

Introduction

On October 30th, 1918, the soldiers and workers in Budapest came together and overthrew the imperial Habsburg government that had ruled Hungary for centuries. The soldiers seized strategic military points in the city while the workers took to the streets in a massive protest. The soldiers placed chrysanthemum flowers—normally placed on gravestones in observance of All Soul's Day—on their lapels to signify their rejection of the old order and their hopes for Hungary's future. By nighttime the masses ratified the National Council—a coalition led by Mihály Károlyi's Independence Party, and which included the moderate Social Democratic Party and a group of independent-minded intellectuals known as the Bourgeois Radicals—as the new leaders of Hungary. The Emperor first appointed Károlyi as the new prime minister and then abdicated as King of Hungary. Hungary was free to become a republic. It seemed that the 1848 revolutionaries' dreams of an independent and democratic Hungary had been realized.

The new government, however, would have to overcome massive challenges. The First World War was in its closing stages, and Hungary was on the losing side. It was not only faced with the vengeance of the victorious Entente, but also with the calls of various national minorities, especially Rumanians, Slovaks, and South Slavs, for the dismemberment of historic Hungary into a group of small, homogeneous nation-states. Their national armies, as well as the French, continued to invade more and more Hungarian territory, even after the official end of the war. Moreover, the country had already suffered greatly during the war, the economy was in shambles, and people were starving. The process of demobilizing the army became more and more chaotic by the day. The government immediately faced internal enemies from the traditional elites on the right and from the radical left. Its main hope for survival was Károlyi's success in currying favor with the Entente and securing a peace that would preserve as much of Hungary's traditional territory as possible—a hope which was based on Karolyi's longstanding

pacifism and affinity with Wilsonian values. Nonetheless, the Vyx Memorandum of February 1919 made it clear that the Entente planned to give about two thirds of Hungary's territory to the new nation states.¹ Károlyi's government could not accept this on behalf of the Hungarian people, and resigned in favor of a coalition of the Communists and Social Democrats, led by the Communist Béla Kun. This government hoped to spread the international proletarian revolution and rely on Russian military support to repel the onslaught of the Western "imperialists."

This paper attempts to provide a new interpretive framework for the Hungarian Revolution of 1918, also known as the Chrysanthemum Revolution (or alternatively, the Frostflower or Winter Rose Revolution). Although these events brought about the birth of the modern Hungarian state, the Hungarian historians generally place far greater weight on the failed revolutions of 1848 and 1956. Those two revolutions seem to resonate more with the idea of Hungary's heroic martyrdom—a romantic stand for enlightened, "Western" ideals crushed by more powerful autocrats. Also, the 1918 revolution will always be stigmatized by its association with the Treaty of Trianon, which resulted in the loss of two thirds of Hungary's territory, including historically important regions such as Transylvania, Northern Hungary (i.e., Slovakia), and Fiume (Hungary's only port). Significantly less has been written about the 1918 revolution as a result of this stigmatization. This difference is even more marked in the English language literature; not a single book on the revolution has been written in English in the past two decades.

As such, recent ideas of historiography and methodology have not been applied to the revolution in a comprehensive manner. One thing that is striking about most of the English-language literature on the subject is that, while it acknowledges internal dynamics and events, it focuses largely on the international situation as the driving force of the revolution. That is, it sets forth Károlyi as the choice of revolutionary Hungary primarily because of his ability to mitigate the negative effects of the lost war through successful diplomacy. Then it argues that Károlyi lost legitimacy mainly due to his diplomatic failure, and finally asserts that Béla Kun's vision of international proletarian revolution was the only alternative to Károlyi's liberal republicanism because of a desire to resist the Entente's dismemberment of Hungary.

Certainly, this focus on external events and concerns for the preservation of Hungary's borders is a useful interpretive approach, and emphasizes some of the most important dynamics of the postwar revolutionary period. This paper, however, attempts to provide some basis for a narrative of the revolution that focuses on internal dynamics—specifically, concerns about the social and political future of Hungary—as driving forces in the period of Károlyi's rule. It argues that historians should look more at the domestic policy ideas of the Károlyi regime, and, more importantly, the makeup and psychology of the social groups that brought about and sustained Károlyi's rule. This interpretive approach not only adds to the overall picture of the revolution, but reveals certain distortions, or at least omissions, resulting from the dominant narrative.

As stated above, this paper merely attempts to provide the framework for a new narrative of the revolution—constraints of space, the complexity of the subject, and a limited access to primary sources renders the construction of a complete narrative impossible. Nonetheless, the articulation of an analytical framework, and its application to a few relevant aspects of the period in question, reveal important insights about the revolution and illustrate the promise of an approach focused on internal dynamics.

The interpretive framework of this paper depends largely on the unifying concept of political legitimacy. This concept serves to provide some connection between the ideology and aims of political elites, as illustrated in their public statements and attempts to institute policy, and social groups, who exhibit their political tendencies through mass action, either in support or opposition to their leaders. In short, social groups either actively support, passively accept, or actively resist a political regime, based on a variety of factors. These include the perception of shared values or goals, as well as the state's ability to command coercive force. That is, a state can govern based on a democratic mandate, or based on its control of the overwhelming majority of coercive power in the country. Thus, political legitimacy can be defined here as the support of political leaders by relevant social groups (elite, popular, military, economic, etc.) which sustains effective rule and which is based on the conception of ideological affinity as well as rational self-interest.

This paper uses the lens of political legitimacy to examine three aspects of the revolution. First, it discusses the revolutionary break, when the masses of Budapest rejected the imperial order, which had been completely delegitimized by the disastrous war, and called for the leadership of Károlyi and his progressive coalition. Here, in the revolutionary moment, the discourse of political legitimacy, which defines the terms of the covenant between ruler and subject (or citizen), becomes explicit. The masses assert their ability to violently overthrow a government that they view as illegitimate, and articulate their view of what legitimates state power. This section focuses on the relative importance of nationalist (based on external factors, that is, Hungary's diplomatic/military situation) and social (based on internal factors, especially economic and power relations within the country) legitimacy to the relevant historical actors. On the one hand, the new political leaders, as well as the masses who propelled them to power, were concerned with the coming peace settlement, especially in terms of territorial changes. On the other hand, many sources indicate that the goal of a new, progressive social order was crucial to the legitimacy of the new regime, especially to the previously marginalized classes who brought about the revolution. The second section discusses the regime's attempts to consolidate its social legitimacy through domestic reforms. The regime wanted to extend its social base, which was mainly the radicalized workers and soldiers in urban centers, and thus pursued land redistribution and nationality reform. Firstly, this shows that while the regime certainly staked its survival on the success of Károlyi's diplomacy, it was also attempting to construct a coalition of marginalized classes that would consolidate the new progressive, democratic order. Secondly, its failure in both areas is crucial to the "internal" narrative of the revolution, as it limited the social base of the government to the unstable workers' movement. The third section discusses the fragmentation of the working class as a result of Béla Kun's communist agitation propaganda. It describes how the Communists were able to radicalize a small section of the working class, forcing the Social Democrats, who in fact controlled the regime's social base through its trade union organization, to choose between engaging in "fratricidal" violence against working class comrades on the one hand, and leaving Károlyi's government in order to rule in coalition with the

Communists. The paper concludes with a discussion of the Vyx Memorandum and Béla Kun's rise to power, again contrasting the nationalist and social factors that legitimated his rule.

Historiography and Methodology

As I have stated earlier, most literature on the war focuses on the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire as a result of the lost war, and asserts that concerns about the territorial settlement were the driving force of the revolution. As András Siklós states in the beginning of his *Revolution in Hungary and the Dissolution of the Multinational State*, the "history of the Hungarian revolution, which followed World War I and the dissolution of the multinational Hungarian state were closely connected."² The introduction that follows this statement focuses on the growing movements of the minority nationalities to secede from the Empire, and attempts by Hungarian leaders to prevent this. In a similar vein, R.J. Crampton says that the main appeal of Károlyi was that "It was hoped that Károlyi's long-standing support of the west would help Hungary in its dealings with the allies, and that his favorable standing with the radicals at home would help to preserve internal order."³ Peter Pastor's *Hungary Between Wilson and Lenin* focuses on the choice between the two competing visions of international order from the title, and explicitly asserts that both Károlyi and Kun based their rule on the defense of Hungary's borders.⁴ Elsewhere, he writes that the Károlyi regime's political orientation "was designed to secure a fair treatment for Hungary at the approaching peace conference."⁵ The traditional interpretation of the period is thus characterized by two assertions: that the primary cause of revolutionary events was Hungary's defeat in the war, and that the primary goal of revolutionary actors was to mitigate the effects of defeat.

These are probably fair assertions, and by merely presenting an alternative framework of interpretation, this paper does not attempt to disprove them. Such a task would not be possible, considering the limited access to primary sources. In short, I do not mean to diminish the importance of dissolution and diplomacy in the revolutionary period. Certainly, they played a crucial role, and any complete narrative must discuss them. However, as this paper attempts to demonstrate, this interpretive approach distorts or omits certain aspects of the revolution. For

example, they focus on Károlyi and Kun as the international faces of the regime. This deemphasizes the role of the Social Democratic Party, which was in fact crucial to gaining the support of the great majority of the working class for both regimes. Secondly, because the Entente had already decided to dismember the Habsburg Empire before the revolution started, these narratives tend to depict the regimes as doomed from the start. They describe Károlyi as an idealist who could not possibly deal with the challenges Hungary faced. As such, they do not take the regime's domestic policies at face value, instead assuming their failure. Lastly, they argue that it was a "paradox" that Károlyi would fall for nationalist reasons, only to be replaced by a proletarian internationalists.⁶ They ignore the internal dynamics leading up to the Communist seizure of power. Thus, this paper tries to show how a narrative focused on political legitimacy can correct these distortions, and others.

