

# REVOLUTIONS OF 1848

## Hungary – Austria

*“We vow, that we won't be slaves  
any longer!”*



*Committee start date: 2 May 1848*

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## **.Letter from Deputy Secretary General.**

Valuable Guests, Honourable Members of the Academy and Distinguished Delegates,

With pride and joy, I welcome you all to the latest iteration of the decade-surpassing tradition of Kabataş MUN. For this edition we have refurbished numerous committees, all of which present the highest caliber academic experience. Furthermore, throughout this experience we have strived to facilitate innovation as a Model UN Conference. While exhibiting our unique offerings, our aim was always being an exemplar and inspiration for the upstarts and the ‘Freshmen’ of the Community at large. This wouldn’t have been possible if it weren’t for the relentless exertions of our assiduous members of our Academy Team working in harmony with our ever meticulous Organization, for this symbiosis is what enables us to be so confident in ourselves. Most importantly though, I would like to thank and declare my content for my compatriots, Ece and Ayşe as we share the opportunity to constitute this year's Secretariat. Finally, as the final offering to the altar of the legacy of Kabataş MUN family, I announce my gratitude to our precedents who brought us up on the stairwell of our journey.

My crown jewel, among the vast array of Committees we offer, is though must be this one-of-a-kind JCC, for which I and my venerable Head of Crisis Ela have toiled to gather the perfect team, deliberated to create the best harmony among our ranks and experimented on many previous occasions for this final act. Overarching our vocational experience was only our passion for academic excellence and obsession of historical accuracy as we studied the Spring of Nations from many books, from differing perspectives of nations and the diverging lenses of paradigms.

I was lucky enough to be gifted with the priceless camaraderie of 3 of my hard working Under-Secretary Generals, each tasked with the specialty of one of three partitions of cabinets and I was lucky enough to be working together with some of the best minds of the vocation of crisis, as my Crisis Team members. Finally, for my Academic Assistants, as they come in an array of experience but each passionate as one another, I can only thank them for their additions and care for detail.

To further establish an understanding of our design, I will continue to explain the layout of our projection. We have dissected this hexagonal entanglement into three partitions of cabinets in accordance with their relevance to the broader environment during the epoch of the Springtime of Nations. Furthermore we allow and encourage you, as the delegates, to converse, with different cabinets and seek alliances while settling disputes for the greater cause of your agenda.

If you wish to prosper, and ascend to prominence, or to preserve your position in political relevancy; then you shall toil under the pressure of time, with pen and steel at hand, gunpowder and eloquence in your breath.

— Efe Mehmet Gıdır

## **Hungary before 1848**

### **King and Nation**

Hungary came under Habsburg rule in 1526 as one of the many kingdoms and provinces in the Austrian domain. Due to its size, Hungary maintained a measure of autonomy and was theoretically governed constitutionally. Initially, the monarchy was elective, but in 1687, following liberation from the Turks, the assembled estates recognized the Habsburgs' hereditary right to the throne. This concession was reinforced in 1722-23 when the Hungarian Diet accepted the Pragmatic Sanction, allowing hereditary succession to include the female branch of the Austrian dynasty.

However, Hungarian Diets seldom granted favors without securing concessions in return. The kings had to repeatedly agree to coronation according to ancient rites, which obliged them to swear to uphold the rights and liberties of Hungary. According to Hungarian legal theory, both the king and the nation were sovereign under the Holy Crown of Saint Stephen, the founder of Christian Hungary. These joint sovereignties imposed specific rights and obligations on each. Hungary was viewed by her jurists as an independent state, governed by her own laws, unlike other Habsburg provinces. In return, the nation was obligated to support the monarch.

Due to their inclination toward absolutism, Habsburg rulers often tried to ignore their coronation oath, leading the Hungarian nation to resort to passive resistance or open rebellion. The three centuries before Louis Kossuth's birth were marked by periodic clashes between Hungary and its foreign rulers. However, the threat of foreign aggression and domestic lower-class unrest often led to reconciliation. The Vienna Court needed Hungarian taxes and soldiers for its European wars, while Hungary needed Austrian protection against the Turks and internal unrest.

The bloody rebellion led by Prince Ferenc Rákóczi in the early 18th century resulted in a compromise and decades of peace. A bloodless but effective rebellion against the enlightened despotism of Joseph II between 1780 and 1790 was followed by the compromise of 1791, where Leopold II and the Diet detailed the rights and duties of both parties. The Napoleonic wars extended this compromise due to shared hatred of Jacobin agitation and the economic benefits reaped by wealthy Hungarian landowners. However, Napoleon's defeat left the Habsburg treasury near bankruptcy and caused economic depression, ending Hungarian prosperity. Despite declining income, the king demanded more revenue and soldiers to maintain European law and order, leading to near-rebellion and the convocation of the national Diet in 1825.

The "Hungarian nation" referred to the nobility, Catholic clergy, and burghers of free royal towns—the populus—excluding the rest of the inhabitants, the misera plebs contribuens, or "poor tax-paying populace." Around 1820, Hungary's nobility numbered about half a million, nearly 5% of the population. This was significant compared to neighboring regions like Bohemia, where the nobility was just over one-tenth of 1%, and Galicia, where the nobility accounted for less than 2% of the population.

Transylvania, although under the Hungarian Crown, was governed separately and not included in these statistics.

