which became the new capital - were first constructed or surrounded by solid stone walls in the decades following the invasion, against the return of the Mongols.

However, to supplement the Crown's efforts, Béla IV had found it necessary to relax his earlier policy of clamping down on the barons, whom he granted extensive estates on condition that they too built castles and raised troops of horse in heavy armour. Intended to strengthen the country, these measures laid the foundations of **excessive baronial power** (thus, for instance, by the 1290s barons owned 136 fortified castles to the Crown's 30). In order to provide additional troops he settled the **Cumans** in Hungary, marrying their chieftain's daughter **Elizabeth** to his son **Stephen**.

Stephen V (1270-72) - had forced his own father Béla IV to hand him half the country to rule as Junior King in 1261 but died of grief after his son **László** was kidnapped, by a trusted dignitary allegedly in alliance with his Queen (a Cuman by birth)

The growth of baronial power, a constant feature of the age, was at its most rampant, during the reign of the penultimate King of the Árpád dynasty, **László IV** surnamed **the Cuman**. Kidnapped when still heir; crowned a few months later, on his father's death, aged but ten and at the mercy of competing baronial factions, his efforts to assert himself were undone by the Papal Legate. The King was excommunicated and was murdered in his sleep when only twenty-eight.

By the time the last of the Árpád dynasty **Andrew III** (1290-1301) - born and brought up in Venice, his mother's home - came to the throne the country was carved up by the

nobility. Although never possessed of hereditary titles nor of fiefdoms in the feudal sense, each of these had come to control large tracts of Hungary and they had taken to sharing out the main offices and dignities of state amongst themselves.

Owing to his early death Andrew III failed to break their power. However, during his brief reign new constitutional forms were taking shape. Moulded by churchmen trained at Bologna, foremost among them **Archbishop Ladomér of Esztergom**, these forms - developed in parallel with and in response to the growth of excessive baronial power - from now on gave the **Diet** a formal voice in the making of laws and policy, alongside the Crown. Amongst the novel principles that now became established, three, in particular, radically changed the way the country was to be governed. First, the validity of the King's accession was tied to the Diet's approval of his coronation. Second, on being crowned the King had to swear a Coronation Oath, to preserve the liberties of his subjects and the territorial integrity of the realm, before his subjects swore an oath of loyalty to him. Third, and most significant, legislation - hitherto issued as Royal Decrees expressing the sovereign will of the monarch - was henceforth passed by the Diet, in the form of numbered articles, to which the monarch merely assented, to bring them into force, as they stood.

During the reign of Andrew III the Diet used its new powers to pass laws that, inter alia, obliged the Crown to obtain the Diet's approval to appointments to the senior offices of the realm, and that required of these same senior office-holders that they give an annual account of their stewardship to the

Diet. While it would be naive to pretend that such laws were thereafter always observed to the letter, the principles of a rudimentary parliamentary government had been established. These innovations echoed the humble petition to the **King, Béla IV (1235-70)**, who incorporated them in a Royal Decree and in 1277 the representatives of the Counties had been invited, in the name of the Crown, to join the bishops and barons in their deliberations. Jointly they declared that **László IV (1272-90)** had attained his majority, and approved the draft of a treaty of alliance with the Emperor Rudolph of Habsburg. This was to have lasting, if unintended, long-term consequences for Hungary: had it not been for Hungarian military support in 1278, the **Habsburgs** might never have ruled neighbouring Austria). This joint meeting of bishops, barons and elected representatives of the Counties was to grow into the Diet, first referred to as *parlamentum publicum* in 1289.

Hungary in the Fourteenth Century

On the extinction of the Árpád dynasty, **Charles I (1301-42)** - also known as **Charles Robert or Carobert** - of the Sicilian-Neapolitan House of Anjou, a cadet branch of the Royal House of France became King. For the first decade of his reign Charles had to contend with rival claimants and a recalcitrant upper nobility. Of the latter the most powerful **Matthew Csák**, was crushed by Charles-Robert.

The King's first task was to build up the authority of the crown over the nobility and the Church. By the end of his reign the crown controlled two thirds of all estates as well as the valuable gold mines of Transylvania. Royal taxes and monopolies guaranteed Royal finances. At this time the population reached three million: there were 49 Free Royal towns as well as 638 market towns and the peasantry were largely free. On the international stage Charles-Robert built up Hungarian military might and even mediated between **Poland** and **Bohemia** over **Silesia**.

He left sound political and economic foundations for the reign his son, **Louis I (1342-82)**. Louis conducted an aggressive foreign policy extending Hungarian power to the Adriatic, which bought the Kingdom into conflict with **Venice**. In the first years of his reign Louis even conquered Naples to dispossess his cousin Queen Joanna of Naples and Sicily, who had instigated the assassination of her husband, his brother Andrew, though he soon withdrew to the Kingdom.

At home the country thrived. Trade, especially with Italy - both through the ports on the Adriatic and along the land routes via Carinthia to Lombardy and with Bohemia and Poland thrived, and the cities prospered. Trade was aided by the use of Hungarian silver and gold coinage, of which the most notable was the **gold florin**, patterned on the Florentine gold fiorino, and which continued to be minted to the same weight and purity from the 1330s into the 19th century.

The peasantry was subject to Church tithes, rents due to the landowner, and taxes to the Crown, accounting for between one quarter to one third of their produce. However, they were still free to move from place to place, to sell their surplus produce at markets, engage in craft manufacture, trade in livestock, and to keep all income earned from these sources.

The Kingdom was badly hit by the **Black Death 1346-53**, which claimed possibly 20-30% of the population and impacted on trade and commerce across Europe.

Louis continued to consolidate royal rule: he built the first Royal Palace on the present site at Buda. The barons, far from giving trouble, competed for offices. The principle of regular Diets - bishops and barons in person, the lesser nobility represented by elected members from the Counties - had become accepted, although Diets were not yet always called with consistent regularity. The granting of the 'constitution of the nobility' in 1365 solidified this 'internal peace'.

In **1370** Louis inherited the **Polish crown** from his father in law, making Hungary the dominant power of Central Europe. The Kingdom seemed secure, but in 1375, south of the Carpathians, Royal forces clashed with raiding **Ottoman Turks**, a harbinger of things to come.

Hungary in the Fifteenth Century

Sigismund (1387-1437), also Emperor, of the House of Luxembourg had initially been the consort of the teenage **Queen Regnant Mary (1382-95)**. He was the first monarch to appreciate the advantages of working with the Diet, rather than treating it as a source of troubles for the Crown, regularly consulting interested parties and circulating drafts for legislation in advance (on subjects as diverse as reforming the status of towns, the army and the Courts of Law).

He saw to it that learning was promoted among his subjects, founding a (short-lived) university at Óbuda, intended to match his father's foundation at **Prague**, the Carolinska. Trade and commerce were encouraged by, inter alia, the standardisation of measures and simplification of tolls. Furthermore, following a review of all city charters, the main chartered towns - Royal Free Cities - were given the right to send members to the Diet.

Conscious of the increasing **Turkish threat** - the last European crusading army, assembled, but was annihilated by them at **Nicopolis** in **1396**. The power of **Tamerlane (1370-1405)** temporarily halted the Turkish advance but a second defeat in **1428** at **Galamboc** confirmed Turkish power. Alert to the threat Sigismund initiated the construction of a continuous line of fortifications along the southern borders, placing them under unified command. It was from this time on that increasing numbers of **Serbs** and **Vlachs** (Romanians), fleeing from the Turks in the Balkans, settled in the safety of southern Hungary and Transylvania.

Later increasingly kept away by affairs of the Empire - notably the **Council of Constance** that ended the Great Schism in the Church - and by his other Kingdom, Bohemia, Sigismund did not neglect Hungary, where he asked to be buried, when on his deathbed in Moravia. Unfortunately, he did not have a legitimate son.