It is also important to note that the traditional approach to the revolution is informed by the decline model of imperial history. This model posits that the great multinational empires (Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman) went into a period of irrevocable decline which coincided with the rise of the nation-state in the nineteenth century. The nation-states were not only more dynamic than the archaic, ossified imperial structures, but also inspired nationalist movements among the constituent peoples of the empires. These "centrifugal forces" inevitably strengthened over time, the empires were too inflexible to adjust to the new political environment, and the cataclysm of World War I merely brought about the dissolution which had already been determined by historical trends. This model dominated historiography on all three empires for most of the twentieth century. It makes sense that a historian informed by this model would focus on concerns over territorial changes in the case of the Hungarian revolution—after all, it was the moment where the centrifugal trends of the past century came to their supposedly inevitable conclusion. Only in recent years have historians criticized the decline model, by reevaluating the dynamism of imperial systems and questioning the inevitable reorganization of East-Central Europe into small nation-states. It is with this more skeptical approach to the

importance of nationalisms that this paper explores the death of the multinational Hungarian state.

To be sure, some scholars have discussed the internal causes of some of the events in the revolution, and nearly all acknowledge the role played by progressive social values in the legitimation of Károlyi's regime. Indeed, reconstructing the internal dynamics of the revolution would have been impossible without the secondary sources whose interpretive approach I criticize. For example, Peter Pastor acknowledges that the Social Democrats “represented the real force behind the government.”⁷ This admission is typical of many secondary sources, which note the importance of progressive social elements in the revolutionary period but nonetheless focus on external factors. One book that does focus almost entirely on internal dynamics is Rudolf Tóké's *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic*. However, it was published during the Cold War by the Hoover Institute—its goal is to discuss the early stages of the Hungarian Communist Party, which at the time ruled Hungary. Therefore, no study has comprehensively looked at the revolution as a social phenomenon resulting from conflicts about the internal organization of the Hungarian state and society.

Sources

The primary sources used in this paper are all either in English or translated from Hungarian. As such, their scope is rather limited. The main sources are translated first-hand accounts of the revolution. One group of accounts is the memoirs of Mihály Károlyi and Oszkár Jászi, who were members of the revolutionary government. Another is the recollections of Cecile Tormay and Charles Henry Schmitt, who were observers of the revolution. These were both translated in England for polemical reasons—Tormay by a conservative press, because she was a counterrevolutionary activist, and Schmitt by the Workers' Socialist Federation, because he was a leftist supporter of the revolution. All the personal recollections are, therefore, highly politically charged and subjective. Nonetheless, they reveal important insights about the internal dynamics of the revolution. The paper also uses a variety of other primary sources, including American newspaper articles, Béla Kun's *Pravda* essays from the summer of 1918, and a variety

of translated excerpts from pamphlets, speeches, and the like from secondary literature. While this collection of sources cannot be used to construct a complete narrative of the revolution, they do demonstrate that an interpretation based on political legitimacy and focusing on internal dynamics is enlightening and resolves apparent contradictions in the course of the revolution.

I: The Revolutionary Break and the Discourse of Legitimacy

The Hungarian Revolution of 1918 began as a result of the complete breakdown of Austro-Hungarian war efforts, especially on the Italian front. The war was ending, and the main concern was how the defeated powers would come to terms with the Entente. As a result of the disastrous war, the imperial government had completely lost legitimacy, and the various constituent nationalities moved to form national governments that could negotiate peace terms. Hungary was no exception, but since it was one of the ruling nations of the Monarchy, the break technically happened within the framework of the Dualist system (wherein Austria and Hungary each had separate elected Parliaments, with ministers appointed by the Emperor). In short, the discredited government led by Sándor Wekerle resigned on October 23rd, recognizing that the war was lost; in response, progressive elements coalesced around Mihály Károlyi and formed the Hungarian National Council, which aimed at creating a government that would declare independence for Hungary. A large demonstration in Budapest on the 28th called on Archduke Joseph, Charles VI's representative in Hungary, to have Károlyi form a government. However, Archduke Joseph called on János Hadik, a Conservative. This resulted in widespread strikes throughout Hungarian urban centers on the 30th, along with a full-scale military revolt wherein revolutionary soldiers and workers seized centers of military and economic power in the capital. That night, the members of the Hungarian National Council appeared before enthusiastic crowds in Budapest, and the Archduke finally appointed Károlyi as Prime Minister the next day. In the following days, the Emperor would formally abdicate his authority over Károlyi, the government (made up of members of the National Council) would declare independence, and in January

would proclaim the Hungarian People's Republic, with Károlyi now serving as the provisional president.⁸-

The question here is not so much of how the revolutionary break happened—that is, the specific events and negotiations that led to the installation of Mihály Károlyi as Prime Minister and his National Council's assumption of power in a newly independent state. Rather, the issue is the disappearance of imperial authority, and the necessity of finding a completely new way of legitimizing state power in a society threatened with anarchy. The question is why Károlyi and his coalition were seen as the only credible alternative, how the new regime's legitimacy was conceptualized by historical actors, and how this new idea of legitimation was translated into political action that affected the course of the revolution, particularly with regard to the organization and composition of the new regime.

The opening days of the revolution are especially important because they represent the moment when new actors entered the discussion about the sources and parameters of political legitimacy. These new actors included political figures, such as Social Democratic and Bourgeois Radical politicians, who had engaged in political discourse, but from the margins and outside of government. More significantly, the revolutionary moment allowed previously disenfranchised classes, constituting the bulk of the Hungarian populace, to articulate their own vision of legitimacy through mass action, whether planned or spontaneous. Normally, even authoritarian states have tacit agreements with their citizens or subjects that outline the prerogatives and power of government. What distinguishes the revolutionary event is that the negotiations leading to that agreement become quite explicit, with the population asserting their ability to violently reject authority they see as illegitimate. As was the case in Hungary, often the mere assertion of that ability is enough to topple the state. Thus, the point of this section is to investigate the ways these new political actors conceptualized political legitimacy at the moment they were given a voice. The sources at hand indicate that the new regime legitimated itself in two ways. As the established interpretation already asserts, the overarching concern of Hungarian politicians, as well as the Hungarian people, was the cessation of hostilities and the attainment of a peace that

would hopefully preserve most of the Hungarian state's territory (although it was already clear that certain areas would be lost). Károlyi was seen as the only politician that could negotiate successfully with the Entente, due to his liberal views, especially with regard to Wilsonist ideals. There was, however, another distinct but related source of legitimation for the regime, as various political figures and groups saw the revolution as a unique opportunity to transform Hungarian society. The revolutionary regime was thus not only legitimated by nationalist self-interest, but also by the desire to reconstruct Hungary as a just society, a desire informed by current liberal and radical ideologies. The importance of this source of legitimation has perhaps been understated in histories of the revolution.

The sincerity of the new government and the enthusiasm of major segments of the Hungarian population in pursuing a liberal/socialist domestic program has never been in doubt, but the question remains of whether it was legitimated by a desire to distance the new government from war guilt, and to present a friendly face to the Entente. In other words, people who might have opposed a government made up of liberals, radicals, and socialists—for example, bureaucrats and military officers, who could have easily toppled the weak regime—passively accepted the revolution because they accepted the necessity to please the Entente. Károlyi's legitimacy would thus be predicated almost solely on his ability to obtain a favorable peace. This view is supported by the fact that Károlyi fell from power when the Vyx Memorandum proved that Hungary would cede vast amounts of territory in any peace settlement. The relative importance of each source of legitimacy in the minds of Hungarians, and whether one followed from the other, is impossible to ascertain, especially without access to untranslated sources.

Nonetheless, there are certain aspects of the beginning of the revolution that have been deemphasized in most interpretations which indicate the importance of the social legitimacy of the regime. One of these is the crucial role the Social Democratic Party had in the regime, especially with respect to the domestic program. This group's importance in their coalitions with both Károlyi and Béla Kun's Communists is understated by historians that emphasize diplomatic/military legitimation and therefore focus on the figures of Károlyi and Kun as the international

faces of the successive regimes. Secondly, the creation of workers' and soldiers' soviets in Hungary in the beginning stages of the revolution, as well as their importance in expressing political will on the ground, indicate that a revolutionary socialist current was present in the revolution from the beginning. Although it seems that the immediate goal of both the Social Democratic executive and the soviets was the preservation of order and consolidation of the gains made by the revolution, rather than radicalizing the situation, their role in controlling events on the ground should be emphasized in a comprehensive narrative of the revolution.

The National Council

R.J. Crampton, in summing up Mihály Károlyi's appeal to the people of Hungary in the days leading up to the revolution, says that "It was hoped that Károlyi's long-standing support of the west would help Hungary in its dealings with the allies, and that his favorable standing with the radicals at home would help to preserve internal order."⁹ In other words, only he could defend Hungary from the two dangers of radical revolution and territorial mutilation. Generally, historians focus on the role Károlyi was expected to play in obtaining a favorable peace settlement—this is perfectly reasonable, as Hungarians were primarily concerned with ending the disastrous war, and the results of its conclusion.¹⁰ Furthermore, Károlyi had indeed been an outspoken critic of the war, and a strong supporter of Wilson's Fourteen Points, even summing up his peace program as "Wilson, Wilson, Wilson."¹¹ Importantly, the Fourteen Points originally called for the reorganization of Central Europe based on the principle of national self-determination *within the Habsburg Monarchy*, which would be preserved as a Central European power.¹² While the post-war plans of the Entente had already changed, with a new emphasis on strengthening independent Czechoslovak, Rumanian, and South-Slav nation-states as a counterpoint to German and Russian power, the Hungarians understandably still hoped that the Hungarian polity could survive in a federalized state. Thus, when Hungarian soldiers and workers took to the streets on October 31st, 1918, demanding Károlyi's installation as premier, they did so in large part because they hoped Károlyi's rapport with the Entente would help preserve Hungarian territorial integrity.