### **Administration and Social Constituency of the Hungarian Realm Under Habsburg Reign**

Because of their inclination toward absolutism, Habsburg rulers often ignored their coronation oaths, prompting the Hungarian nation to resort to passive resistance or open rebellion. Three centuries of Hungarian history were marked by periodic clashes between Hungary and its foreign rulers. However, mutual intransigence was mitigated by the threats of foreign aggression and domestic lower-class unrest. Consequently, clashes between king and nation were invariably followed by reconciliation. The Vienna Court needed Hungarian taxes and soldiers for its European wars, while Hungary needed Austrian protection against the Turks, peasants, and non-Magyar nationalities.

The bloody rebellion led by Prince Ferenc Rákóczi in the early 18th century resulted in a compromise and decades of peace. A more effective, bloodless rebellion against Joseph II's enlightened despotism between 1780 and 1790 was followed by the 1791 compromise, where Leopold II and the Diet detailed the rights and duties of both parties. The Napoleonic wars extended this compromise due to shared hatred of Jacobin agitation and economic benefits to wealthy Hungarian landowners. Napoleon's defeat left the Habsburg treasury nearly bankrupt and caused an economic depression, ending Hungarian prosperity. Despite declining income, the king demanded more revenue and soldiers, leading to near-rebellion and the convocation of the national Diet in 1825.

Hungary's ancient laws granted immense power to the king, including initiating and executing laws, appointing high officials, acting as supreme judge, making war, conducting foreign policy, regulating education and church affairs, creating nobles, chartering free royal towns, minting currency, granting monopolies, determining customs duties, and collecting revenue from taxes and royal properties. The estates in an assembled Diet could curb royal power only in voting taxes and recruits.

Habsburg rulers aimed to preserve and expand these rights, supported by theories of monarchical absolutism and centralism, and an expanding state bureaucracy. However, their ambitions were checked by concurrent theories of human rights and national independence, as well as the rising power of the landed nobility. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both the king and the nobility constructed powerful political institutions.

The Habsburgs gradually shifted much of Hungary's government to Imperial institutions that managed the entire Monarchy. They exploited the Hungarian nobility's need for Austrian assistance against Turks, peasants, and national minorities and used the Counter-Reformation as a political tool. By the early nineteenth century, key decisions were made by all-Austrian institutions such as the Secret State Chancellery, the Court War Council, the General Treasury, and the Highest Police and Censorship Office. These institutions left relatively little decision-making power to offices specifically handling Hungarian affairs.

However, the Royal Hungarian Court Chancellery in Vienna acted as an intermediary between the monarch and local Hungarian authorities, with its chancellor, two vice-chancellors, and twelve major councilors performing very important advisory roles.

The Vice-Regal Council (Königliche Ungarische Statthalterey or Consilium Regium Locumtenentiale) handled all domestic affairs except finances and justice. Located in Buda and presided over by the palatine or viceroy, a Habsburg archduke since the late 18th century, the council's higher officials were drawn from the Magyar aristocracy. However, the minor bureaucrats of the royal offices in Hungary played a more crucial role. When the first constitutional government formed in March 1848, it inherited pre-revolutionary Hungary's 2,500 functionaries, essential for the new administrative machinery.

The Hungarian nobility, especially the lesser provincial nobility, were dissatisfied with their underrepresentation in the all-important all-Austrian offices and the inefficiency of their representation in Hungarian offices. To influence the executive branch, the lesser nobles used the "noble" county system. The fifty-five counties, along with free districts and other privileged territories, became strongholds of lesser noble interests against the king. Each county sent two deputies to the national Diet, who had to vote identically and whose combined votes counted as one.

In domestic administration, the counties were also powerful. The lord-lieutenant (Obergespann, comes, főispán), the highest county official, was a royal appointee, but many held their positions hereditarily or were local bishops, making them relatively independent. All other county officials were elected by the local nobility and paid by the county, with the elected deputy lord-lieutenant (Untergespann, vicecomes, alispán) and his underlings handling everyday affairs.

The term "Hungarian nation" referred to the nobility, Catholic clergy, and burghers of free royal towns, excluding the majority of the population. Around 1820, the nobility numbered about half a million, nearly 5% of the population. This was significant compared to neighboring regions like Bohemia and Galicia, where the nobility was much smaller.

Hungarian noblemen enjoyed privileges such as habeas corpus, direct subordination only to the king, ownership of personal domains, freedom from service to the king except in arms, and tax exemption. In contrast, commoners could be arrested at will, were direct subjects of noble landowners, paid taxes, and performed military service as required by the king and Diet. **The nobility was divided into aristocrats (magnates) and lesser nobles.** Aristocrats, often with Habsburg-given titles, monopolized high state offices and had the right to attend the Upper House of the Diet. Lesser nobles sent elected representatives to the Lower House. Wealth and influence varied greatly within the aristocracy and lesser nobility. The Esterházy family, for example, owned vast estates, while some nobles owned very little.

The lesser nobility was the core of the political nation and the country's administrators. While many nobles lived isolated, traditional lives, others were classically educated, nationally conscious, and politically active. Despite lacking capital, credit, and markets, these landowners managed their estates and local governance, serving as tax collectors, recruiters, judges, and welfare workers.