The real hero of the age was **János Hunyadi**, who may or may not have been a bastard son of Sigismund, and who was Regent in the years **1446-53** - during the minority of **László V (1443-58)**. This Captain General of the Realm, whose power base was in Transylvania, was the richest noble in Hungary, owning 2.3 million hectares 28 fortresses, 57 towns and 1,000 villages (**Molnár**). He repeatedly defeated the Turks in campaigns conducted deep in the Balkans, although was defeated by them at **Kosovo** in **1448**.

Cholera carried him away in the summer of **1456**, within weeks of his most famous victory: the relief of **Belgrade**. (The city was besieged by the very same armies that had taken Constantinople in 1453.)

The succession was problematic; after Sigismund we enter the period of the two kings - one a child **László V (1443-58)** and the **Jagellonian Ulászló I (1440-44)** who acquired the throne after civil war and then fell at the Battle of Varna, on the Black Sea, fighting the Turks. The continuous weakness of the monarchy resulted in the nobility acquiring greater power. In 1458, with rival claimants to the throne pressing their claims, the nobles elected Matthias (Mátyás), also known as **Matthias Corvinus the Just (1458-1490)**. Initially he owed his election to the throne largely to the prestige and wealth of his recently dead father János Hunyadi.

Matthias bequeathed to Hungary a just and effective administration, a strong standing army, a well-maintained line of fortifications in the south, the memory of several victories over the Turks in open battle, as well as a Treasury that was overflowing. He dealt harshly with **Hussite** forces, and those of the Hungarian nobility who backed Habsburg claims to the throne. He defeated the Polish and Imperial armies of Frederick at **Breslau**. This was achieved largely by incorporating the defeated Hussite 'black army' into his ranks. At the subsequent treaty of **Olomuc (1479)** Hungarian power in Austria, Moravia and Silesia was confirmed.

Matthias sustained a lavish lifestyle and financed a splendid Italianate renaissance Court, swarming with artists and savants, and a famous library - the **Corviniana** - at Buda with 1,500 books (where the first locally printed book, a history of Hungary dedicated to the King, was published in 1473, some years before Caxton started printing in London). At this point Hungary was very much part of Latin culture. His reign is considered to have been the most brilliant in the history of Hungary. The subsequent decline of Hungary- personified in the weakness of its monarchs- was echoed in the saying

'Matthias is dead: Justice has gone'.

Hungary: The Coming of Turkish Power

The **Dowager Queen Beatrice** (of the Spanish-Italian House of Aragon) prevented the accession of John **Corvinus**, Matthias' illegitimate son. In **1490 Ulászló II** of the Polish House of Jagiello, and King of Bohemia was elected to the throne -largely because he was expected to prove pliable. The reigns of **Ulászló II (1490-1516)**, and his son **Louis II (1516-26)** undermined central authority, exhausted the Treasury, and encouraged factional dissension. This in turn led to a neglect of the country's defences, and contributed to a major peasants' revolt.

In **1514** some 20,000 peasants gathered in Buda- which itself only had a population 15,000- ostensibly for another crusade against the Porte. Instead, led by a minor noble **Dózsa György** a revolt broke out. This had not been the first: in the reign of Sigismund a serious peasant revolt had taken place and such outbreaks were common in the late medieval period.

In a bloody aftermath the Kinizsi and **Szapolyai** clans, led by ruthless aristocrats, crushed the revolt, tortured and executed Dózsa and hundreds of his followers. This led to what became known as 'the second serfdom' as the crown, church and nobility codified their control over the peasantry. An already weakened country then had to face the might of the Porte.

Mohács

On **29 August 1526** the army of the Porte led by **Suleiman I, the Magnificent**, inflicted a catastrophic defeat at **Mohács** in southern Hungary. Of twenty-eight thousand Hungarians who faced the Turkish army some twenty-four thousand, among them most of the bishops, senior office holders, dignitaries and leading men of the realm, perished. The ambitious John Szapolyai and his 30,000 strong Transylvanian army failed to arrive in time for the battle. The childless Louis II himself was killed as he fled the field, leaving the throne vacant. This crisis was followed by the election of two Kings - by incomplete, separate, Parliaments convened in a country that was in disarray.

The division of loyalties between two Kings had also impeded resistance to the Turkish advance. **Ferdinand I (1526-64)**, the first of the long line of Habsburg Kings, had been elected to the then vacant throne in the expectation that he, and his successors, would obtain armed assistance against the Turks from the Empire (the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, to give it its full designation). Only Hungary stood between the Turks and the Empire; moreover, his brother the Emperor Charles V was at war with Francis I of France, who had allied himself with the Turks.

John I (1526-40) Szapolyai- up to then Governor of Transylvania – was also elected to the vacant throne, largely because he still had an army. However, within two years he became a client of the Turks, and was then left in possession of Buda and the centre of the country until his death in 1541.

After his death the Turks seized Buda from his baby son **John Sigismund** in a bloodless coup. The infant John Sigismund and his Regency Council (except for some, notably Valentine Török, who were taken to Istanbul in chains) were then permitted to

retire to, and retain, Transylvania. It was from this time that it gradually evolved into an independent principality, governed by Prince John Sigismund. In his minority it was governed in his name by Bishop, later **Cardinal, George Martinuzzi** (who preferred to be known as **Friar George**) until he was assassinated in 1551, certainly with the knowledge, and possibly at the behest, of Ferdinand I.

The Turkish conquest continued despite the heroic resistance of outnumbered garrisons in numerous fortified places: **Kőszeg, Eger, Drégely, Szigetvár** - the last held unto death by Count **Nicholas Zrinyi the Elder** -- to name but the most famous. Habsburg vacillation and intrigue did not help the perilous Hungarian position. In 1551, with the Porte busy elsewhere, Habsburg power even extended to Transylvania. However, with Turkish help John the second returned from Polish exile to reclaim Transylvania

By the beginning of the 17th century Hungary seemed to be set to remain divided into three parts: Royal Hungary, the Turkish Conquest, and Transylvania. The only major effort to dislodge the Turks, known as the **Fifteen Years War (1593 - 1606)**, resulted in minor successes (such as the re-taking of Győr in 1598) By the **Treaty of Zsitvatorok (1606)** what was to become a 20-year peace was concluded with the Turkish Empire.

Land Of The Three Crowns

After **Mohács** historic Hungary (283,000 sq. km) was increasingly divided into three: the west with a population of 1.5m falling under the Habsburgs; the centre and east – the great plain occupied by the Turkish Empire – with a population of 1m and Transylvania- nominally independent, but recognising the authority of the Porte- also with a population 1m. Warfare and shifting alliances would ensure that these divisions remained somewhat fluid.

The period of Turkish rule and subdivision of the country is said by many, among them **Molnár** in his recent history of Hungary, as a disaster for the country. Even before Mohács Hungary could be considered underdeveloped in that it had a very small urban population, some 3% as opposed to 9% in France. There were few large towns with only Buda numbering more than 20,000. The power of the nobility and their control of local towns prevented the emergence of free states and powerful cities in the manner of Germany. The merchant and city groups were in no position to challenge the great nobility. The country largely exported cattle and wines and imported cloth and most manufactured goods. Since the landed nobility had made a good living out of this there appeared to be little need for change. Hungary had an extensive nobility numbering some 5-7% of the population, but real power lay in the hands of the major families. Their power was maintained by the growth of the **Latifundia**, and was accompanied by a increasing serfdom at a time when this was in decline in Western Europe. The increasing power of the Habsburgs, and with it the consolidation of royal monopolies did little to encourage the growth of middle classes.

The power of the aristocracy was reinforced by the wars with the Habsburgs and Turks which allowed border barons building up vast wealth and influence. The nobility saw themselves as the incorporation of Hungarian identity, preserving it against the Habsburgs and the Porte.

The Reformation

The reformation swept through Hungary. The country had been exposed to the influence of the **Hussites** who failed to make any real military inroads into the country, but whose evangelism opened the way for the advance of Protestantism. In part the acceptance of Protestantism was engendered by the continuing power of the Porte. The Turks were more concerned with taxes and government than religion and did not impede the spread of the new religion. Moreover, in common with many in Hungary, the anti-Catholic anti-Habsburg position of the new religion performed a useful political function.

Many were attracted to the new religion, assuming that the disaster that had befallen the country was due to the 'corruption of Catholicism'.