At the same time, Károlyi's National Council, which formed the core of the new regime, had an extensive domestic program. For them, the courting of the Entente went hand in hand with a sincere desire to reform Hungarian society in line with western liberal ideas. A *New York Times* article from October 29th states that the National Council, in agreement with the "Radical Socialist Party" (it is unclear whether this means the Radical Bourgeois or Social Democratic party; it is probably the latter), had presented a comprehensive program outlining both diplomatic/military and domestic goals. Of the seven articles, one calls for "The dissolution of the Hungarian lower house, with subsequent elections by the direct and secret ballot of both male and female voters."¹³ The call for women's suffrage is significant, although it was common in the newly created post-war states (e.g. Weimar Germany, Austria, and Poland). After all, this was before any of the major Entente nations had granted women full voting rights (admittedly, Wilson had voiced his support for the Nineteenth Amendment in January of that year). According to Charles Henry Schmitt, the call for women's suffrage "must have clearly shown that the taxing and executive power of the State reposed in hands reliably radical."¹⁴ Overall, four of the seven articles cited in the newspaper present domestic goals, while three relate to demobilization, the end of the German alliance, and the nationalities issue. This indicates that the National Council was staking its legitimacy on more than its ability to preserve Hungary's borders. They were presenting themselves to the people of Hungary as providers of a new, just order that would replace an old, archaic system that had led its subjects to defeat and humiliation. Their success thus hinged not only on Károlyi's abilities as a statesman, but also on the consolidation of democratic and liberal values.

The personal recollections of Tormay and Schmitt, while highly subjective, indicate that Hungarians of various political stripes understood the legitimating ideology and concrete goals of the National Council to be predicated on social/political reform as well as diplomatic/nationalist aims. In fact, Tormay is quite adamant in saying that the revolution represented an acceptance of the loss of Hungarian territory, and the complete betrayal of the Hungarian nation. In response to their declaration of goals, she exclaims, "They have not got a word for our

frontiers established a thousand years!"¹⁵ She then reveals her personal prejudices, complaining that the council claiming to represent the interests of the entire nation is in fact "Eleven Jews and eight bad Hungarians!"¹⁶ At the same time, she remembers a conversation indicating that many Hungarians, perhaps those less inclined to social revolution, nonetheless accepted Károlyi out of diplomatic hopes. She describes a conversation between two "gentlemen":

"We must resign ourselves. None but Károlyi can get us a speedy peace.'
"How do you know?"
"Well, the newspapers... Then Károlyi has made a statement. He has great connections with the Entente"¹⁷.

The conversation implies that revolutionary enthusiasm did not permeate all levels of society, or grip every Hungarian, but that many nonetheless "resigned" themselves to the new regime because it represented the defeated country's last hope. One might presume that the feeling of resignation was quite widespread, especially among classes that were not mobilizing in favor of political change. Béla Király, for example, remembers how his father, a provincial bureaucrat carried out his duties under the Károlyi regime based not upon politics but on loyalty to "the royal Hungarian state."¹⁸ While it is impossible to generalize about entire classes from personal memories, it seems that members of the middle and upper echelons of Hungarian society accepted the new political order out of loyalty to the state—especially the Hungarian crown, and the territories it represented. Nonetheless, Tormay's vociferous criticisms of the Council suggest that Hungarians understood that the new regime intended to legitimize its rule by empowering heretofore oppressed groups through progressive social policy.

Schmitt, a socialist strongly in favor of the revolution, likewise emphasizes its social aspect, in spite of the fact that it began as a result of the war and was undeniably linked to anxieties about the coming peace settlement. He states that after a governmental crisis brought about by a loss of confidence on the part of the imperial government, "the word was: Károlyi could save the country."¹⁹ He probably means here that Károlyi could save the Hungary from complete collapse under the burden of war and dismemberment at the hands of its enemies. Indeed, throughout his pamphlet he describes the revolution in terms of a national liberation movement, although one

undertaken by the revolutionary working class. He still notes however, that "The Revolution was quite frankly and obviously republican" when he explains that the abolition of the monarchy was a foregone conclusion after Károlyi's appointment as premier.²⁰— Thus, Károlyi's rise to power was understood by Schmitt as more than the last ditch effort of a defeated nation to preserve itself, but also as the seizure of an opportunity to refashion society.

Still, there is the question as to whether the shift in Hungarian domestic policies followed necessarily from a desire to distance the country from the pre-war political culture that had caused the war. There was something of a consensus among political elites in all the defeated countries that the old order had been completely discredited, and that only "People's Governments" could both successfully negotiate a settlement with the Entente and prevent total anarchy. A persuasive argument can be made that the post-war revolutions in Central Europe represented something of a cynical attempt to avoid war-guilt, especially in light of the acquiescence of important social elements (such as Tormay's two gentlemen, as well as members of the old imperial bureaucracy and officer corps) that otherwise would have stridently resisted social change. However, it is abundantly clear that members of Károlyi's National Council conceptualized the revolution as a distinct break from the past, and believed that their rise to power revealed a profound shift in the legitimation of governmental authority. This is clearly shown in the words of Oszkár Jászi, a Bourgeois Radical among the founding members of the revolutionary regime:

"It will be clear to [future historians] that every line of [a statement of intent released in late October] is impregnated with a sincerely democratic and socially progressive spirit...[The] sovereignty of the industrious masses of peasants and town workers in the state, under the guidance of the genuinely creative *intelligenza*—these were the fundamental principles of the revolution; and in them were agreed originally not only the three parties but, as I can affirm with clear conscience, the whole of the workers in the country."²¹—

The National Council did not intend to pander to the interests of pre-war elite groups, although their passive acceptance was necessary and justified by hopes for an advantageous peace. They saw themselves as representatives of the oppressed classes who had suffered most from the war,

and as providers of a just political order legitimated by democratic participation. According to sources on the ground, this was fully understood by the populace and apparently contributed to popular support for the revolution, regardless of how important the issue of territorial concessions was.

The Social Democrats

One of the aspects most overlooked by historians of the revolution is the importance of the Social Democratic Party as a member of the governing coalition. Scholars discussing the revolution in the context of the end of the war (and of the multinational imperial order in Central Europe) understandably focus on Károlyi's group and their liberal political orientation. However, the socialists were crucial to the legitimation of the regime, specifically in terms of gaining the support of a social base that it could mobilize and express political will. Károlyi himself was well-known and respected, but it was the Social Democrats that had established themselves as representatives of disenfranchised workers, through years of political organization and activism.²² Their presence in the government justified the label of "People's Government." That their relative importance in the establishment of political legitimacy has been understated suggests that historians have overemphasized diplomatic/national concerns in the dynamics of the revolution. Nonetheless, questions remain as to how radical the Social Democrats were in pursuing social justice, and one could argue that their main role in the government was to maintain order and prevent anarchy, while the essentially liberal government pursued a peace settlement.

Sources indicate that the Hungarian working class became more politically active during the war. Rudolf Tóké's *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic* traces the development of the Hungarian workers' movement, beginning in the early twentieth century. As an appendix clearly shows, trade union membership experienced rapid growth beginning in 1916. In that year, membership stood at 55,338. The figure jumped to 215,222, an all-time high, in 1917. By 1918 there were 721,437 organized workers in Hungary.²³ The deprivations of war apparently caused

increased activity on the part of the working class. It was the Social Democrats that controlled these trade unions. Also, while most returning soldiers trusted Károlyi, the organized workers (who were more capable of political direct action) turned to the socialists for leadership.²⁴ Thus, when imperial authority broke down, it was the Social Democratic executive that had already organized a vast social base which it could call upon to express popular approval for a new government. In fact, Tórkés argues that the Party could have had more influence in the revolutionary government but "voluntarily declined to assert its actual power."²⁵

The socialists assented to junior membership in a coalition led by liberal magnates and bourgeois intellectuals. This does not suggest that they were particularly radical in their outlook, and in fact continued a trend wherein they focused on short-term improvements for workers rather than pursuing the long-term goal of a workers' state. However, the vital importance of the Social Democrats in providing popular support for the regime suggests that even their relatively conservative social priorities formed an essential component of the regime's legitimacy. The statements of the party furthermore indicate that they conceptualized the revolution not as a last-ditch attempt to save Hungary from an undesirable peace settlement but rather as the seizure of the state by the working classes. Tormay recalls a declaration posted by the party near the recently seized Garrison Commander's Building, which exclaimed, "Workers! Comrades! Now it is your turn... Out into the streets! Stop all work!"²⁶ The statement was calling for a strike in order to express solidarity with the soldiers who had, under the aegis of the National Council, revolted and occupied the centers of military power in the city. Clearly, the Social Democrats were confident in their ability to mobilize large numbers of people in support of the regime. Furthermore, they conceptualized their support of the regime in revolutionary rather than nationalistic terms. They viewed the revolution in class terms, as the inevitable result of the contradictions of the *ancien regime*, not in the context of the multinational Habsburg Empire's collapse and diplomatic maneuvering.