Catholic prelates, enjoying noble privileges, played minor roles in 1848 events. They were immensely wealthy, drawing tithes from all serfs and controlling education. Although conservative and loyal to the king, their authority had declined since Joseph II. Overall, the Hungarian aristocracy and lesser nobility were integral to the country's political, economic, and social fabric, with their support essential for any major undertaking, including the 1848 revolution.

There were in Hungary as many free royal towns as there were counties, about fifty. These towns and mining cities had corporate nobility, meaning they enjoyed communal liberties similar to those of individual nobles. However, there were significant differences in the economic and political influence of the towns compared to the nobles. Free royal towns paid taxes and were under the direct authority of the Royal Hungarian Treasury. Each town had the right to send two deputies to the Diet, but all town representatives combined had only one vote, in contrast to the individual votes of each noble county.

The towns were mostly inhabited by non-Magyars, primarily Germans, who had only begun to assimilate into Hungarian culture by 1820. Hungary's social and economic backwardness was evident as no town had 100,000 inhabitants, and most urban dwellers in free towns were actually agriculturists. Only one-fourth of town dwellers were burghers, with the majority having no role in city government. Municipal rule was controlled by small oligarchies. Over time, the free royal towns, once prosperous and powerful, became increasingly defenseless against the rising power of the landowning nobility. Similar developments occurred only in Poland, where nobles dominated and burghers had little influence, a situation that persisted into the nineteenth century.

In the national Diet, town representatives had little power, mustering only one vote against the fifty-odd votes of the noble counties. Representatives from free towns were among the most conservative and rarely supported liberal reformers' attempts to modernize Hungary. Hungarian history shows that the "Third Estate" was composed of the landowning gentry, unlike the bourgeoisie of Western Europe, and artisans and tradesmen in feudal Hungary were perhaps the most feudal of all strata.

Another important social group was the **honoratiores**, educated commoners who were granted some privileges. This group included physicians, writers, journalists, Protestant clergymen, and professors. Though they had no political rights, they influenced politics through their public activities. The **honoratiores** often blended with professional nobles. For example, Kossuth, a landless nobleman, lawyer, and journalist, was practically one of the **honoratiores**. This rising intelligentsia played a decisive role in the events of 1848, and one of the new government's first acts was to grant voting rights to nonnobles with higher education.

Unfortunately for bourgeois development in Hungary, both the town burghers and the honoratiores tended to adopt the values and lifestyle of the landed gentry, a trend that continued for a hundred years.

## **Germany under the Shadow of the French Revolution of 1789**

The events of July 1789 had profound repercussions throughout Europe. The Thermidorian Reaction and Napoleon's rise to power brought significant changes within the Holy Roman Empire, ultimately leading to its demise and extensive political and social transformations. The "Age of Napoleon" modernized the German-speaking countries and influenced German concepts of patriotism and liberalism, contributing significantly to the rise of the 1848 revolutionary movement.

The outdated system of the Holy Roman Empire, despite being symbolically held together by medieval notions, failed to assimilate Enlightenment ideas, even though the French Revolution initially impacted its cultural circles. Germany's modernization remained incomplete because a political force comparable to the French citizen did not develop. Constitutional and political reforms in Germany emerged as reactions to perceived French hegemony but were often resisted by the existing corporate society. While the burgeoning literary and philosophical elite revived German thought and culture, they contributed only marginally to political reform movements.

### **The Seminal Revolution and the Wars of Liberation**

The series of wars against France strengthened feelings of patriotism and nationalism, but without political structures to direct them, these sentiments languished in romantic dreams of reviving the old Reich and rejected modernist ideas of the Western Enlightenment. Influences like Goethe and Schiller were largely confined to the princely court of Weimar, and Kant's philosophy was scarcely known beyond university circles. The formation of a public mind became possible only at the end of this period.

The "Wars of Liberation" against Napoleon brought about a new romantic and patriotic spirit, but this spirit failed to promote modern ideas of citizenship or liberal democratic principles.

The generally held view among historians was that German society at the end of the eighteenth century was too antiquated, fragmented, and damaged by the Thirty Years War for a public mind, generated by open intellectual debate, to develop. However, this assessment has been revised in recent years. The response of Germany's cultural elite to the French Revolution, though uneven, was generally positive and reached a wider public. In 1784, Ludwig Wekhrlin recognized the importance of public views generated by German literary circles. The American War of Independence had profoundly impressed these circles, promoting more than mere discontent with the domestic situation. A varied response emerged to the period 1789-1815, which can be generalized as follows:

The older generation of writers and philosophers, who adapted the ideas of the French Enlightenment to German conditions, generally supported the events west of the Rhine. Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, in his late sixties, welcomed the revolution as the century's most noble deed, though he regretted it originated in France, not Germany. His ode to La Rochefoucauld celebrated France as the liberator from despotism and harbinger of peace, consoling himself that Germans had participated in the American War of Independence and initiated the Reformation.



Christoph Martin Wieland was slightly more critical but addressed the French National Assembly as a world citizen, expressing admiration for their policies and new patriotism while urging caution in transforming the monarchy into a republic. The various uprisings in Geneva, Aachen, Liege, and Brabant were eagerly discussed throughout Germany, and Joachim Heinrich Campe's "Letters from Paris during the Revolution" were widely read. The constitutionalist A.L. Schlözer used the opportunity to criticize all forms of despotism, stating that the incidents in France were a strong lesson for all oppressors worldwide.