For many of the peasantry it was a case of 'my masters religion is my religion' as entire counties fell to the forces of the Reformation. Nowhere was this more evident than in Transylvania. In the eastern part of the Kingdom the town of **Debrecen** became '**Calvinist Rome**'. Under Princes **Stephen Bocskai (1605-6)** and **Gábor Bethlen (1614-29)** Transylvania played a crucial role in promoting tolerance and in preventing the Habsburgs from treating Hungary as a mere province in the manner of Bohemia after the battle of the White Mountain in 1620. Bethlen had even supported the Porte in the siege of Vienna in 1683. The retreat of the Turkish army and the end of the **Thirty Years War (1618-48)** led to an increase in Habsburg power and in 1687 led to the occupation of Transylvania.

Debates

Caspar Károli produced the first complete translation of the Bible in 1590. The counterattack was led by **Péter Pázmány**, from 1616 to his death in 1637 **Cardinal-Archbishop of Esztergom** (and founder of the University that still thrives in Budapest). They were both well educated: Károli had studied at Wittenberg and in Switzerland; Pázmány in Cracow, Vienna and Rome.) In general Hungarians seemed to prefer helvetic style Protestantism although the anti-Trinity Unitarians had considerable influence over areas of Transylvania.

The numerous tracts and debates promoted the use of the Hungarian language. The impact of the reformation and Erasmus Humanism was evident in **János Horváth's** writings. In this respect mention must also be made of **Count Nicholas Zrinyi** (the Younger, to distinguish him from his great-grandfather), author of important works on political and military matters, as well as poetry. The poems of the soldier-poet Baron **Valentine (Bálint) Balassi**, who died in action against the Turks in 1594, deserve special mention

The Counter-Reformation had come to Hungary too, but here it proceeded by open debate, argument and a flood of tracts (by 1600 well over five hundred had been published.) The counter-reformation was also evident in the emergence of Baroque art and architecture promoted by aristocrats such as the **Eszterházy** family.

The Parliament called to approve the coronation of **Matthias II (1608-19)** - who replaced his increasingly deranged brother Rudolf I (II as Emperor, 1576 - 1608) on the throne -- passed Acts that granted religious liberty for those who adhered to one of the Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist or Orthodox churches, and established the equal standing of Catholic and Protestant candidates for some of the highest offices of state. (Another Act also divided Parliament into separate Upper and Lower Chambers: up to then the

bishops, magnates and elected county representatives had, in principle at least, sat and debated together.)

Hungary in the 17th and 18th centuries

The **Counter Reformation** intensified under with **Leopold I (1657-1705)** described as 'bigoted, dour, surrounded by Spanish priests and courtiers' who attempted to govern Hungary through a secret committee, the *Camarilla*, from the Hofburg in Vienna. His attempts to suppress religious liberty with sword and fire -a good half and more of the population was Lutheran or Calvinist and by the Act of 1608 were permitted to practice their religion freely- undermined the stability of the crown. He imposed arbitrary taxes to pay for foreign troops and had leading opponents of his policies - notably Counts **Peter Zrinyi**, **Francis Frangepán** and **Francis Nádasdy** - illegally executed. In addition, he treated land reconquered from the Turks as newly acquired ownerless land (*terra nullius*); to be distributed among favoured courtiers and successful army suppliers without regard to Hungarian claims and rights rooted in previous ownership.

Transylvania was constituted as a hereditary **Habsburg Duchy**, and was not, despite demands, reunited with the rest of the country. (Maria Theresa later made it a Grand Duchy; re-unification with the rest of Hungary had to wait until 1848.) Despite Habsburg successes Leopold made considerable concessions to the Turks in **1699** at the **Peace of Karlóca**, However, Turkish power was on the wane.

Buda was retaken in September **1686**. For nearly a century and a half it had been the administrative centre of the Turkish area- about one third of the country- known as the Turkish Conquest (**török hódoltság**): this included most of the central plains to the southern foothills of the Carpathians, and the south-eastern portion of Transdanubia, more or less to the line of Lake Balaton.

The anti-Habsburg movement of the late 17th century under **Imre Thököly (1657-1705)** as part of the **Kuruc** (Crusader) movement to liberate Hungary from the Habsburgs was continued by **Francis II Rákóczi**, Prince of Transylvania. **Rákóczi** was one of the most romantic characters in Hungarian history and his revolt, with tacit financial support from Louis XIV of France, lasted from **1703 to 1711**, but ended in defeat and exile. It was warning to the new King (Charles) that Hungary had to be managed rather than conquered.

Charles III (1711-40) (Charles VI as Emperor) was the last Habsburg in the male line. As the Hungarian constitution then stood, when the monarch had no male heir, Parliament could elect a king of its choice to succeed him. However, Charles III managed to persuade Parliament to incorporate the **Pragmatica Sanctio**, which recognised his daughter's right to succeed him, into Hungarian law, together with additional clauses that "perpetually and indissolubly" linked the Kingdom of Hungary and the Hereditary Lands in a personal union (Acts I-III of 1722), much as England and Scotland had been linked in the 17th century through the person of their common monarch.

Maria Theresa (1740-80), became the second Queen Regnant in Hungarian history (the first had been in the 14th century). Married to Francis, Duke of Lorraine, and Holy

Roman Emperor - hence her descendants are, strictly speaking, Habsburg-Lorraines. Hungarian troops enabled her to fend off Frederic the Great of Prussia, in the **War of the Austrian Succession 1740-48**, and in the **Seven Years War 1757-63**. Her enlightened absolutism like that of her son gave rise to important cultural and educational reforms. In this period Baroque style swept Hungary and the aristocracy patronised the development of music, none more so than the Eszterházy's who employed Haydn.

The country was torn in its attitudes towards her son **Joseph II (1780-90)**, who aimed to impose enlightened government from above. In this spirit he refused to be crowned, so as not to be tied by a Coronation Oath (indeed, he had the Holy Crown and other regalia placed in a museum in Vienna), would not call Parliaments, and made German the only official language of government in Hungary. For these reasons Hungarian historiography decries him; yet many enlightened and progressive Hungarians of the period -- such as **Count Ferenc Széchenyi**, who founded the **National Library** from his own collection, and **Ferenc Kazinczy**, who did more than any other contemporary for Hungarian literature (and was one of those later imprisoned at Kufstein) -- supported many of his reforms, notably in education. By the end of his reign almost one third of all books published were in Hungarian, the rest being in German and Latin, Budapest had a population of 50,000 and the country had an annual graduate population of 20,000.

The **Napoleonic Wars** resulted in the defeat of Hungarian arms along with that of Austria but did not result in an anti-Habsburg uprising. Under the impact of the French Revolution and, in particular, the Paris Terror, Vienna introduced strict policing and censorship which did not clash with the priorities of the nobility, who feared the outbreak of revolution in Hungary. Moreover, Landowners did well from high prices for agricultural produce. In the 1790s, the very ideas that frightened the Habsburg Court, inspired a considerable number of Hungarian intellectuals -- writers, poets, lawyers, even clergymen, most of them **Freemasons**, who formed a Jacobine Circle and circulated liberal tracts. The prime mover behind the Jacobins, the **Abbé Ignatius Martinovich**, might have been a police informer, but he was arrested with the others and was among the half dozen executed; the sentences of the rest were commuted to long periods of incarceration in remote fortresses, notably the Kufstein.

In 1804 **Francis I (1792-1835)** renamed the lands of the Habsburg crown as **The Austrian Empire** (only in 1807 did he finally relinquish the, by then totally meaningless, title Holy Roman Emperor). He firmly believed that it was the divine right of the monarch to govern his lands by decree, -- maintaining that it was only the person of the ruler who could confer unity, a common identity and guarantee the rule of law on his lands (which, given the heterogeneity of these possessions, made some sense). This view of the **Habsburg Gesamtmonarchie** contrasted sharply with the Hungarian view which held that the Kingdom, symbolised by the Holy Crown of St Stephen, existed as a distinct and coherent state irrespective of the King's person, who was merely the incumbent of the highest office, bound by his Coronation Oath to rule the country in accordance with its Constitution - evolved by precedent and legislation over the centuries - with and through a Parliament that represented the nation.