Popular Actors

Regardless of the political outlook of the members of the newly formed government, it was the entrance of mass actors into the discussion about legitimacy that marked the events in Hungary as a revolution. The spontaneous uprising of soldiers and workers in Budapest was the event that forced King Charles to appoint Károlyi as premier; the members of the National Council were actually quite surprised and unprepared for the event.²⁷— It would be impossible to make general statements about the views of the people of Hungary with regard to political legitimacy, especially without access to sources in Hungarian. Nonetheless, it is clear that spontaneous organization and direct action on the part of previously disenfranchised Hungarians were the driving forces of the revolution. It is therefore important to investigate the social groups that contributed to revolutionary activity. The question is of how their actions contributed to a new agreement between the government and the governed, and whether these actions indicated a distinct concern for social transformation, without regard to the outcome of the peace settlement. In spite of all the newspaper articles describing the political machinations that led to the formal transfer of power to Károlyi, all of the participants of the revolution fully understood that it was the brute force of social revolt that legitimated the new government. As Jászi says, "In those fevered October days I realised as never before the irresistible force of mass movements towards social change, [and] the impotence in the face of them of all who seek deliberately to guide and control them."²⁸— In other words, even Jászi, who was part of the government that in fact *did* gain control of the situation of Budapest, felt that the populace was making demands on the state in a completely new way. The tacit agreement that legitimates state power had become explicit: any political actor hoping to quell the fury of the masses had to take their desires into account, as the state's ability to control the populace through force had completely dissolved. Thus, the formal transfer of power, as represented by Károlyi's installation as premier and the subsequent release from the oath of loyalty to King Charles, was in fact driven by mass actors who ostensibly had no role in the process. Still, this does not demonstrate that the masses revolted for social reasons. Surely, the hardships of war had radicalized many sectors of society (as shown by the increase in trade union

membership, mutinies on the front and in the hinterland, etc.) and increased willingness to challenge the political system. Nonetheless, the soldiers and workers could possibly have revolted because they were disgusted with the government that had brought them to ruin, and because they wanted a government that could salvage Hungary's future. Indeed, the symbolism and rhetoric of national liberation were prevalent in the mass demonstrations. Furthermore, it seems that one of the main roles the spontaneous actions of large groups in the early days of the revolution was to preserve order and prevent anarchy. One incident recalled by Schmitt occurred as a result of mistaken rumors that a group of escaped Russian prisoners of war were marching on Budapest in order to pillage the city:

"The news spread rapidly through the streets; officers and civilians ran through the out-of-the-way nooks, and a quite astonishing number of volunteers offered themselves, who, just as they were, as they came out of office or shop, cafe, restaurant or house, went on foot, by tram, many too by droshky, to the Municipal Gendarmerie, to be armed there. They all came quite willingly and spontaneously, to resist the reported advance of the Russians and protect the capital from irruption, plunder and anarchy."²⁹—

While the episode demonstrates the popular, spontaneous character of revolutionary activity, it was motivated primarily by a concern for national defense and the preservation of order.

Throughout his narrative, Schmitt applauds the masses for their careful prevention of plunder and chaos, rather than for demands on the new government for social progress. This indicates that popular political action may have been motivated in large part by a desire to mitigate the catastrophic effects of Hungary's defeat. There was one group, however, that expressed popular will in way that was explicitly socialistic. Those were the workers and soldiers organized into soviets.

The Soviets and Dual Power

Perhaps the most telling form of popular participation in the discourse of political legitimacy was the activities of newly formed soviets, or councils, in the early days of the revolution.³⁰—

Arguably, Károlyi's regime operated in a dual power situation, where political will and control were exercised not only by the state, but also by the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils. The

importance of this explicitly communist form of organization suggests that the legitimation of political power was rapidly changing. While the councils cooperated closely with the Social Democrats, their crucial role in maintaining order and expressing the will of the government shows that the people of Hungary were assuming some of the prerogatives of the state. This in turn indicates that the events of October and November, 1918, represented in part a truly social revolution, in addition to the nationalistic character of the political change.

Schmitt's recollections are filled with references to the Soldiers' Council in particular. He says that "The Soldier's Council did excellent work in the way of preserving order, and high merit is to be ascribed to it and its leaders, especially to Dr. Josef Pogány, a journalist, now Chief-Commissary of the Soldiers' Council."³¹ Later on, he credits the organizational capabilities of both the Council and the Social Democrats for limiting the amount of looting that went on in the days after the revolution, although he does speciously credit *agents provocateurs* sent by the Nationalities for the plunder that did occur.³² Regardless, the Soldiers' Council became a de facto police force. Meanwhile, as Tókéss asserts, the Workers' Council was the most powerful of the four administrative authorities in Budapest (along with the National Council, the coalition government, and the Soldiers' Council), and it "was, in effect, an enlarged Hungarian Social Democratic Party congress—fully controlled by the party executive and the Trade Union Council."³³ The importance of these organizations, based on the principle of direct popular participation in the political world, suggest that the revolution had a radical aspect that is not evident in the international context.

Furthermore, Schmitt suggests that the Soldiers' Council was motivated by more than a desire to defend the newly independent Hungary and preserve order. In fact, it was "at once an element in Education, and an administrative organ, in which not politics was uppermost, but the organization of a People's Army on the basis of the 'vertrauungs-männer' system."³⁴ While he says that politics were relatively unimportant to the Council, the fact that a non-state actor took over the role of security, and moreover that they were organizing an army that would fight for class-based rather than national interests, indicates that they conceptualized their role as

furthering the gains made by marginalized classes in the revolution. Thus, the organization of soldiers and workers into soviets, and their important role in controlling revolutionary events on the ground, are aspects that demonstrate the social sources of legitimacy for the revolution. Placing the revolution in an international context, with a focus on Károlyi as a negotiator with the Entente, tends to deemphasize the importance of the Councils' participation, and thus the radical change in social legitimacy in the Hungarian political discourse.

Conclusion

To be sure, it is important to look at the outbreak of the Chrysanthemum Revolution in the context of the collapse of the multinational Habsburg Empire and the end of World War I. Sources generally show that the coming peace settlement and the prospect of ceding Hungarian territory was foremost in the minds of Hungarians when they brought about the overthrow of the monarchy and the installation of a liberal/radical/socialist regime. Historians have been correct in emphasizing this motivation for the shift in political legitimacy. In addition, they have generally acknowledged that the participants in the revolution, both leaders and popular participants, understood the revolution to be social in character and sincerely aimed for a just sociopolitical order in Hungary's future. However, by focusing on the international context of the regime, they have arguably given short shrift to the relative importance concerns about social legitimacy had in the dynamics of the revolutionary break. The Social Democratic Party's crucial role in legitimating the National Assembly, as well as the Soldiers' Council's job of controlling events on the ground, were relatively unimportant in the international context but essential to the ideological and practical characteristics of the new regime. These often overlooked facets of the revolutionary break would also prove to be crucial in the continuing dynamics of the period. To be specific, since the regime depended on working class support for its legitimacy, radicalization due to social issues would severely weaken the regime and render it powerless to continue after its diplomacy failed. This will be discussed below, in the section on Béla Kun and communist agitation.

II: Domestic Policy: Land and Nationality Reform

Over the next months, Károlyi's regime would struggle to achieve its diplomatic goals, in an environment of increasing chaos in Hungary. At the same time, the regime tried to implement its ambitious domestic program, which included both the political and social reorganization of Hungarian society. This section examines the efforts of the government to carry out reforms in a way that would rectify the injustices of the past, ease the suffering caused by the war, and expand the social basis for the new regime's rule. The redistribution of land and rapprochement with the minority nationalities were two of the central goals of the Károlyi government's domestic policy. The government's strategies with respect to these goals reveal important insights about the internal dynamics of the revolution—that is, how the revolutionary regime sought to legitimate its rule through the creation and consolidation of a large, diverse social base. Although the regime had triumphed in the Fall of 1918, its social basis was limited. It was able to control events on the ground in Budapest—or at least had the support of those who could—but it had few active, *organized* supporters outside the urban working classes. Its attempts to transform the Hungarian countryside through the application of a radical domestic policy thus represent an attempt to consolidate the political legitimacy of the regime through the extension of its social basis outside the capital. That is, the leaders of the regime wanted to strengthen the social aspect of their political legitimacy, which justified and sustained their precarious rule.

The regime sought to address two major grievances—the unequal distribution of land in the countryside, and the suppression of the national right of minorities (specifically Rumanians, Slovaks, and Serbs) living on Hungarian soil. Importantly, these were two areas where members of the Hungarian left had long called for reform.³⁵ Once in power, the Hungarian liberals, radicals and socialists took the opportunity to apply their ideas; although they were limited in their ability to do so, this fact suggests that the regime was animated by authentically liberal/radical impulses. More importantly, success in these two areas would have brought two of the most marginalized groups in Hungary into the support base of the government, thus working

towards the goal of a government representing the interests of all of Hungarian society, rather than the interests of the old order and the prewar elites.

As we shall see, Károlyi's government failed to draw support from the minority nationalities and the rural poor, both because of its limited ability to implement meaningful reforms and because of mistakes on the part of the regime. Any attempt at reconciliation with the nationalities was perhaps doomed from the start, while the land reform decree promulgated by the government was delayed by internal disputes and was too moderate for the peasantry. Nonetheless, the story of land and nationality reform under the Károlyi regime is important in several respects. Firstly, although this is outside the purview of the paper, the attempted reforms represented important steps in the overall process of modernization and liberalization of Hungarian society—especially because the issues of economic backwardness and ethnic diversity were central to Hungarian politics throughout the modern era. Secondly, the story is central to a reconstructed narrative of the revolution focusing on internal dynamics and political legitimacy, as it shows the government trying to realize potential support among previously marginalized classes. Thirdly, even the failure of the reforms is important, as it limited the social basis of the regime to the urban working class, which was vulnerable to the agitations of revolutionary communists such as Béla Kun.