In retrospect, the struggle for supremacy between Austria and Prussia between 1792 and 1806 had a significant impact on subsequent events, leading up to the German revolutions of 1848. The rivalry, which began during the Seven Years War (1756-63), continued despite attempts at conciliation, such as the Treaty of Reichenbach (1790) and the Declaration of Pillnitz (1791). Both powers underestimated the threat from revolutionary France, focusing instead on seventeenth-century absolutist policies of territorial expansion.

Prussia saw the Revolution as an opportunity for territorial gains at France's expense, continuing its rivalry with Austria in the Netherlands. Both Austria and Prussia were more interested in gaining territory from Poland and the Ottoman Empire and forming a coalition with Russia than in events west of the Rhine. The first coalition war revealed their tensions: coalition armies were poorly coordinated, with Austrian and Prussian troops fighting separate battles. The rest of the Empire remained inactive or neutral until March 1793, when the Imperial Diet declared the hostilities an imperial war due to French successes. Sensing a French victory, Württemberg and the Palatinate declared their neutrality.

By autumn 1794, the second partition of Poland benefited Prussia and Russia at Austria's expense. Consolidating his gains, Frederick William II of Prussia sought peace with France and withdrew his troops from the imperial armies. Most German princes were compensated for territorial losses in the west by gains elsewhere, often at the expense of Poland, Italian states, or through the secularization of ecclesiastical territories. Austria, for instance, was compensated for losses west of the Rhine by a secret codicil to the Treaty of Basel (April 1795).

While Prussia enjoyed ten years of peace, Austria had to defend an extensive frontier from the Low Countries through the Rhine valley into Italy. Despite some early successes, outdated Austrian forces suffered major defeats, culminating in Austerlitz (December 1805). Prussia, led by incompetent and disunited political leadership, tried to counter French advances but failed. It did not benefit from its peace, failed to gain new allies, and even provoked war with Britain due to Hanover passing to Prussia by the Treaty of Schönbrunn. Napoleon's victories at Jena and Auerstädt sealed Prussia's fate.

## **Reforms in Prussia and Austria**

After the Treaty of Tilsit (1807), Prussia was significantly weakened, while Austria suffered relatively less after Austerlitz. Despite retaining some benefits from Joseph II's reforms, Austria faced French domination, high reparations, and significant territorial losses. These losses, however, were less critical to Austria's survival as they were mainly outside the Habsburg heartlands.

Both Prussia and Austria had indecisive, romantic, and reactionary monarchs, but their political approaches differed. Austria pursued neutrality and sometimes acted as a mediator between the Tsar and Napoleon, under the guidance of Prince Clemens von Metternich, who opposed national movements. Internal rivalries within the Habsburg court hindered clear reforms, maintaining a conservative approach and strengthening the nobility's position. Austria did establish a militia and some legal reforms in the Civil Code of 1811, but these were minor bureaucratic changes that didn't modernize the administration.

Wilhelm von Humboldt's education reforms promoted independence of mind and freedom of thought, contributing to this intellectual renewal. The new University of Berlin became a national institution for all Germans, fostering German patriotism. Humboldt's achievements, alongside the Stein-Hardenberg reforms, suggest that while many Prussians struggled economically, a powerful intellectual elite began to inspire a German patriotic conscience centered on Prussia, unlike the pre-revolutionary sentiments still prevalent in Austria.

## **The Wars of Liberation and the Restoration of the Old Order**

The struggle against Napoleonic domination played a crucial role in Germany's national awakening, despite historians often overemphasizing German nationalists' role. The rulers of the Confederation of the Rhine remained loyal to France even after Napoleon's Russian campaign. Austria, under Prince Metternich, kept her options open, undecided whether to support Russia against France. King Frederick William III of Prussia and his chancellor, Hardenberg, were similarly indecisive and inactive.

The uprising against Napoleon was driven by Prussian reformers like Stein, Scharnhorst, Clausewitz, and General Yorck von Wartenburg. By August 1812, Stein, serving Tsar Alexander, began organizing a German legion and raised a militia in Eastern Prussia, using his influence to secure Germany's military liberation.

## **Hungarian Reaction to the Napoleonic Wars**

Napoleon issued an announcement from the Palace of Schönbrunn in which he offered independence for Hungary and the freedom to choose a new ruler instead of having one from the Habsburg family. The French emperor was thinking about destroying and dividing the Habsburg Empire even though Talleyrand warned him that the balance of power requires it because of the growing influence of Russia in the region. The Hungarian nobles received the message, but instead of accepting it they decided to go to war against France and announced the so-called insurrection. This was an ancient element of the Hungarian feudal (legal) system in which if the country was in danger in return for tax exemption. Since the French troops were approaching the borders, it was time. Such forces along with the regular Hungarian and Austrian troops were placed under the command of Archduke John who intended to cross to the north bank of the Danube and move northwest through Bratislava (Pozsony) to unite with the main army commanded by his brother, Archduke Charles, Generalissimo of the Austrian armies. Napoleon ordered Eugène de Beauharnais, his stepson, to pursue and destroy John's army. The Franco-Italian troops caught up with John's forces in mid-June and forced him to give battle near Győr (Raab). The French forces not only outnumbered the troops of the Archduke but they were also better trained and equipped.