In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and the reaction under **Chancellor Metternich** there would be no room for compromise with Hungarian demands. However, the ideals of the French revolution were not so easily swept aside: the way was open for a clash between **nationalism/ liberalism** and **autocracy**.

1848 'The Springtime Of The People'

Early in 1848 the absolutist monarchs of Europe were shaken by revolutionary upheaval. In Vienna the symbol of that authority **Klemens von Metternich** was driven from office and a parliament and constitution were promised.

In Hungary **Louis Kossuth** and his radical allies such as **József Irinyi** proclaimed the **March Programme** of demands known as the 'twelve points'

Aided by young radicals such as the poet **Sándor Petöfi**, author of the '**National Song**', Pest fell to the demands of the March programme.

'The Twelve Points'

These points echoed the demands of Europe's revolutionaries and were:

Freedom of the press; abolition of censorship; a national assembly in Budapest; equality of civic and religious freedom; equal and universal contribution to public expenses; abolition of seigniorial taxes; a national bank; national armed forces; freeing of political prisoners; legal reforms; union with Transylvania.

A national government headed by Count **Lajos Battyányi** ruled through an elected **National Assembly**. Suffrage was extended to the nobility, the bourgeoisie and wealthier peasants with the result that Hungary had a wider electorate than was permitted by the 'Great Reform Act' of 1832 in Britain. A reluctant Emperor-**Ferdinand V**- was forced to give into these demands, including union with Transylvania. Despite the emancipation of the peasantry, and the implementation of the policies listed above, the numerous minorities within the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary were restless: Slovaks, Serbs and Croats were wary of the ambitions of the new regime.

Croatia had its own 'diet'- a limited assembly- and the Imperial government in Vienna encouraged and supported the opposition of the Croats to the Hungarians. Moreover, as Imperial armies restored Habsburg rule in Italy the way was open to deal with Hungary.

The War Of Independence.

On September 11th 1848 the Croatian General **Jellacic** crossed the border with the aim of destroying the revolution. On September 29th he was stopped by the Hungarian territorial army - the **Honvedség**. However the monarchy reneged on the April settlement and attempted to return to absolutism which led to revolutionary outbursts in Vienna. On October 8th Kossuth became President of the **Defence Committee**. The Hungarian army headed westwards to aid the revolutionaries in Vienna but on **October 8th** were defeated by **General Windischgratz** near Vienna. **On December 2nd 1848 Ferdinand V abdicated** in favour of his 18-year-old nephew **Francis-Joseph** who was determined to restore absolutist rule. In November the Hungarian government left Budapest and moved east to Debrecen. The revolutionaries were joined the **Polish General Bem** who had taken command of the army of Transylvania.

On April 13th 1849 the National Assembly declared the **Independence of Hungary** and the deposition of the house of Habsburg-Lorraine. Kossuth became Head of State. This was achieved despite the opposition of more moderate groups. This coincided with the defeat of two separate Austrian armies and the Croatian army. However,

success was short-lived. Following an appeal to **Tsar Nicholas 1st** two Russian armies invaded Hungary. The Hungarian army of 150,000 was faced with combined Austrian and Russian troops numbering 370,000 and with far superior artillery. On July 28th 1849 the Hungarian government, now in Szeged, issued the declaration on the emancipation of the Jewish population, which also permitted mixed marriages, and enacted the nationalities law giving extensive rights to minorities, but it was too late for these measures to have any great effect.

On August 9th 1848 the Hungarian army suffered a third of defeat. On August 13th the War Council surrendered. Kossuth and many other leading figures fled into exile.

It was the end of the revolution and the beginning of bloody repression under the Austrian commander **Marshal Haynau** and his civilian counterpart **Alexander Von Bach**. Despite pleas for clemency from the Tsar, the Austrians **executed 13 generals** and the former **President of the Council of Ministers** Count **Lajos Battyányi**.

Absolutism 1849-1866

After the crushing defeat in the War of Independence **Absolutism** returned to Hungary. Transylvania was detached from Hungary proper and Lord Lieutenants under **Archduke Albrecht** the Emperor's uncle ruled the country. Real power resided in Vienna with Alexander Bach, the Minister of the Interior and his administrative army of '**Bach Hussars**'. Of the demands of 1848 only the emancipation of the serfs and equality before the law remained. The **Imperial Concordat** with the Catholic Church in 1855 consolidated the forces of reaction.

In the midst of this seeming triumph external events served to confound the reactionaries and promote attempts at changes in the relationship between Austria and Hungary. In **June 1859** Austrian forces suffered defeat at the hands of French and Italian forces at the battle of **Solferino**. Meanwhile, **Garibaldi's** redshirts liberated southern Italy. It seemed as if the dream of national liberation would spread to Hungary.

An anxious Emperor issued the **October Diploma** which promised a return to constitutionalism by establishing an **Imperial Council**. The mood of discontent in Hungary was heightened by the suicide of **Széchenyi** in April 1860. Liberal elements in Austria proper forced the Emperor towards greater reform. This led to the issue of the **February Patent** in 1861 which strengthened the role of the Council. The Hungarian delegation to the Imperial diet in Vienna was split: **László Teleki**, a leading politician and friend of Kossuth, was violently opposed to any compromise with the Imperial Court, but **Ferenc Deák** sought a middle way while vigorously defending Hungary's demands. The Diet achieved nothing and Teleki committed suicide. It seemed that absolutism would triumph.

Meanwhile Kossuth, in exile first in Turkey, and then in Italy, railed against compromise. In 1858 he had formed the **Hungarian National Directorate** with Teleki and George Klapka. In addition, Kossuth wooed Napoleon III of France and Cavour in Italy. Kossuth and his colleagues searched for a workable solution to the nationality problem, and 1862 devised the idea of a Danubian Confederation. However, others notably Deák, were intent in forging some sort of compromise with Austria. In essence Deák's liberal reformers were the inheritors of Széchenyi; with colleagues such as Baron **József Eötvös** they emphasised the modernisation of Hungary focusing on industrialisation and education.

External events again conspired to push the Imperial government towards reform. In **1866** the Imperial army suffered a crushing blow by Prussian forces at the **Battle of Sadowa**. With the loss of influence in the German lands the Imperial Court attempted to solve its internal problems. The result was the **Compromise of 1867**.

Compromise 1867-1914.

Following the triumph of Tsarist reaction in Poland in 1863, Deák reaffirmed his stance that if Vienna recognised the territorial integrity of Hungary, and affirmed the 1848 laws and appointed a Hungarian government, then Hungarians would concede that foreign and military affairs were common to both. These issues were to be discussed at the special Hungarian diet at the end of 1865. While in session Austria suffered the defeat of Sadowa. As a result of this and the negotiations the Empire was transformed into a **dualist state** with two separate parliaments and governments. Common affairs were to be supervised by delegations from each parliament. This, together with the tariff and commercial alliance would be reviewed every ten years. The empire was renamed the **Austro-Hungarian Empire**. On 17th February 1867 **Count Gyula Andrassy**- former leader in the War of 1848- became Prime Minister. Kossuth's reply- the famous **Cassandra letter** denounced the agreement as failing to settle the national question and tying Hungary to the 'doomed Empire'. **On 8th June 1867 Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria was crowned King of Hungary.**

The **Austro-Hungarian Empire** comprised many nationalities: Germans; Magyars; Czechs; Slovaks; Poles; Ukrainians; Romanians; Serbs; Croatians;

Slovenes, Italians; Armenians; Bulgarians and Romany. It was also a land of many faiths: Catholicism; Protestantism; Islam; Judaism, and Orthodoxy. It spread from the Swiss Alps to the mountains of Brasso, from Dalmatia to the Polish Carpathians, covering an area in excess of 600,000-sq. km with a population of 35 million in 1867, which had risen to 50 million by 1914.