Nationality Reform

The issue of nationality, a perennial source of headaches for Hungarian politicians in the Dualist era, presented Károlyi and his colleagues some of their most daunting obstacles. Since one of the central goals of the regime was the retention of Hungary's prewar borders, some form of reconciliation had to be found with the minority nations. However, the already fraught relationship between ethnic Magyars and the other nationalities had perhaps been irreparably harmed during the war. Furthermore, all of the nationalities were by now represented by nation-states or national councils with far better relationships with the Entente than that of Hungary. These existing and incipient nation-states were busily convincing the Entente powers that Central Europe should be carved into small states defined by ethnic boundaries towards the

end of the war. It seems unlikely that the Károlyi regime could have convinced any of the minority nations that autonomy within a multinational Hungarian state was preferable.

Nonetheless, the regime attempted to do so, continuing its tendency of trying to legitimate itself by portraying itself as a benefactor of previously oppressed groups. That they at least attempted to achieve reconciliation with the minority nations (and apparently believed in the possibility of success) is therefore important to the narrative of the internal dynamics of the revolution, and their failure was another aspect of their inability to extend their social base, thereby consolidating their domestic legitimacy.

The story of nationality reform under the Károlyi regime is necessarily the story of Oszkár Jászi and his ideas. As Pastor notes, the head of the Bourgeois Radicals had been one of the foremost critics of Hungary's nationality policy in the decades before the war.³⁶ The official stance of the prewar government was that the minority nationalities should be integrated through

"Magyarization," which essentially meant the repression of languages other than Hungarian in upper education and government.³⁷ Nationality struggles before the war generally involved language and cultural rights. Deák argues that most non-Magyar nationalists living in Hungary did not strive for independence until the end of the war.³⁸ József Galántai's *Hungary in the First World War* describes how the government's repressive measures against suspect nationalities (especially Hungarian Serbs) led to a change in the goals of the minority nationalists, wherein they came to favor union with neighboring nation-states (e.g. Transylvanian Rumanians) or the creation of new nation-states under *emigre* national councils (e.g. the Slovaks under the Czechoslovak National Committee). The Czechoslovak Committee, Rumania, and the Serbs (aiming for the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians) were all considered belligerents allied with the Entente by the end of the war, meaning that they would presumably be favored in the coming territorial settlement.

Nonetheless, Jászi had developed several ideas about the reconstitution of the Hungarian state along ethnic lines before and during the war. He was a part of what Held calls the "second generation" of Hungarian reformers (a tribute to the more famous mid-nineteenth-century liberal

reformers including Ferenc Deák, István Széchenyi and Lajos Kossuth) "who set out at the beginning of the twentieth century to do battle with bigotry and prejudice."³⁹ In this spirit, Jászi had long called for autonomy for the minority nationalities, and the transformation of the state into a modern polity that would ensure the protection of group rights. Pastor explains that Jászi, in a mid-1918 essay entitled "The Future of the Monarchy, the Collapse of Dualism and the Danubian United States," advocated the reorganization of the Danubian region into a "Pentarchy," wherein Hungarians, Poles, Czechs, Serbs, and Croats—all nations with actual "historico-political entities" in their past—would coexist in loose confederation.⁴⁰ Jászi himself described it as "immediate recognition of the equal rights of all nationalities and the development of national autonomy on the Swiss model."⁴¹ Though the proposal may seem quixotic, and it did come from one of the more radical figures on the Hungarian political scene, it is not so far-fetched. Indeed, his feeling that a collection of small, mutually antagonistic nation-states in East-Central Europe would be vulnerable to German and Russian imperialism was fairly widespread.⁴² Also, those fears were borne out in the twentieth century, as the new nation states were subject to Nazi and then Soviet domination. In 1924, when he wrote his memoirs of the revolutionary period, he was already advocating the kind of economic integration and cultural autonomy now accepted in post-national Europe.⁴³

At any rate, Jászi's plan for a confederacy of the Danubian peoples was enthusiastically supported by the other political parties of the National Council—Károlyi's party because they associated it with a similar idea proposed by Kossuth during the 1848 revolution, and the Social Democrats because it was an internationalist project that viewed a "United States of Europe" as a possible endpoint.⁴⁴ Pastor adds, however, that the National Council's rational support for the plan was perhaps tinged with "an irrational reverence for borders that dated from 'times immemorial.'"⁴⁵ In his memoirs, Jászi also claims that "A considerable section of Hungarian public opinion hoped that my policy would provide a solution for the nationalities problem."⁴⁶ So, Jászi had an opportunity to put his twenty year old ideas into practice. This was not a prewar elite granting the nationalities certain rights as a last-ditch attempt to hold an multinational state

together, as was the case when Emperor Charles federated the Austrian half of the Empire mere days before his abdication. Rather, Jászi attempted to translate a legitimating ideology—that of liberalism, democracy, and reform—into real reform, thereby bringing the minority nationalities into the support base of the regime.

Despite his idealism, Jászi was realistic about the difficulty of his situation. He writes that "I had more or less reliable information which went to show that the territorial claims of the Czechoslovaks and Roumanians had already obtained treaty recognition from the Entente during the war."⁴⁷ He goes on to say that his goals at this point included the principle of plebiscite as the determinant of borders, the preservation of economic ties in the region, and the preparation of conditions providing for "future reconciliation and federation, assuring complete autonomy to each of the nations living within the Danube basin."⁴⁸ He argued that his policy was aimed at the future, as he accepted that national antagonism was too high at the time.

Even his modified proposal, however, was rejected by most of the nationalities. Jászi says that his "proposals were met with open joy by the Germans and Ruthenes."⁴⁹ The Rumanians nonetheless rejected his overture at a conference at Arad, and the Slovaks were discouraged from even meeting with Jászi by the Czechs.⁵⁰ Eduard Benes, a Czech politician, said as early as November "that the Czechs would have to occupy Slovakia in its entirety because Bolshevism threatened Hungary and could spread from there to the West."⁵¹ Thus, minority nationalities that were represented by Entente-allied nation-states and nationalists proved resistant to the Hungarian overtures, and they were quite skillful at getting Entente support for their territorial claims. The losses of Transylvania to Rumania and Northern Hungary (Slovakia) to Czechoslovakia ended up being quite disastrous for Hungary, both in terms of total area lost and the creation of ethnic Hungarian minorities. So, their rejection of Jászi's ideas was significant. It is hopefully clear that the regime, through Oszkár Jászi, had no intention of preserving the prewar order of a Magyar-dominated Hungarian state. The goal of keeping territories occupied by the minorities certainly did agree with the foreign-policy goal of obtaining a peace settlement that would preserve Hungary's historic borders. Still, the regime's nationality policy was not

undertaken to please those imperial elites and conservative nationalists that were tolerating the revolution for now but would soon launch their reaction. In fact, it was conceptualized and portrayed as a radical rejection of the prewar order, even if it did have the goal of keeping traditional boundaries. It fits better into a tradition of Hungarian social radicalism (however weak that tradition may have been in Hungarian history) than of the kind of chauvinistic, reactionary nationalism that defined the Hungarian nationality discourse in the Dualist and interwar periods. And although the proposal of a confederated Hungary was roundly rejected, the idea itself illustrates the regime's attempt to build a social base outside of the urban working class through transformative reforms that would benefit previously marginalized groups.

Land Reform

Hungarian land ownership was highly concentrated in a small class of aristocrats, and this had been one of the central social issues facing the country, even in the decades before the war. As Held says, "Most writers seem to agree that an extremely uneven distribution of land was one of the major sources of discontent in the country" before the war.⁵² He goes on to describe how a large, rural proletariat had developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. His argument is that serfdom was abolished during the 1848 revolution, but that land was never given to the newly liberated peasantry. In the following decades, falling grain prices put small landowners out of business, and their possessions were absorbed by the larger estates. By using economies of scale, the wealthy magnates were able to withstand the price drop while employing less workers. Consequently the situation of the rural, landless laborer worsened. This led to a massive exodus from the country, and Held notes that "Between 1871 and 1898, emigration increased from 119 to 270,000 yearly."⁵³ In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Hungarian government—dominated by the very magnates who benefited from the unbalanced system—did nothing to remedy the situation.

In the month after the successful revolution, the National Council, along with each of its constituent parties (i.e. the Social Democrats, Bourgeois Radicals, and Károlyi's Independence Party) individually, put out statements to the effect that the altering the distribution of land was a

central goal of the new regime.⁵⁴—Siklós also notes, however, that the government feared an agrarian revolution and sought to prevent it by distributing land "through bureaucratic procedure."⁵⁵—Tormay, in her diary, largely agrees that the land reform was undertaken as much out of liberal or radical sentiments as a need to garner support in the countryside. In February 1919, when the land reform decree was promulgated, she wrote "They promised to bring the country happiness. Hungary has never unhappier than now. Public opinion in the Provinces has lately turned entirely against them. They had to do something, so they produced the mirage of land distribution."⁵⁶—The statement is typically cynical of the regime's intentions. (Tormay was by now actively helping to organize the counterrevolution.) What is important to note is that the regime sought to redistribute land because they believed it was necessary for ideological and practical reasons. They sought to placate the dissatisfied peasantry by giving them land—but, as a marginalized group, the peasants were seen as a natural constituency of the new government. A successful redistribution of land would consolidate the gains of the revolution by bringing order to the countryside and by establishing the regime as the benefactor of the largest social group in the country.