Both the Habsburgs and the Hungarian reform movement said later that the Hungarian noble troops were cowards on the battlefield. One of the greatest Hungarian poets, Sándor Petőfi, wrote even a poem about the "shameful decampment" of the Hungarian insurgents. However, even the French leaders acknowledged that all Hungarian troops fought bravely, but their poor and outdated equipment was not enough against the biggest and most modern army of the time. Petőfi and his friends fighting against the (otherwise clearly outdated) Hungarian feudal system found important allies in the Habsburg government which tried to shuffle off responsibility for the lost battle; thus, they both said that the Hungarian nobles lost the battle. However, this was not true at all; in fact, it was commander Archduke John who gave some wrong orders. Furthermore, thanks to the self-sacrificing Hungarian hussars, the Austrian and the Hungarian lines did not break up, and the troops could retreat in good order. The French victory prevented Archduke John to arrive on the battlefield of Wagram in time which, among other reasons, resulted in the catastrophic defeat of the Habsburg army. Wagram was followed by peace negotiations during which Napoleon himself visited Győr and spent one night there. Nevertheless, the Treaty of Vienna was signed in October, and the Habsburg Empire survived though it lost many territories including Croatia and Dalmatia, the former belonging to the Hungarian Holy Crown.

Ironically, The Napoleonic wars had brought a measure of prosperity to agriculture. When food prices were high during the Continental System (Napoleon's Embargo Policy, prohibiting and forcing European nations to export to United Kingdom) the big landowners enlarged their patrimony, breaking up virgin lands, enclosing commons, hiring wage labor, and introducing (whenever they knew how) more intensive methods of cultivation.

## **Congress of Vienna**

Congress of Vienna, assembly in 1814–15 that reorganized Europe after the Napoleonic Wars. It began in September 1814, five months after Napoleon I's first abdication and completed its "Final Act" in June 1815, shortly before the Waterloo campaign and the final defeat of Napoleon. The settlement was the most-comprehensive treaty that Europe had ever seen.

Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain, the four powers that were chiefly instrumental in the overthrow of Napoleon, had concluded a special alliance among themselves with the Treaty of Chaumont, on March 9, 1814, a month before Napoleon's first abdication. The subsequent treaties of peace with France, signed on May 30 not only by the "four" but also by Sweden and Portugal and on July 20 by Spain, stipulated that all former belligerents should send plenipotentiaries to a congress in Vienna. Nevertheless, the "four" still intended to reserve the real decision making for themselves.

## **Delegates**

Representatives began to arrive in Vienna toward the end of September 1814. All of Europe sent its most-important statesmen. **Klemens, prince von Metternich**, principal minister of Austria, represented his emperor, Francis II. Tsar Alexander I of Russia directed his own diplomacy. King Frederick William III of Prussia had Karl, Prinz von Hardenberg, as his principal minister. Great Britain was represented by its foreign minister, Viscount Castlereagh. When Castlereagh had to return to his parliamentary duties, the duke of Wellington replaced him, and Lord Clancarty was principal representative after the duke's departure. The restored Louis XVIII of France sent Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand. Spain, Portugal, and Sweden had only men of moderate ability to represent them. Many of the rulers of the minor states of Europe put in an appearance. With them came a host of courtiers, secretaries, and ladies to enjoy the magnificent social life of the Austrian court.

Assisting Metternich as host, Friedrich Gentz played a vital role in the management of protocol and in the secretarial organization of the congress. The social side of the congress was, in fact, one of the causes of the long and unexpected delay in producing a result, for Metternich often subordinated business to pleasure.



## Decisions

The major points of friction occurred over the disposition of Poland and Saxony, the conflicting claims of Sweden, Denmark, and Russia, and the adjustment of the borders of the German states. In general, Russia and Prussia were opposed by Austria, France, and England, which at one point (January 3, 1815) went so far as to conclude a secret treaty of defensive alliance. The major final agreements were as follows:

In return for acquiring Poland, Alexander gave back Galicia to Austria and gave Thorn and a region around it to Prussia;

Kraków was made a free town.

The rest of the Duchy of Warsaw was incorporated as a separate kingdom under the Russian emperor's sovereignty.

Prussia got two-fifths of Saxony and was compensated by extensive additions in Westphalia and on the left bank of the Rhine River.

It was Castlereagh who insisted on Prussian acceptance of the latter territory, with which it had been suggested the king of Saxony should be compensated. Castlereagh wanted Prussia to guard the territories

of the Rhine region against France and act as a buttress to the new Kingdom of the Netherlands, which comprised both the former United Provinces and Belgium.

Austria was compensated by Lombardy and Venice and got back most of Tirol. Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden on the whole did well. Hanover was also enlarged.

The outline of a constitution, a loose confederation, was drawn up for Germany—a triumph for Metternich.

Denmark lost Norway to Sweden but got Lauenburg, while Swedish Pomerania went to Prussia. Switzerland was given a new constitution.

In Italy, Piedmont absorbed Genoa; Tuscany and Modena went to an Austrian archduke; and the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza was given to Marie-Louise, consort of the deposed Napoleon. The Papal States were restored to the pope, and Naples went to the Sicilian Bourbons.

Valuable articles were agreed to on the free navigation of international rivers and diplomatic precedence. Castlereagh's great efforts for the abolition of the slave trade were rewarded only by a pious declaration.