On the eve of the First World War, the Kingdom of Hungary-excluding Croatia- had a population of 18.3 million of whom 54.5% were Hungarians: 10.4% Germans; 10.7% Slovaks; 16.1% Romanians. Roman Catholics accounted for 50% with 22% Protestant, 23% Orthodox / Uniate and 5% Jewish.

The Compromise in turn led to an agreement between Hungary and Croatia which allowed for a local diet. In Hungary itself the compromise had confirmed the power of the aristocracy as they continued to dominate state positions. The growing prosperity of the Empire in the years after the compromise gave rise to a powerful industrial class. Much of the country was underdeveloped and the nationality question was far from settled.

Andrassy's policies led to the reincorporation of Transylvania and the military frontier and the creation of a separate Hungarian army, although real military power rested with the Imperial and Royal Army. The **Nationalities Act of 1868** granted limited rights to the minorities, but declared that Hungary's citizens belonged to the 'united Magyar nation', factors that exacerbated tensions. Social tensions were equally high: workers groups that supported the Paris commune of 1871 were severely dealt with, as were demands from peasant groups for land reform.

The changing balance of power in Europe led to the consolidation of the Empire. The fear of panslavism ran deep in Hungary which viewed the Russian threat as far graver, a policy which led the Empire closer to the German Empire. The **defeat of France in 1871** led to a new system of alliances: as part of this in **October 1879 the Dual Alliance** of Austria-Hungary and the German Empire was signed.

On the domestic political front controversy over the compromise and shifting allegiances meant that Hungary had 17 cabinets in the period 1867-1916.

In the period **1875-1890** Hungarian politics was dominated by **Kálmán Tisza**. Tisza - once a leading opponent of the architects of the compromise- was able to put together a coalition which saw him take-over the government party. He presided over a policy of **Magyarisation** which alienated the minorities. Moreover, he supported the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878.

Tisza built up a network of supporters through patronage and was able to dominate the government party. However, he fell from power in 1890 over reforms of the Hungarian army.

With the fall of **Tisza** the liberal administration of **Wekerle** made some headway in its struggle with reaction in Vienna. He adopted the gold standard, stabilised the crown and enacted legislation permitting civil marriage and introduced state registration of births, marriages and deaths- albeit after a struggle with the Catholic Church. Freedom of religion was granted. Judaism was granted equality with other faiths.

In **1896** a confident Hungary, particularly Budapest, engaged in **millennium celebrations** in respect of the arrival of the Hungarians in the Carpathian basin. In a frenzy of festivals and public events the King and the court opened the Millennium Exhibition. The government also undertook the construction of the new ring road system in Budapest, and the opening of the first continental electric railway. The construction of **Heroes Square** and the **Millennium Column** celebrated the Hungarian leaders of ages past. A new museum of Fine Arts was established. The expansion of Budapest evident in the construction of the opera house by Ybl and the development of a vibrant **Art Nouveau** architectural style symbolised an elite reconciled to the empire, but able to celebrate its own identity. (Lukács)

This confidence masked real problems: the condition of the peasantry fluctuated in the aftermath of the depression of 1897, which left many homeless. Workers' demands for universal suffrage better pay, conditions and housing led to the formation of workers movements, trade unions and social democratic parties.

Political Chaos

In January 1905 the **Liberal Party** lost the election, thus ending a 30- year period of rule. It looked as though the Independence Party could gain the upper hand and this led to tensions between Budapest and Vienna. However, it was a conflict born of a nationalist conservative reaction to liberalism in which the Church and the aristocracy played a leading role.

In the midst of this crisis, news arrived of the attempted revolution in Russia which in turn led to increased demands from workers' groups and from the Social Democratic Party. When the Tsar granted the October manifesto it seemed as though constitutionalism had triumphed in Russia. In Vienna the Emperor threatened to dissolve the Hungarian parliament. The conservatives fearing not only this, but a more

radical situation in Hungary capitulated. They were content to ride the tiger of nationalism, but they identified themselves with a nation that represented their interests. Threats of universal suffrage and the power of the common populace terrified them.

The turmoil in Hungarian politics between the **Independence Party** and the **Constitutionalists** continued up to 1914. Neither side could satisfy the demands of the peasantry for land reform and from Social Democratic groups for real social change.

The fragile international situation was evidenced by the outbreak of **war in the Balkans**. In 1912 members of the Balkan league (Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro) defeated the Ottoman Empire, a war in which Bulgaria gained greatly. A second war, by the other allies against Bulgaria, resulted in the defeat of the latter. Austrians and Hungarians also feared a strong Serb- Romanian nationalist revival. The Balkan wars were to be the precursor to an even more terrible conflict.

Hungary 1867-1914

Economic and Cultural Development

The rise of industrialisation and urbanisation was nowhere more evident than in the growth of Pest. In 1873 the ancient towns of **Óbuda and Buda** joined with **Pest** to create an administration for **Budapest**. In 1867 there were 170 industrial joint-stock companies and a few hundred private firms in Hungary employing some 100,000 workers. By 1900 there were 2,700 such plants registered with 430,000 workers and **by 1914 there were 5,500 plants with 600,000 workers**. Such developments give rise to the new industrial districts of **Ujpest, Kispest and Csepel**. The population of such areas exceeded 1 million by 1914 with manual workers accounting for 40% of the labour force. On the eve of war there were 1.8 m industrial workers with some 66,500 capitalists. Emigration provided the way out for some: In the period 1880-1914 some 2 million people left Hungary, of these one third of those were Magyar, the rest being Slovaks, Germans and Croatians

A new railway construction programme saw the network rise from **2,200 kilometres in 1867 to 22,000 in 1914**. Hungarian national income rose threefold, and with growth rates of 2.5% the economy was being transformed. Rising industrial production was mirrored by improvements in agriculture. The export of agrarian produce was one of the main features of agrarian development in the late Habsburg era. These developments also promoted the development a new financial sector

Despite the competition of Bohemia and Moravia, Hungary developed machine production, electrical and chemical industries. A new generation of entrepreneurs was able to take advantage of Hungary's new status within the Empire.

The state played a crucial role in economic development providing **subsidies of 1,300m in the period 1900-1906**. Foreign investment was also crucial providing up to 50% of all investment in the 1890s, and 25% in the first decade of the 1900s.

The expansion of higher education was witnessed by the **founding of the Technical University in 1891**, followed by universities in Pozsony and Decrecen. The Arts and Medical faculties of the University of Budapest produced leading experts.

A literacy campaign saw the expansion of the school system; by 1914 one third of the population remained illiterate compared to two thirds in 1867. There were ethnic differences in the spread of urbanisation and industrialisation: only 4.5% of Romanians and 1% of Ruthenians lived in towns, while in Serbian, Slovak and Croatian areas industry accounted for between 15-20% of employment. (Molnár) In the period until the war national consciousness amongst minorities was developed by national parties which envisaged the creation of separate states and certainly had no wish to remain under Hungarian tutelage. The spread of minority language daily newspapers and cultural associations aided this process.

In Hungary the power of the landed aristocracy remained unchallenged; the development of capitalist farming had increased the values of the estates.

Some 5,000 landlords owned 8.5m hectares with some 2/3 of all peasants owning less than 0.57 hectares. In 1890 there were 2 million day labourers.

The numerous small or lesser gentry were well represented in public administration and the intelligentsia. The middle classes were predominately German and in manufacturing Jewish entrepreneurs were well represented. Entrepreneurs such as **Manfred Weiss, Leo Goldberger, the Fellners and Brulls** all contributed significantly to the modernisation of Hungary. These families were more concerned with integration. Not all of the Jewish population was entrepreneurial: many remained in industrial labour. However, at this point anti-Semitism, although by no means absent, was not a major problem when compared to Russia. The Jewish population had only numbered 75,000 in 1785, but by 1870 this figure had risen to 540,000. Most Jews saw themselves as Magyar.