However, the regime was ultimately unable to carry out its plans. One reason was a delay caused by the Social Democrats, who had ideological problems with distributing land to the peasants. Historians hold that they were overly orthodox in their analysis of the situation and felt that land ownership would encourage conservatism among the peasantry—that is, they preferred collective ownership of land. As István Deák says, "Because of the doctrinaire opposition of the Social Democrats [the regime] did not distribute land among the peasants."⁵⁷—Peter Pastor also blames the Social Democrats for delaying the reform decree until February.⁵⁸—Károlyi, in a passage from his memoirs, also lays blame on the Social Democrats for the regime's inability to carry out its distribution plans:

"The increasing animosity of the feudal classes, who felt the sword of Damocles over their heads, could have been neutralized by the support of the peasantry; but the Social Democrats, who had no followers amongst the peasants, were trying to gain time until they could build up their own rural organizations, and therefore

sabotaged the reform. In theory they were right, for the peasant in possession is a conservative element."⁵⁹

It is worth noting that Károlyi became a committed communist later on in his life (i.e., by the time he wrote his memoirs), which explains his acceptance of the Social Democrats' orthodox resistance to the plan. Nonetheless, Károlyi still believed that a successful redistribution of land would have brought the peasantry into the support base of the regime, while reducing the ability of the hostile aristocracy to mobilize against the new order.

In spite of the delays caused by the Social Democrats, the government did indeed promulgate a decree on February 16th providing for the redistribution of land. The state proclaimed its right to nationalize estates of over 700 acres (with the limit going down to 280 acres in areas where there was a greater need for land on the part of the peasantry), compensating owners based on 1913 prices, and distributing the land, mainly to "poor farm hands, laborers and war veterans."⁶⁰

Károlyi described it as a "moderate reform."⁶¹ As one of the largest owners in the country, he symbolically distributed his lands in early March, as a beginning of the process. He describes the actual experience of the ceremony in a positive light, saying that the peasants "could not believe that their dream was at last to become reality. They had so often been fooled, so often deceived."⁶² Once again, it seems clear that Károlyi at least felt that a landowning peasantry could have become an important part of his government's support base.

The decree was predictably despised by the aristocracy. For Károlyi, this was in fact a very personal matter, as the decree resulted in alienation from his family and peers. He notes that the first public attack against his regime came after the decree from his own brother Josef, who "summoned the dissolved Assembly of the County and passed a vote of no confidence against my Government, demanding the restoration of the old order."⁶³ So, the attempt at land reform (never fully implemented; the government would fall in a matter of weeks) mobilized counterrevolutionary elements in the countryside, especially among the rural nobility that would be an important part of the social base of the conservative government of Admiral Horthy. Tormay, an urban conservative, alleged that the distribution of Károlyi's land was a farce; the

peasant who ceremonially received the first parcel of land was "coached," and the land had at any rate been mortgaged for "several millions."⁶⁴ In short, elite conservatives were further motivated in their opposition and mobilization against the regime as a result of the decree. This would have been acceptable, of course, had the regime been compensated for their risky move with the full-fledged support of the rural poor. After all, the general tendency of the regime was anti-elite. While primary sources indicating the peasantry's response to the regime are unfortunately unavailable, historians unanimously agree that the response was negative. László Kontler says that while the reform was an admirable first attempt to bring Hungary out of quasi-feudalism, the reform in fact "satisfied nobody."⁶⁵ The landowning elites predictably rejected any form of land redistribution, while the rural poor felt that far too little land was affected by the reform.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the lateness of the decree, and the lengthy, bureaucratized process of ownership transfer meant that the peasantry would not obtain land in time for spring planting.⁶⁷ The regime tried to find a compromise that would be acceptable to landowning elites, the rural poor, and Marxist politicians, and ended up with a reform that angered everyone. So, the regime's attempt at land reform was an unequivocal failure. While the government knew that it would permanently alienate most of the social and economic elites in the country by taking aim at the system of land ownership, the transformation of the peasantry into a mobilized political force in support of the progressive regime could make up for the loss. Károlyi certainly believed so, as revealed in his assertion that the "feudal classes" could be "neutralized" by a supportive peasantry. The decree, however, did not achieve his goal. As described above, there were perhaps three main reasons that the plan failed to mobilize the peasantry in support of the government. Firstly, the reform simply did not go far enough to please the peasants. The second and third reasons are related; the reform was delayed by the Social Democrats, allowing the peasantry to lose faith in the government, and was therefore not implemented because the government fell only a month after the decree was promulgated. So, due to hesitation, both in the timing and extent of the reforms, Károlyi's government missed an opportunity to prove itself as the representative of Hungary's marginalized groups.

Conclusion

Although they were never fully implemented, the Károlyi regime's land and nationality policies are important to the internal dynamics of the revolution for two reasons. Firstly, their intended effects aimed at consolidating the social legitimacy of the revolutionary government by correcting the inequalities of the prewar order. They provide evidence that the regime, though hapless, sought to make Hungary a modern, just society. They saw their mandate to rule as more than a mission to impress the Entente with their pacifist, pro-west bona fides and obtain a favorable territorial settlement. Rather, they cast their lot with the powerless, oppressed elements in Hungarian society, knowing that this would mobilize both elite and non-elite reactionary groups against the gains of the revolution. Many of these people had resigned themselves to the new government with hopes for Entente clemency, but Károlyi's personal experience shows that the government's new policies alienated many of them.

Secondly, the failure of both reforms was important to the internal dynamics of the revolution because the regime found itself without a large, diverse support base. Without the passive acceptance of their rule by the majority of the country, which depended on their success with the Entente, they would have no mandate for rule. And indeed, when the Entente plainly demonstrated that the peace settlement would give away most of Hungary's land, Károlyi felt that he had no right to accept it on behalf of the Hungarian people, whom he did not represent, and so he resigned along with his cabinet. Furthermore, although the regime's fall as a result of its diplomatic failure suggests the primary importance of the foreign policy legitimation for political rule in revolutionary Hungary, internal dynamics nonetheless determined Károlyi's successor. The government's support base was limited to the working class movement, which was subject to doctrinal dispute and fragmentation. Thus, as the next section will show, Béla Kun was able to split the workers' movement and mobilize a leftist opposition to the regime. When Károlyi resigned, Kun was the only political actor capable of calling on the organized manpower that could uphold a state. Furthermore, he espoused a legitimating ideology that promised the

rejection of the peace settlement. Thus, the regime's failure to expand its support base helps to explain the rise of Béla Kun—one of the most important events in the revolutionary period—as a result of internal developments.

III: Béla Kun and the Leftward Drift

Because he failed to attract supporters from the peasantry and minority nationalities, Károlyi's fragile rule depended solely on the mass support of the organized working class, as controlled through trade unions and councils by the Social Democratic Party, which participated in the government as a junior member. In late 1918 and early 1919, the more moderate members of the government (including Jászi) gradually resigned, feeling that the reforms undertaken by the regime were too radical.⁶⁸—Károlyi himself acknowledged the leftward drift in the government, wherein his rule came to depend almost solely on the continued support of the Social Democratic Party, saying, “I accept responsibility for the gradual transfer of power into the hands of the Social Democrats. As I have pointed out, they were the only organization capable of controlling production and preventing chaos. Consequently, the balance turned in their favor day by day.”⁶⁹—This was a tenuous basis for continued rule, but counterrevolutionary forces still lacked the organizational strength to topple the government, possibly because many of their future supporters still hoped that Károlyi would have success in his overtures to the Entente. But even this weak base of support, which legitimated the government's rule, would succumb to the Left's weakness—sectarianism and fragmentation.

Béla Kun, along with a small group of vanguard revolutionaries, was able to quickly create a split in the Hungarian working class movement. After returning to Hungary in the early days of Károlyi's rule from Russia, where they had become committed Leninists as prisoners of war, they organized a left-wing opposition to the Social Democrat-led working class organizations. They challenged the legitimacy of the coalition government, questioning its role as the true representative of proletarian interests and aspirations. Large groups of workers were convinced by their message and soon began to actively organize and protest the government.

This split in the only social base of the Károlyi government was perhaps as fatal a blow to its ability to rule as the more famous Vyx Memorandum. As Oszkár Jászi notes in his memoirs, the memo itself was merely a "spark [which] was needed to set fire to the inflammable accumulation of social and national discontent," which Kun had already manipulated to his advantage.⁷⁰ This section discusses Béla Kun's arrival from Russia, the policy of his newly formed Hungarian Communist Party, and the way in which he successfully challenged the legitimacy of the Károlyi government. As it will show, the government's only social base was a working class animated by Marxist revolutionary fervor and radicalized by the hardships of war. Béla Kun was thus able to use the language and logic of revolutionary Marxism to convince a large section of the workers' movement that the government was not the true representative of their interests. That is, he convinced them that bourgeois parliamentary politics would not solve the working class' problems; rather, the only option was the immediate creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is, a discourse of political legitimacy confined to competing visions of the workers' struggle inherently favored radicalism and orthodoxy, dooming Károlyi's coalition of progressive elements.

Communist Ideology and Propaganda Techniques

Béla Kun arrived in Hungary on November 16th, 1918, the same day that Hungary was officially declared to be a republic.⁷¹ He had been a prisoner of war in Russia, where he and a small group of Hungarians had become radicalized and participated in the Russian Civil War. During the war, he had met Lenin and became a personal protégé of the Russian leader⁷², eventually becoming "one of the most influential foreign socialists in Petrograd and Moscow."⁷³ Nonetheless, when Kun returned to Hungary, he and his comrades were rather obscure figures, as Jászi notes: "Nothing was known of Béla Kun save that before the war he had been a subordinate official in a provincial office of the Insurance Department."⁷⁴ But he had powerful friends, vast financial resources, and a brilliant strategy that aimed at gaining influence Hungary and establishing a revolutionary beachhead in Central Europe.