The Final Act of the Congress of Vienna comprised all the agreements in one great instrument. It was signed on June 9, 1815, by the "eight" (except Spain, which refused as a protest against the Italian settlement). All the other powers subsequently acceded to it. As a result, the political boundaries laid down by the Congress of Vienna lasted, except for one or two changes, for more than 40 years. The statesmen had successfully worked out the principle of a balance of power. However, the idea of nationality had been almost entirely ignored—necessarily so because it was not yet ready for expression. Territories had been bartered about without much reference to the wishes of their inhabitants. It was customary for historians to condemn the statesmen of Vienna. It was later realized how difficult their task was, as was the fact that they secured for Europe a period of peace, which was its cardinal need. The statesmen failed, however, to give to international relations any organ by which their work could be adapted to the new forces of the 19th century, and it was ultimately doomed to destruction.

#### — Status Quo:

Although there are various definitions for status quo; It is generally agreed that it is a "stereotyped", "unquestioned", "bigoted" way of thinking. This concept generally appears as a negative term in the political environment. This adjective is attributed to the people to whom the word status quo is attributed; criticism is intended

For instance, Prince Metternich, the autocrat of Austrian politics in the period closing the Napoleonic wars, declared himself to be "the man of the status quo." "Innovation he abhorred, immobility he glorified." —

The Congress of Vienna, pre-revolutionary in nature and dominated by crowned heads and their personal political advisers, favored reactionary forces. The Congress was in the final stages of absolutism, characterized by intricate intrigues and the manner in which whole territories and peoples changed 'ownership.' The decisions made at Vienna reflected the spirit of eighteenth-century absolutism: territories

were divided among the victorious nations without regard for linguistic and cultural ties. Major players like France and Britain sought to preserve a balance of power to further their imperial interests, ignoring the modernizing tendencies fostered by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Metternich's declared aim was to prop up 'rotten buildings', considering any new departure from time-honoured practice as revolutionary.

The more progressive statesmen and activists such as Stein and Humboldt found themselves little more than bystanders. The Romantic historian and scholar Joseph Görres criticized the emerging political order as a deplorable, misshapen, unrepresentative monstrosity, created by expediency rather than design. Two aspects, in particular, were actively discouraged:

**The Voice of the People:** The concept of a people's army (Bürgerwehr) captured the popular imagination as a Prussian equivalent to the revolutionary levée en masse. Despite its limited military impact and its inferiority compared to its French counterpart, it was perceived as a significant popular uprising in German history, well-documented in popular literature. The fame of the Lützow Free Corps endured in student associations and militias, which played a crucial role during the 1848 revolutions. However, these popular aspirations were bitterly disappointed by the Congress of Vienna's settlement. Although the Bundesakte (1815) established a confederation of German states, Article Thirteen, which mandated that every federal state introduce a constitution based on corporate principles, was ignored by Austria and Prussia, leading to significant discontent before 1848.

**The Patriotic and National Issue:** The divisions of Italy and Poland were seen as outdated, reflecting the Habsburg Empire's multinational nature, which no longer matched the new landscape and failed to meet the aspirations of those who had fought for Germany's liberation from Napoleon. The patriotic agenda was undermined at the Congress: von Stein's plan for a 'Third Germany' was rejected. Instead, Metternich adapted Hardenberg's Forty-One Articles, removing the proposal for an independent court of law and diluting national representation at Frankfurt.

## **Metternich System**

The Metternich system, named after Austrian Chancellor Metternich, was a framework established by Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to maintain the status quo in Europe. Metternich advocated for preserving the status quo through military force, believing nationalist movements should be ruthlessly suppressed and nation-states dissolved. The system relied on the cooperation of Austria and Russia in the Balkans, Prussia balancing France and Russia, and preventing any single country from dominating Continental Europe.

The first reactions to the Metternich system were the revolutions of 1830 and 1848.

The 1830 Revolutions strengthened liberalism in Europe, leading to the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in France and the expansion of rights and freedoms. The revolution spread across Europe, resulting in Belgium's separation from the Netherlands and declaration of independence, and in 1905, Sweden and Norway becoming two separate kingdoms.

The 1848 Revolutions marked the collapse of the Metternich system.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, industrial developments led to the emergence of the working class. Following harsh measures by the King of France, an uprising in Paris forced the King to leave the country, and the Republic was declared in France. These revolutionary movements significantly impacted Austria, with Hungarians, Czechs, Croats, and Italians rebelling for freedom. In England and Switzerland, liberals and democrats came to power.

## **Holy Alliance**

At Metternich's behest, the Holy Alliance between Russia, Austria, and Prussia was formed, declaring:

"In accordance with Holy Scripture which commands all men to consider themselves brothers, the three monarchs will remain united through the bonds of a true and indissoluble brotherhood, viewing each other as compatriots and considering themselves as fathers vis-a-vis their subjects and armies, in order to protect religion, peace, and justice."

This statement mocked the Rights of Man, which had proclaimed the equality and freedom of all men a quarter of a century earlier.

The Alliance is usually associated with the later Quadruple and Quintuple Alliances, which included the United Kingdom and (from 1818) France with the aim of upholding the European peace settlement and balance of power in the Concert of Europe concluded at the Congress of Vienna. On 29 September 1818, Alexander, Emperor Francis I of Austria and King Frederick William III of Prussia met with the Duke of Wellington, Viscount Castlereagh and the Duc de Richelieu at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle to demand stern measures against university "demagogues", which would be realized in the Carlsbad Decrees of the following year. At the Congress of Troppau in 1820 and the succeeding Congress of Laibach in 1821, Metternich tried to align his allies in the suppression of the **Carbonari** revolt against King Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies. The Quintuple Alliance met for the last time at the Congress of Verona in 1822 to advise against the Greek Revolution and to resolve the French invasion of Spain to Suppress the Spanish Revolutionaries. Britain, in this instance showed their support for the Spanish cause for revolt against the and established their stance of not interfering with any revolts in Europe, practically withdrawing from the alliance.