Hungarian Culture

Petőfi's poems had inspired the nation and his example continued to inspire Hungarian cultural development. Hungarian concerns were evident in the operas of **Erkel** particularly **László Hunyadi**. Romantic epics on the fate of Hungary and Hungarians built on the earlier works such as József Katona's nationalist opera *Bánk Bán* (1839). These traits were also evident in the early works of **János Arany. Oskar Jászi and Mor Jókai and Kálmán Mikszáth** appealed to a vast audience. This new generation of writers and poets included **Babits, Kosztolányi, Ady, Móricz, Bródy** and **Lukács**, each of whom gave Hungarian writing a new enquiring voice.

The new journals such as **Huszadik Század** (Twentieth Century) and **Nyugat** (West) published the work of the finest minds of the day.

Ady wrote that

'In the struggle with intellectual weapons the victory is already theirs (i.e. progressive forces), the time will come when it will be theirs in the political struggle as well. That time will be the renaissance of Hungary'.

In 1860 **Imre Madách** produced his epic 'The Tragedy of Man' on the nature and meaning of human existence, a play still in production today. **Mihaly Munkácsy** pioneered naturalism in painting. The establishment of the **Academy of Fine Arts in 1872** and the **Academy of Music 1875** witnessed the rise of a more sophisticated liberal middle class in Hungary. The great talent of the age **Ferenc Liszt** was known the world over for his compositions such as Hungarian rhapsodies and his organ music. His successors **Bartók** and **Kodály** developed Hungarian folk music into a worldwide phenomenon.

Budapest in 1990 was a thriving Imperial city that witnessed the golden age of Hungarian culture. With its wide boulevards and impressive coffee houses - notably the New York Kávéház- Budapest displayed an outward confidence, but its contradictions were well known to the new generation of writers and poets. The rural urban divide was still pronounced and the gap between wealth and poverty in the capital was all too evident. However, international events rather than domestic contradictions would once again prove crucial in the reshaping of Hungary

The Inter-War Period 1919-45

In November 1918 the alliance of the Central Powers- The Austro-Hungarian Empire and its German, Turkish and Bulgarian allies collapsed. The victorious French, British Americans and other allies,- Serbia and Romania- were to take their revenge in the form of a series of harsh treaties.

Thus, at the end of the 'long 19th century' Hungary found itself deprived of 2/3 of its territories and 3/5 of its population. The **Treaty of Trianon**, signed on July 4th 1920 meant that the population of Hungary had been reduced from 18.2m to 7.6m, leaving **3.4m Hungarians inside neighbouring states**. This included 1.7m in Romania, which had gained Transylvania, and 1m in the new state of Czechoslovakia, and up to 250,000 in the new Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes and Croats- later Yugoslavia. The loss of territory entailed the loss of raw materials: 80% of forests and iron ore as well as the wider Imperial market. Moreover, of the 8 million who fought in the Imperial armies 4 million- of various nationalities- had come from the Hungarian lands: **some 660,000 were dead and 700,000 wounded**.

The inter-war period would be characterised by beggar thy neighbour economic policies. Like Germany, Hungary would spend a great deal of time and energy in the inter-war period attempting to reverse the post-war settlement.

The immediate result of the war was the establishment of a **Peoples' Republic – Tanácsköztársaság**- a short lived Soviet regime under **Béla Kun** - which lasted from March 21st until August 1st (1919). Fired by the example of Lenin's revolution in Russia, and by the peace proposals and supported by returning soldiers and a disgruntled peasantry and proletariat, the regime launched a successful counter offensive in the north against Czechoslovakia. It also nationalised industry, the banks and land. This Soviet regime was comprised of a socialist/communist alliance and included as Commissars **Mihály Károlyi**, **Mihály Polányi**, **György Lukács** and **Karl Mannheim**. However, it did not have broad popular support, and when the regime declared itself in favour of co-operative farming rather than adhering to peasant demands for land redistribution, it lost some of its core support. Its stability was further undermined by military defeat on the Romanian front, which led to the Romanian occupation of Budapest on November 1919. This was followed by a successful counter revolutionary campaign under

Admiral Horthy –Hungary’s regent in the inter-war period. (Technically Hungary remained a Kingdom- Franz-József died in 1916 to be replaced by the Emperor Charles)

The Horthy Era

In the ‘white terror’ that followed some 1,500 people died, amongst them communists, socialists, and freemasons. In all of this there was a considerable anti-Semitism, a feature that was to become increasingly important under Horthy.

Horthy, an Admiral under the old Empire, forged a coalition of landlords, and the middle classes cemented by fear of revolution and reinforced by virulent nationalism. The communists were banned, but not the social democrats and a controlled parliamentary system operated. The leading figure of the first post-war decade was Count **István Bethlen** who sought to reform the financial sector aided by a loan of 250 million crowns from the western powers and by the establishment of a new currency - the **Pengő** in 1927. State support for industry, which included tariffs, quotas and subsidies placated the middle classes and ensured urban employment. The landed aristocracy similarly benefited from state protection, which also guaranteed that peasant demands for land redistribution were not likely to succeed. The old adage that Hungary was a land of ‘**a thousand lords and 3 million beggars**’ was not far from the truth. One hundred families and the Catholic Church owned 1/3 of all cultivable land and together with the next 11,000 large landlords owned 47% of all arable land. Meanwhile, there were 1.5m seasonal workers and a population of 1.3m surviving on subsistence plots. These voices were heard in the works in the populist school of writers such **Gyula Illyés** in his ‘**People of the Puszta**’.

In European terms Hungary was underdeveloped. Despite diversification, including the growth in mechanisation and in aluminium production the primary sector still accounted for 52% of all employment. By 1938 industrial production was 28% up on 1914, but this masked the fact that growth rates of 1.5% p.a. for the inter-war period suggests a sluggish economy. Hungarian national income remained at about 70% of the European average income. Internal and external debt remained high and a constraint on growth. These factors were exacerbated by the terrible impact of the Great Depression, which exposed the fragility of everyday existence for the majority of Hungarians. The government was forced to provide support in rural and urban areas. With the collapse of the international trading system Hungary found itself drawn ever closer to Germany.

The depression witnessed the end of the Bethlen government and the accession of far right groups under **Gyula Gömbös**. The **Gömbös** government 1932-36 embarked on national reconstruction and rearmament plans and conducted an anti-Semitic policy. This had already been evident in the ‘*numerus clauses*’ limiting Jewish participation in education and in some professions.

The government party, the **Party for National Unity** won 170 out of 245 seats in the 1936 elections, a feat achieved partly by thuggery and open voting which confirmed the rightwards drift of Hungary. Hitler’s remilitarization of the Rhineland and his willingness to tear up the hated post war settlement drew Hungary even closer. As trade grew between the two countries political ties also grew closer and anti -Jewish legislation increased, leading to a mass exodus, from which Hollywood in particular gained. In increasing despair the eloquent voice of urban Hungary, the poet **József Attila** committed suicide.

Hungary was now committed to the German/Italian camp. The victory of the fascists in the **Spanish Civil War**, and the **Anschluss** between Germany and Austria gave ample reason for the government party under Kálmán Darányi (Gömbös died in 1936) to pursue closer links with the Axis. The impact of Munich and the abandonment of Czechoslovakia merely confirmed this. Emboldened by this the Hungarian fascist party –the **Arrow Cross** won 40 seats in the 1939 parliament.

War And Its Consequences

In November 1938 Hitler had promised Horthy a revision of the territorial provisions of the post-war treaties. In the spring of 1939 Hungary occupied the sub-Carpatho Ukraine. In August 1940 the **Vienna Award** allocated northern Transylvania to Hungary (the population was only 51.4% Hungarian) In November 1940 Hungary finally joined the Axis grouping. In February 1941 Hungary concluded a Friendship Treaty with Serbia, but was subject to intense pressure from Hitler to allow German troops access to Yugoslavia via Hungary. As a result **Prime Minister Teleki** committed suicide. In his note to Regent Horthy Teleki stated that ' **we have allied ourselves with villains**'

In the summer of 1941 Hungarian armies took part in the invasion of Russia committing 250,000 troops plus Jewish 'auxiliaries'- in effect slave labour- numbering 50,000. The defeat on the Don and **Stalingrad** in 1943 ensured the end of axis power in Russia, and with the invasion of Africa, then Italy Horthy put out peace feelers. However, the Germans knew about this and applied greater pressure for more men and materials for the war effort. With Romania looking set to change sides, which it did in August 1944, the German army took control of Hungary in March 1944. This led to the installation of **Ferenc Szálási**, head of the **Arrow Cross**, as Prime Minister.