Béla Kun founded his Hungarian Communist Party on November 24th, in Budapest.⁷⁵ It consisted of Kun's core associates from Russia and various left-wing elements in the capital, including György Lukács.⁷⁶ Its strategy was to apply the same tactics that the Bolsheviks had used in Russia during the bourgeois-democratic phase of their revolution. In fact, Kun had suggested such a strategy in a *Pravda* article written in Russia before the Hungarian revolution had even begun. He quotes a "metalworker," whose literary language and political orthodoxy suggest that Kun either embellished his words or simply wrote them himself, and writes:

"I am happy to be able both to observe and to fight for that proletarian dictatorship, and, spiritually enriched, to return home to open the eyes of the workers, starving in our rich Hungarian land of Canaan, concerning the enormous difference between a demonstration in the name of electoral reform, and the dictatorship of the proletariat."⁷⁷

So, the plan was to use the lessons of the Russian Revolution, as well as Russian financial support, to convince the Hungarian proletariat that the immediate, extralegal imposition of a proletarian dictatorship was the only acceptable course of action.

The specific tactics are outlined in Tökés' book: they planned to unite the left opposition of the socialist camp, which was "inhibited by traditions of proletarian unity," infiltrating trade unions, creating "youth and nationality auxiliaries," and most importantly, either stunning "the socialist executive into immobility or [antagonizing] it into reckless actions."⁷⁸ It was a combination of both public and covert tactics, wherein the communists would seek to discredit the bourgeois-socialist government and portray themselves as the solution to all of Hungary's problems in their propaganda efforts, while at the same time trying to instigate the kind of fraternal violence within the working class that would delegitimize the regime. As Jászi argues, somewhat cynically, "The communist's tactics were as simple as could be: whatever the 'bourgeois' government promised or did, was denounced as a worthless crumb of reform, and in place of it the communists promised everything: universal prosperity and freedom for the proletariat."⁷⁹ At the same time, he says that "They were no mere theorists of communism; they preached very practical violence, and some, even general robbery and murder."⁸⁰

While it may seem unlikely that a small group of unknown agitators could topple a government led by some of the most prominent and respected progressives in Hungary, many agree that conditions in Hungary favored radicalization of the revolution. For example, Béla Kun felt that there were "Harbingers of a forthcoming revolution in Hungary—the establishment of workers' councils, mass desertions from the official socialist party and from the army, and general strikes."⁸¹ Jászi largely agreed with Kun, but from a different perspective—rather than seeing events in Hungary as the fulfillment of historical inevitabilities, Jászi argued that events in Hungary and Russia disproved Marx's theories by showing that conditions for proletarian revolution could only come about due to external factors, such as war, and not as a result of economic development.⁸² Nonetheless, Jászi admits that Hungary was "a country in which there was perhaps more inflammable material, both social and national, than anywhere outside Russia."⁸³ The deprivations of war, as well as the chaos caused by demobilization and national conflict had created large populations who were displaced, starving, resentful, and frequently armed: "Officials and workers fleeing from the frontier territory swelled [Budapest's] ailing, restless, disorderly, excitement-craving mob. Soldiers returning from the front and from internment added to the army of unemployed, crying out for food and shelter."⁸⁴ Kun and his comrades could target these groups in their agitprop efforts and easily radicalize a section of the working class.

Indeed, Tőkés notes that the Communist propaganda was noteworthy mainly for "its selectivity of chosen targets," as well as its "intensity and emotional quality."⁸⁵ The communists knew that some of the most desperate groups in Hungarian society—including workers in heavy industry and *Lumpen* elements—could easily be convinced that the government's reformist line was insufficiently progressive. What followed was a public debate on the nature of the revolution and the regime's social legitimation as the representative of working class interests. Kun's opposition to reformist or legal socialism can be seen in a *Pravda* article, commenting on a general strike in Hungary during the summer of 1918. He says that "it is absolutely impossible to reduce the causes for the General Strike purely to hunger or the demand for electoral reform. The General

Strike is directed against the machinery of the State—against militarism and discipline."⁸⁶— This was *before* the ancien regime fell—Kun had a tendency to interpret any form of working class activism as proof of orthodox revolutionary spirit. Regardless of whether or not he was correct, his propaganda efforts would make the case that proper course for the revolution was not parliamentary or reformist.

The same kind of attempts to discredit legal reforms and advocate the seizure of state power by the proletariat is evident in Communist propaganda. A *Vörös Újság* ("Red Gazette") editorial from January 7th, argues that

"A party split is becoming inevitable. The two prevailing tendencies... (the reformist and the revolutionary)... cannot be accommodated within the same organizational structure... We must push the reformists to the right, by splitting off the revolutionaries and uniting them in the [Communist] Party. This is the only way to enable the Hungarian proletariat to take advantage of the revolutionary situation and participate in the international proletarian revolution."⁸⁷—

So, the Communists justified the creation of a split in the working class movement, because they felt that the government was actually bourgeois (that is, anti-proletarian) in character, and that the opportunity for the workers to seize state power would exist for only a short period of time.

A February 3rd editorial argues in rather more strident language:

"To hell with bourgeois democracy! To hell with a parliamentary republic which makes it impossible for the masses of the proletariat to act... Long live the republic of the councils of the workers, soldiers, and village poor which will assure the rule of the exploited... To arms, proletariat!"⁸⁸—

The propaganda campaign, as can be seen, aimed at inflaming passions and even inspiring violence. At bottom, it represented an attempt to delegitimize the Károlyi regime by changing the public conception of the revolution, its goals, and the government's role in it.

In order to do this, the Communists had to focus on the Social Democratic Party, which represented the mainstream, reformist majority of the working class. Therefore, Communist propaganda often depicted them as class traitors—both for favoring reformist politics and for collaborating with bourgeois liberals. Even when he was in Russia, Kun criticized the leaders of

the socialist leaders of the Hungarian workers' movement, intimating that they were out of touch with the rank-and-file of the proletariat. Commenting on a general strike in the summer of 1918, he notes that

"The leaders had to resign, because the workers had become more class-conscious, and a crowd of 200,000 people was pouring through Budapest, intoxicated with the Russian revolution, and crying "We too want a revolution!" But the party leaders, who were negotiating with Wekerle [the Hungarian Premier in the summer of 1918], were not capable of that . . . Instead, they tried to bring confusion into the ranks of the proletariat."⁸⁹—

Twenty days earlier, he had written, "*the workers now are carrying on the struggle in spite of the trade union leaders*. The mass struggle has in Hungary become the accepted method of the working-class movement, even though it has not yet received official sanction."⁹⁰— Thus, Kun and his colleagues in the radical left felt that the Social Democrats did not represent the true ambitions of the working class, and indeed were hindering the workers from fulfilling their historical destiny, which was the violent seizure of power (led, of course, by a small vanguard of revolutionaries, not by trade union functionaries) and the blossoming of worldwide communism.

Results of Agitation

While the Communists could not hope to gain the support of a majority of the workers in the country, they were strikingly successful in inspiring militarism and antagonism within the working class. As Oszkár Jászi states, "The first number of 'Vörös Újság' ('The Red Gazette') appeared on December 10, and within a very few days we experienced the first in a long series of mutinies among the soldiery, disorders in the factories and sporadic acts of terrorism."⁹¹—

This kind of violence only increased as time went on, as an anecdote from Károlyi's memoirs demonstrates:

"On February 20th Béla Kun organized an attack against the *Nepszava*, the Social Democrats' organ, and broke up their premises. A collision with the police followed and several were killed and wounded. At the request of the Social Democrats I had the Communist leader arrested. The next day the free bourgeois press, sensing from where the wind was blowing, published detailed accounts of inhuman and brutal treatment of the Communists, and pathetic portraits of Béla Kun, with bandaged pumpkin face, appeared everywhere. They deliberately made a martyr of him."⁹²—

Clearly, the constant confrontations with members of the regime's supposed social base were escalating, and making even the state's most basic prerogative—the preservation of order—increasingly difficult. Even members of the bourgeoisie could tell that the minority of workers agitated by Kun's radicalism had shattered the social legitimacy of the regime, such as it was. The streets of Budapest, where a few months earlier the soviets of workers and soldiers preserved order in the name of the revolution, now were characterized by chaos, and fratricidal violence within the working class.

More importantly, the Communists brought about a crisis of confidence within the Social Democratic Party. Although the Communists would never attract as many workers as the more mainstream socialists, they radicalized enough workers to force the government into a confrontation. Thus, the Social Democrats had to choose between opening themselves up to charges of class treachery, or uniting with the Communists in a purely socialist government.