The last meetings had revealed the rising antagonism between Britain and France, especially on Italian unification, the right to self-determination, and the Eastern Question. The Alliance is conventionally taken to have become defunct with Tsar Alexander's death in 1825. France ultimately went her separate way following the July Revolution of 1830, leaving the core of Austria, Prussia, and Russia as a Central-Eastern European block which once again congregated to suppress the Revolutions of 1848. The Austro-Russian alliance finally broke up in the Crimean War. Though Russia had helped to suppress the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, Austria did not take any action to support her ally, declared herself neutral, and even occupied the Danubian Principalities upon the Russian retreat in 1854.



## **1830 Revolutions**

The Revolutions of 1830 were a revolutionary wave in Europe which took place in 1830. It included two "romantic nationalist" revolutions, the Belgian Revolution in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands and the July Revolution in France along with rebellions in Congress Poland, Italian states, Portugal and Switzerland. It is considered as the antecedent wave of revolutions to the notorious Spring of Nations.

### **France**

The French July Revolution was the spark that ignited the powderkeg of 1830 and consequently strongly influenced political thinking of the Intelligentsia, the reactionaries and the emerging socialists. The intellectual and political climate in Germany changed after the French July Revolution. Independent writers, academics, and some university professors gained prominence, shifting from Romantic nostalgia to direct political agitation. The new literature took on a more specific tone:

"Our faith is at one with the faith of mankind; fine talk and sweet dreams are over. ... I wanted to write about literature and have begun with politics. Of course! It is the defining mark of modern literature that it is the child of politics, or, in plain German, the child of the French July Revolution."

The previous emphasis on beauty and truth over political reality faced increasing skepticism, as did Hegel's idea of the unity of reason and reality. This shift from imaginative subjectivity to material objectivity became a significant topic in philosophy and literature. The new generation, no longer captivated by the beautiful, heroic, and ingenious, focused instead on the ugly, unwashed, and exploited proletariat, often anticipating the growing power of the working classes. Ferdinand Freiligrath foresaw the new potential of the fourth estate:

We are the power! Our hammers will rejuvenate this old and rotten thing, the state,  
We who till now, by God's wrath, are the proletariat!

### **Poland, November Uprising**

The November Uprising was born on the wave of revolutionary aspirations that took over most of Europe. In France, Belgium, Germany and Italy it was known that Poles, standing up to tsarism, thwarted the armed Russian intervention, and thus they strengthened the chances of liberation movements in the West. Revolutionary elements were sympathetic to Poles and enthusiastic about their victories. The French left attacked the government for its indifference to Poland and stormy demonstrations taken for this reason shook the streets of Paris several times. Many French and Germans came to volunteer to fight in the Polish ranks. The November Uprising had a stimulating effect on Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks, as a model of active defense of nationality. And contributions reached Poland from these countries, volunteers. The example of Poles accelerated the crystallization of new, more active and aware political groups and camps. In Russia itself, 1831 brought a wave of social riots. Conspiracy circles, suppressed after the Decembrist uprising, were also revived here and there. 11 About the November Uprising Student youth in Moscow and St. Petersburg universally sympathized with the Poles. One of the student groups in Moscow had very few realistic plans for revolution in agreement with the Poles, but it soon fell apart, it seems the

effect of provocation. The prevalence of pro-Polish sentiments in progressive circles of Europe testified eloquently to the importance of the Polish issue in the international context of that time revolutionary movement.

Cabinets of European powers reacted completely differently to the November Uprising. For the French government and England, this outbreak was a convenient phenomenon because it allowed them to regulate matters Western Europe without regard to Tsarist Russia. That way, thanks A neutral Belgian state was established for the Polish uprising. Powers Western powers, however, had no intention of helping the Poles. If the government of King Louis Phillip expressed his "sympathy" for Poland several times, he did it exclusively for the sake of public opinion.

Czartoryski managed the diplomacy of the November Uprising as president of the government. The agents he sent to all capitals emphasized the legal and conservative nature of the uprising and sought intervention or mediation in the Polish case. However, in Paris and London they were met with indifference from offices. The Prussian government, formally neutral, actively supported Russia, concentrating a lot of troops on the border, not allowing weapons and volunteers to enter Poland.

Austria took a stronger stance rather than being ambiguous. Wishing that the uprising would fail, she did not fight it openly. The army was busy suppressing the Italian Revolution, therefore fearing for its fate Galicia avoided provoking Poles. Czartoryski deluded himself that he was offering the Polish crown to one of the Habsburgs to gain Austrian help. His efforts in Vienna were unsuccessful, and as the uprising was drawing close to collapse, the attitude of Austrians towards him also became more severe. People were removed from leftist circles which had ideas of shifting the uprising to Galicia in order to not trigger the anger of the Habsburgs.