This was followed by the arrival of **Adolf Eichmann** and the deportation squads. A total of **450,000 Jews**, mostly from outside Budapest, were rounded up and deported between May and July 1944. On July 8th Horthy issued a decree halting the deportations before they impacted on the population of the capital. Despite this and the heroic efforts of the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg the vast majority perished in the camps. The **Roma**, harshly treated for centuries by succeeding regimes, suffered greatly under the Arrow Cross. According to the Hungarian War Victims Association **28,000 Roma** were sent to various camps and **only 3,000 returned**.

With the approach of the Soviet armies the Germans and their Arrow Cross allies made a last ditch stand in Budapest to the ruination of the city. Some 40,000 Hungarians died in the Second World War with 70,000 being taken prisoner, but the heaviest losses were amongst the Jewish and Romany population.

One quarter of all dwellings was destroyed along with most of the country's roads, bridges and railways. Industry was at a standstill, and foodstocks were running out. For the second time in a generation Hungary had lost a major war. This second conflict brought the might of the **Red Army** and **Soviet power** into the country. It was the end of the war but the beginning of a dark period in the history of modern Hungary.

The Communist Period 1945-56

Communist rule was established gradually –so called ‘salami style’ in Hungary between 1945-48. In effect Hungary became a victim of the post-war division of Europe that saw it firmly in the Soviet sphere of influence. At the General Election, held in September 1945, the Communist Party received only 17% of the popular vote, with victory going to the Smallholders party under Zoltán Tildy, which received 57% of the vote. The communists, by ensuring that they received a number of important posts in the coalition government, gradually built up their power base.

By isolating and bullying the opposition, and backed by Soviet pressure and assistance, and by supporting nationalisation acts and land reform the communists increased their share of the vote to 22% in 1947.

Elections were not to be the way forward as Hungary suffered the same fate as the other countries under the control of the **Red Army**. Gradually all semblance of the national governments of the post-war period were replaced by governments dominated by communist/workers parties. This was achieved by harassing and marginalising the opposition parties and by ‘mergers’ with socialist and social democratic parties. By 1948 the Cold War was looking increasingly hot as the Berlin crisis unfolded.

The coalition government inherited a country in ruins with hyperinflation and mass destruction of entire regions. It set about the task of reconstruction by producing a three-year construction plan and replacing the old currency –the pengő with the **forint**. Reconstruction plans were hampered by reparation payments to the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia amounting to 300 million dollars.

The new government headed by the **Hungarian Workers’ Party** under **Mátyás Rákosi** was totally subservient to **Stalin**. A Soviet-style planned economy was established which effectively emasculated the private sector. Peasants were forced into state and collective farms; the borders were sealed and the political police, the dreaded **ÁVO-AVH**, began a long campaign of mass arrests. Torture, executions and imprisonment without trial were common. Public trials were reserved for spectacular show cases modelled on Stalin’s purges of the 1930s. These claimed even such party notables such as **Lászlo Rajk**. The Party also vetted all aspects of cultural life. On the international front Hungary, as was the case with the other communist states, turned on the ‘nationalist/deviationism’ of **Tito**. There were to be no different roads to socialism under Stalin.

In the period 1953-56 following the death of Stalin, power in Hungary vacillated between hard line Stalinist groups under Rákosi and reformers gathered around the **Prime Minister Imre Nagy**. This struggle was echoed in other central European countries, notably in Poland. This reflected the various **power struggles in the Kremlin, notably that between Khrushchev and Malenkov**. The first denunciation of Stalin at the Soviet communist parties 20th Congress in 1956 forced many in the hard-line leadership in central Europe to recant their past excesses. As a result the victims of the earlier purges were rehabilitated, and in the case of Rajk a public reburial served to act as a vocal point for discontent.

A new course in economic policy was launched with less emphasis on heavy industry which attempted to channel more investment towards consumer goods. The situation was extremely fluid as the leadership focused on trying to discern what was happening in the Kremlin. The victory of Khrushchev provided the backdrop for the removal of Imre Nagy -seen as Malenkov’s man- as Prime Minister

The 1956 Revolution

Opposition to Rákosi was buoyed by events in Poland, which in October 1956 saw the 'nationalist-communist' Gomulka thrust to the leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party in opposition to the Kremlin. The Hungarian Revolution actually began when some 300,000 took part in a march to the statue of the Polish General Bem, (hero of the revolution of 1848), in solidarity with the Polish people. The leaders read out the twelve points of 1848 and sang Petöfi's national song **Arise Magyars**.

Prominent amongst the organisers were the Petöfi circle of writers and leading intellectuals although the marchers contained many workers who were also busy taking over factories through Workers' Councils. In a few weeks communist power in Hungary had vanished.

Even Nagy, by now recalled, was losing control of events. Apart from events in Poland many had been inspired by the fact that in 1954 Austria had managed to unite itself as a neutral country and had bade farewell to Soviet occupying forces. Moreover, the Kremlin's rapprochement with Tito seemed to further emphasise the point that Moscow's relationship with other countries was changing. However, the appointment of Ernst Gerö as new party secretary did little to inspire confidence.

The popular uprising in October 1956 demanded democracy, free elections and neutrality in international affairs, but the Soviets were not about to let go so easily. The Soviet Army moved in (at the behest of Soviet Ambassador Andropov, and in accordance with operational plans already prepared in July that year), to crush the popular uprising. However, the tanks withdrew, but soon returned. By the time the firing had ceased on November 4th more than 2,000 were dead. Hungarian partisans and some military units under **Pál Maléter** fought bravely, but the odds against them were overwhelming

The West sympathised, but did nothing: Britain and France were busy invading Suez and the USA was electing a new President. In the aftermath tens of thousands were imprisoned, thousands 'vanished' into the Soviet Union, and many hundreds, including Imre Nagy were executed. (Nagy and other leaders of the revolution sought refuge in the Yugoslav embassy, but were betrayed by Tito). Some 200,000, about 2 per cent of the population, mainly young (their average age was just over twenty), qualified and enterprising, fled to the West.

Power once again rested with Soviet forces. A new party: the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party was established under **János Kádár**. Kádár, once imprisoned under Rákosi, and fleetingly a supporter of the revolution, had returned to Budapest inside a Soviet tank.

Hungary Under Kádár 1956-88

János Kádár, remained head of the Party from **1956-88**. The period 1956-62 was a dark period of repression as the party/state machine sought to reassert **its authority**. **In 1962 Kádár announced his conciliatory policy 'who is not against us is with us'** in an attempt to bridge the gap between state and society and establish a new social contract. In essence this was a legacy of the Revolution: **'the victory of a defeat'**. (Lendvai)

The question of economic reform was high on the agenda in the 1960s and Hungary was at the forefront of this. **In 1968 Kádár launched the New Economic Mechanism** which was intended to free enterprises from the constraints of central planning. This was to result in contractual relationships, freer prices and greater emphasis on consumer industries. Unlike reform in neighbouring Czechoslovakia –which would result in invasion- there was to be no political dimension to this process.

In his long rule Kádár managed to turn Hungary into the ‘happiest barracks in the bloc’. Hungarians generally had high standards of living when compared to the rest of the bloc. By the mid 1970s Hungarian national income was some 80% that of Western Europe. Hungary was no longer a rural, but an urban society, no longer an agrarian, but an industrial economy. More and more Hungarians had access to higher education and to a national health service. Women played an important part in all sectors of economic and social life, but still found themselves under the chains of the **double burden (Corrin)**: that is in fulfilling domestic and work tasks. As **Miklos Molnár** points out ‘ **it was not freedom, but it was far better than the social and moral slavery of the past**’.