Károlyi himself said that the

“motive of the Social Democrats' *putsch* against me [i.e., when the Social Democrats and Communists announced the dictatorship of the proletariat after his resignation] must have been the fear that they had lost their hold on the workers... The Socialist leaders had not the courage to take their stand against the *putsch* although the majority did not favor it. They hoped to regain the confidence of the working class by betraying their bourgeois comrades of yesterday.”—

In other words, Kun's goal of forcing the Social Democrats into an untenable political position was achieved. Although the majority of workers did not favor Kun's radicalism, their leaders worried that if they sided with bourgeois politicians in the increasingly violent street confrontations then they would lose their cache as spokesmen of the working class as a whole. Their other choice was to ally themselves with Kun, forming a purely workers' state which would aggressively reject the Entente's “aggression” rather than courting its favor. They were in their first negotiations to do just that when the Vyx Memorandum, which ordered Hungary to essentially cede a vast amount of territory to Rumania, forced Károlyi to resign on March 19th.⁹⁴—

IV: Epilogue

Hungary's short experiment with liberal democracy thus ended with the imposition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kun, while still in prison, was approached by the Social Democrats and asked to form a coalition government, which he would effectively lead as the Commissar for Foreign Affairs.⁹⁵ The fact that this position is generally held to be the most important in the government—more important than the socialist Sandor Garbai's position as head of the Revolutionary Governing Council, which was a combination of the two parties' executive bodies—supports the traditional interpretation of the communist takeover. That is, Kun was to use Russian military support and international revolution to prevent the Entente dismemberment of Hungary.⁹⁶ Crampton likewise argues that "it was one of the many paradoxes of Hungarian history that a government of the extreme left had been brought to office on a wave of intense national outrage."⁹⁷

One may only interpret the communist takeover as a "paradox" if the internal dynamics of the revolutionary period are ignored. This assertion, that there was a contradiction between the resignation of Károlyi's government and the creation of a communist one, is the result of the distortions and omissions of the dominant narrative. By focusing unduly on Károlyi as the international face of the regime, and therefore characterizing bourgeois liberalism as its dominant characteristic, this narrative diminishes the importance of the Social Democrats. As Tóké's, first-hand accounts, and memoirs demonstrate, the Social Democrats were crucial to the regime. By joining the coalition government, they attracted a popular base of support for Károlyi. Through its control of the trade unions, as well as the Workers' and Soldiers Councils, they were able to help control events on the ground. While the president of the Hungarian Peoples' Republic proclaimed Wilsonist ideals, his social base was in fact the organized working class led by a Marxist party. Károlyi's government failed to attain any other sources of popular support, although it tried to do so through land and nationality reform. So, when Kun radicalized a section of the working class and placed the Social Democrats in an untenable political position, he had already pulled away Károlyi's social support. The Social Democrats chose to negotiate a union with the Communists *before the Vyx Memorandum was delivered*. That is, the institution

of the dictatorship did not occur as a result of the Károlyi's diplomatic failure, and the decision to rely instead on Russian military support in repelling the Entente's territorial plans. While the Hungarian Soviet Republic certainly staked its survival on the triumph of international proletarian revolution, it came about as a result of internal dynamics. This alternative interpretation of Kun's rise demonstrates the usefulness of a new narrative of the Hungarian postwar revolutions, one that uses political legitimacy as a unifying concept and that focuses on the social support for the regime.

Hopefully we can continue the task of reevaluating the Chrysanthemum Revolution, especially with its one hundredth anniversary—marking a century of Hungary's existence as an independent nation-state—approaching. An analysis focusing on the interactions of social groups and legitimating ideologies is only one way to reinterpret this transformative, yet overlooked episode in Hungarian history. Scholars have not told the story of the revolutionary period from the point of view of the common people who brought about political change and sustained the rule of the various regimes that held power in the chaotic post-war years. The traditional focus on diplomatic maneuvering and the international context has led to a narrative that unduly emphasizes the decisions of political leaders. It is my hope that by critiquing earlier interpretations of the revolution we may construct a narrative that integrates the roles of all the relevant historical actors, including powerful men and the politically active populace, thereby exploring all the motivations, both social and nationalistic, which drove political change in the traumatic aftermath of the war.

¹ The Memorandum (delivered by French officer Ferdinand Vyx, alternatively spelled Vix in some sources) itself was an ultimatum calling on the Hungarians to withdraw behind a specified line so that the territory could be occupied by Rumanian troops, but this military arrangement was understood to be a basis for future political borders. See Peter Pastor, “The Vix Mission in Hungary, 1918-1919: A Re-Examination” *Slavic Review* 29:3 (Sep., 1970): 481-498 for an extensive discussion of the topic.

² András Siklós, *Revolution in Hungary and the Dissolution of the Multinational State, 1918*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 7.

³ R.J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century and After*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 78.

⁴ Peter Pastor, *Hungary Between Wilson and Lenin: The Hungarian Revolution of 1918-1919 and the Big Three*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1-2.

- [5](#) Peter Pastor, “The First Hungarian Communist Party,” in Ivo Banac, ed, *The Effects of World War I: The Class War After the Great War: The Rise of Communist Parties in East Central Europe, 1918-1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 89.
- [6](#) Crampton, 80.
- [7](#) Pastor, 89.
- [8](#) Ignác Romsics, “Hungary in Two World Wars”, in István György Tóth, ed., *A Concise History of Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 2005), 481-482.
- [9](#) Crampton, 78.
- [10](#) Charles Henry Schmitt, *The Hungarian Revolution: An Eyewitness Account of the First Five Days* (London: Workers' Socialist Federation), 6.
- [11](#) Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 259.
- [12](#) Romsics, 480.
- [13](#) "Riots Begin in Budapest," *New York Times*, October 30, 1918; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2004), 1.
- [14](#) Schmitt, 44.
- [15](#) Cecile Tormay, *An Outlaw's Diary: Revolution* (London: Phillip Allan & Co., 1923), 7.
- [16](#) Tormay, 7.
- [17](#) Tormay, 8.
- [18](#) Béla K. Király, *Wars, Revolutions and Regime Changes in Hungary, 1912-2004: Reminiscences of an Eyewitness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 32.
- [19](#) Schmitt, 8.
- [20](#) Schmitt, 26.
- [21](#) Oszkár Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 36.
- [22](#) See Rudolf Tökés for a discussion of the prewar history of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.
- [23](#) Rudolf Tökés, *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger), 1967, 227.
- [24](#) Tökés, 87.
- [25](#) Tökés, 87.
- [26](#) Tormay, 5.
- [27](#) Pastor, 45. Oszkár Jászi and Zsigmund Kunfi apparently thought that they would be hanged when the revolution began.
- [28](#) Jászi, 18.
- [29](#) Schmitt, 40.
- [30](#) According to István Deák, it was a small group of officers from the newly formed Soldiers' Soviets that imbued the rallies that began the revolution with their social content, adding to the primarily pacifist nature of the movement. See “Budapest and the Hungarian Revolutions of 1918-1919,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, 46:106 (1968:Jan).
- [31](#) Schmitt, 46.
- [32](#) Schmitt, 48.
- [33](#) Tökés, 86.
- [34](#) Schmitt, 46.
- [35](#) Joseph Held, “The Heritage of the Past: Hungary before World War I,” Iván Völgyes, ed., *Hungary in Revolution, 1918-19: Nine Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1971), 8.
- [36](#) Pastor, 40.

- [37](#) Held, 6-7.
- [38](#) István Deák, "The Decline and Fall of Habsburg Hungary, 1918-18," Iván Völgyes, ed., *Hungary in Revolution, 1918-19: Nine Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1971), 27.
- [39](#) Held, 7.
- [40](#) Pastor, 40. The essay is unfortunately unavailable in English.
- [41](#) Jászi, 57.
- [42](#) Pastor, 40.
- [43](#) Jászi, 235.
- [44](#) Pastor, 41.
- [45](#) Pastor, 41.
- [46](#) Jászi, 57.
- [47](#) Jászi, 57.
- [48](#) Jászi, 57-58.
- [49](#) Jászi, 59. Ruthenes, or Ruthenians, are alternative terms used for Ukrainians. Some Ukrainians lived in the Kingdom of Hungary, primarily in the region of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.
- [50](#) Jászi, 59. The Czech lands were in the Austrian half of the Monarchy, while the Slovaks lived in what was then called Northern Hungary. Nonetheless, the Czechs sought to form a nation-state with the Slovaks, not least to insure a large Slavic majority-the Czech lands had a sizable German minority. Their concerns about the German presence as a political liability were, of course, shown to be justified in the 1930s.
- [51](#) Pastor, 41.
- [52](#) Held, 3.
- [53](#) Held, 4.
- [54](#) Siklós, 86.
- [55](#) Siklós, 86.
- [56](#) Tormay, 269.
- [57](#) István Deák, "Budapest and the Hungarian Revolutions of 1918-1919," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 46:106 (1968:Jan), 135.
- [58](#) Pastor, 46.
- [59](#) Mihály Károlyi, *Memoirs of Michael Karolyi: Faith Without Illusion*, (London: J. Cape, 1956), 149.
- [60](#) Pastor, 46.
- [61](#) Károlyi, 149.
- [62](#) Károlyi, 150.
- [63](#) Károlyi, 150.
- [64](#) Tormay, 269.
- [65](#) László Kontler, *A History of Hungary: Millenium in Central Europe*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 331.
- [66](#) MacMillan, 261.
- [67](#) Jörg K. Hoensch, *A History of Modern Hungary 1867-1986*, trans. Kim Traynor (New York: Longman, 1988), 89.
- [68](#) Kontler, 333.
- [69](#) Károlyi, 156.
- [70](#) Jászi, 71.
- [71](#) Károlyi, 144.
- [72](#) Tökés, 61.
- [73](#) Tökés, 67.

- [74](#) Jászi, 64.
- [75](#) Tökés, 99.
- [76](#) Tökés, 96. Lukács was perhaps the most important Hungarian theorist of Marxism. See Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation: 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).
- [77](#) Béla Kun, "Materials for the History of the Birth of the Hungarian Revolution," *Pravda* July 24, 1918 (Marxists Internet Archive, www.marxists.org).
- [78](#) Tökés, 97.
- [79](#) Jászi, 73.
- [80](#) Jászi, 72.
- [81](#) Tökés, 77.
- [82](#) Tökés, 66.
- [83](#) Tökés, 64.
- [84](#) Jászi, 72-73.
- [85](#) Tökés, 101.
- [86](#) Kun, "The Revolution in Hungary," *Pravda* July 4, 1918 (Marxists Internet Archive, www.marxists.org).
- [87](#) Tökés, 117.
- [88](#) Tökés, 121.
- [89](#) Kun, "Materials for the History of the Birth of the Hungarian Revolution."
- [90](#) Kun, "The Revolution in Hungary."
- [91](#) Jászi, 72.
- [92](#) Károlyi, 148.
- [93](#) Károlyi, 156-157.
- [94](#) Tökés, 133.
- [95](#) Tökés, 142.
- [96](#) Pastor, 1.
- [97](#) Crampton, 80.