However, the reform process was weakened in that it contained inbuilt centralisation tendencies. The ‘**industrial feudalism**’ of the big barons forced a U- turn as early as 1972. In the later 1970s and 1980s the economy slowed down drastically and by 1982 the country was effectively bankrupt, having in that year joined the IMF. Moreover, **foreign debt** began to accumulate. This had been \$7 billion in 1980, but by 1990 had risen - mainly by changing interest rates rather than increased borrowing - to 20-billion dollars in 1990. Hungarian communism was living on the American dollar.

In the latter period of the regime, limited small-scale private enterprise was also tolerated. Apart from the official economy there was a thriving **second economy** in which most Hungarians had to engage in order to survive -estimates put this at one third of the population, producing 30% of all national income. The division between **state and society**, evident in the debates over the role of civil society under communism. (see the work of the eminent Hungarian sociologist Elemer Hankiss on the second society). An increasingly exhausted population was indifferent to party exhortation. The **Kádárist compromise** was based on one main thing and that was economic growth- without this **economic legitimacy** -nationalist and other opposition forces were willing to present a more concrete challenge.

In addition, the faltering economy was falling behind not only the ‘west’ but also the new ‘tiger economies’ of the Far East and this obvious technology gap became an acute worry for the party technocrats. For the opposition intellectuals such as **János Kiss** the wider question of the economy and technology was tied to the lack of democracy. In what was becoming the information age the Hungarian economy was at a severe disadvantage. By the time the intellectuals met –with some party figures- at **Lakitelek** in 1988 the regime was in its death throes.

1989

At the same time the wounds of the past would come back to haunt the regime. The fact that a leading party figure **Imre Pozsgay** could find himself embroiled with the new party boss **Károly Grosz** over calling the events of 1956 a revolution -rather than taking the party line that it was counter revolution- only served to show the gulf between rhetoric and reality. Such a point was made all the more poignant on the **16th**

June 1989 by the reburial of **Imre Nagy**, an event attended by over 250,000 people. Meanwhile, Kádár lay dying.

In August 1989 - what was to be the last communist government under Prime Minister **Miklos Nemeth** and his Foreign Minister **Gyula Horn** opened the border with Austria: it was the end of the iron curtain. Talks were already underway between opposition groups in what was known as the 'round table' process. Thus, in this 'negotiated revolution' the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party surrendered power.

Conclusions

Many authors have sought to attribute the decline of communism to Gorbachev, the star wars project and the impact of the new cold war. Undoubtedly this had an effect, but one should not overlook the very real impact made by the peoples of Central Europe in taming this system that had set out to tame them. Nor should one overlook the constant crisis in which the system found itself in its lifetime. After the fall of Napoleon, Europe had a peace at least, until 1848, but no one would claim that this was a stable system: one should never equate longevity, with stability, particularly when accompanied by repression. There had been many alien regimes in central Europe in preceding centuries and its peoples endured.

Hungary After The Fall Of Communism

New laws ensured that Hungarian democracy would operate on the basis of a complex proportional representation system -of 386 seats- in which real power would reside with Parliament and the Prime Minister. The President is chosen by Parliament. A Constitutional Court was also established.

The first free election since the post-war period was held in March/ April 1990, and was won by a right-of-centre coalition, headed by the **Hungarian Democratic Forum**, which initiated the restoration of the country's West-European orientation and took measure to a restore a market economy in Hungary. **József Antall**, a historian, became Prime Minister.

The new government had to cope with a terrible legacy: the economy was in freefall **with GDP declining by 30%. Inflation at 30% and unemployment at 12%**. The communist trading system –the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance had collapsed. Moreover, the state was left in control of an economy burdened by high industrial concentration and dependent on state subsidies.

The response was to launch an ambitious, and controversial, privatisation programme, which aimed to transfer the bulk of the country's industrial and trading enterprises, as well as financial institutions, from state to private ownership. The re-opened Budapest stock exchange and a series of commercial and financial laws sought to regulate the new economy.

Foreign capital played a central role in this, with about 50% coming from Germany, the USA and France. During the period 1990-97 approximately one quarter of all western investment in ex Communist countries went to Hungary.

Hungarian trade with the European Union grew to a point that by 1997 it accounted for over 60% of all trade. This was confirmed by the signing of the Association Agreement with the Union. The old managed exchange rate was replaced by a system linking it to international currencies.

The price paid for these economic changes was a high level of inflation and unemployment running at well above 10 per cent: this figure was much higher in the older heavy industrial regions. Moreover, real incomes fell- especially for those in public employment: education, health-care, civil servants - and others on fixed incomes. Old age pensioners were particularly badly hit. Moreover, government room for manoeuvre was limited in that it had signed an agreement with the IMF to control the budget deficit, which even in the mid 1990s was reaching levels of 7%.

Such problems inevitably turned to political discontent. The Forum led government was prone to factional disputes and splits. With the death of Prime Minister Antall in late 1993 such factions came out of the woodwork. These included some extreme right wing and anti-Semitic elements who complained that the country was being given over to 'international capital and Jewry'. Similar elements also targeted the Romany community. There was also widespread concern over Hungarian communities in neighbouring states, which did nothing to assuage those states regarding Hungarian international intentions.

Some Hungarians, reacting to the high handedness of the government- in particular in relation to attempts to control the media- called for a **Democratic Charter**, a Bill of rights, to be implemented

At the **1994** elections the **Hungarian Socialist Party** (broadly: more-or-less 'reform-minded' ex-members of the ex-Communist Party) gained an absolute majority in Parliament. Despite this it chose to enter into an alliance with the liberal minded **Free Democrats**: dubbed the '**coalition of the gaolers and the gaoled**' due to the fact that former dissidents largely led the Free Democrats.

Despite its origins, the government formed by this party proved to be in favour of an untrammelled 'free market' economy, concentrating on attracting foreign investment, and encouraging home-grown capitalists. Balancing budgets and controlling inflation were at the core of its economic policies, as is evidenced by the **1995 Bokross stabilisation package** (after the then finance minister). Such measures pleased the international business community, but not the electorate. Despite the growth of GDP under the socialist government of **Gyula Horn** this was not enough to filter down to much of the ordinary citizenship. Moreover, a series of financial scandals, some associated with privatisation, as well as the revelation that Prime Minister Horn had been on the side of communists in 1956 led to voters to look elsewhere

The result was that at the **1998 election** the Socialist Party lost power. This was despite the fact that they polled a number of votes slightly in excess of their closest rivals. (The outcome was largely due to the complexities of the proportional representation system.)

The General Election of May 1998 was won by the centre-right **Fidesz - Civic Party**, which had grown out of student protest movements of the last years of Communist rule. They won the largest number of seats in Parliament, but could not command an absolute majority. They formed a coalition with the **Hungarian Democratic Forum** and

the **Smallholders Party**. Under **Prime Minister Victor Orbán** Hungary has maintained its drive to integrate into western economic, political and military institutions.

In March 1998 Hungary was invited to start formal **accession negotiations** with the **EU**, and attained full membership in 2004. Hungary is also a member of the **OECD**, and the **Council of Europe**. In 1999 Hungary joined **NATO**.

In 2002 the socialist party under the leadership of returned to power, but were beset by numerous accusations of corruption. After a series of scandals the new Prime Minister (Medgyessey) was forced to stand down. In September 2004 Ferenc Gyurcsány took over. In 2006 a tape was leaked in which he said that in order to win the election the socialist party had lied 'morning, noon and evening'. Growing disenchantment with the government was exacerbated by clashes over the celebrations surrounding the 50th anniversary of the revolution. In May 2009 Gyurcsány resigned and was replaced by Gordon Bajnai. The introduction of cuts to deal with the impact of the international economic crisis alienated the majority of Hungarian society.

In 2010 Fidesz- Civil Union under Victor Orbán –along with its Christian Democratic Peoples Party won over 52% of the vote and took 264 seats out of a possible 386. The Socialist party performed poorly achieving only 19.3% of the vote and taking only 59 seats. A new right wing nationalist grouping (Jobbik) took 16.7% of the vote and gained 47 seats, while another new grouping –Politics can be different (a left of centre green party) achieved 7.5% of the vote and took 16 seats. A large budget deficit will mean tough choices lie ahead.