Defeated Polish insurgents were forced to seek asylum in Europe, many crossed the border to Austria, where they were disarmed and concentrated in many castles, mostly in Transylvania. However, through the Tsarist repercussions, Austria honored their alliance with Russia and convinced many of the low-ranking soldiers to return back to the Polish Kingdom, with the Russian guarantee of a mass amnesty. Leaders of the rebellion were exempt from this amnesty, so they tried to convince their compatriots to not heed to the demands of the Russian regime for return. This period of Polish history is referred to as the Great Emigration. Thousands of Poles fled to the West, where the Revolutionary wave of 1830 was still continuing. They found themselves celebrated as heroes of the revolutionary cause and continued from abroad to try to ignite another Polish rebellion, meddling in the Austrian and Prussian Partitions.

## **Hungary: Road to Reform and Revolt**

The counties, governed by local oligarchies, often diverged from the Crown and aristocracy's interests. They claimed virtual sovereignty, asserting their right to accept or reject royal ordinances, and frequently boycotted royal edicts. The main reason Emperor-King Francis called the national Diet in 1825 was that more than one county had defied his decrees on taxes and recruits.

Local preparations for the Diet of 1825, the first since 1811-12, created considerable excitement. Zemplén county, for example, instructed its deputies to press for the punishment of Hungarians involved in the previous absolutist regime, the abolition of the discriminatory tariff system separating Hungary from the rest of the Monarchy, and the promotion of the Hungarian language in public affairs. The demand for the Hungarian language symbolized the unfolding new age of liberalism and nationalism.

The Diet, which sat until 1827, had meager results. The king promised to call the Diet every three years and let the Hungarians vote on taxes and recruits, but there was no guarantee he would keep these promises.

Francis I, Metternich, and their representatives at the Pressburg Diet played a shrewd game by threatening to address the plight of the serfs whenever the Hungarians raised their grievances. They indicated a willingness to lighten the peasantry's feudal burdens by administrative fiat, which alarmed the nobles and caused them to moderate their polemics, reverting to grand but empty oratory. However, there were a few minor breakthroughs. The Diet accepted the principle of taxing any nobleman living on peasant tenure and agreed to conduct a legal census of the taxable population. Additionally, a post-diet commission was established to discuss reforms proposed by the Diet of 1790-91, with results to be debated by county assemblies, ensuring lively county politics in the following years.

The years 1830-31 were eventful, marked by the French revolution, an anti-Russian uprising in Poland, and a cholera epidemic in northeastern Hungary. The Polish uprising, which began in November 1830, garnered widespread Hungarian sympathy. Polish revolutionary nobles were similar to their Hungarian counterparts, and their struggle against Russian overlords mirrored Hungary's struggle against Austrian rule. The Hungarian liberals, particularly the young, were enthusiastic about the Polish cause, while the Vienna government and Hungarian conservatives were increasingly worried. After the Polish defeat in 1831, many revolutionaries fled to Hungary and were hidden on the estates of the provincial nobility. When authorities began arresting and extraditing the Poles, Kossuth was among the most vehement protesters. The Polish issue remained significant in Hungary for many decades, as it did in France under Louis Philippe. In 1848, European revolutionaries even considered war to free Poland, the "Martyr of Europe."

Cholera reached Hungary in 1831 from the north, originating in India and spread by Russian armies fighting the Poles. Habsburg authorities combated the disease by closing the frontier (which also kept out Polish refugees), quarantining affected regions, and distributing bismuth and chloride of lime. The consequences were dire. Ruthene, Slovak, Romanian, and Magyar peasants in northeastern Hungary, threatened by disease and prevented from migrating south to help with the harvest, faced starvation. They

suspected landowners of poisoning them to convert land into sheep pasture. As a result, peasants hunted down and killed landowners, priests, county officials, and Jews, leading to widespread violence.

Zemplén county, bordering Poland, was heavily affected. Instead of distributing food and promoting cleanliness, county officials ordered blockades of entire districts. However, the cholera epidemic broke through quarantine lines and reached the county seat.

### **Introducing, Lajos Kossuth**

Lajos Kossuth, later to become the premier of the revolting Hungary, became one of the commissioners dealing with the cholera plague in Zemplén county. While older officials fled, Kossuth and other young men sheltered noble refugees and set up hospitals. When the city proletariat revolted, they formed a militia to maintain order, using persuasion rather than violence. By the end of 1831, the epidemic had subsided, and the peasant revolt was suppressed by Imperial-Royal troops. Noble courts in Zemplén and elsewhere ordered the execution of over a hundred rebels, and more would have been executed if Metternich had not intervened. The memory of the 1831 peasant revolt haunted the nobility, prompting some to consider reforms and others to advocate further repression.

Kossuth's reputation was enhanced by his handling of the crisis, and he became a respected and well-paid official, serving as a legal adviser to some of the county's wealthiest landlords. However, his enemies mounted an effective campaign against him, ruining his local standing but paradoxically propelling him into national politics and triggering his career as a statesman.

In December 1832, Kossuth arrived in Pressburg (Bratislava) as an 'ablegatus absentium', a non-voting representative in the Lower House of the Diet. Despite his limited official role, he mingled with the realm's grandees and politicians. At this time, Kossuth was similar to many young noblemen aspiring to a political career. He was a liberal, spoke for press freedom, and criticized the archaic feudal system, like many of his peers. What set him apart was his determination and discipline; he refrained from gambling, drinking, and dueling.

Kossuth's personal life remained largely private. Although rumors linked him to a beautiful countess in Zemplén, he later married a penniless, hardworking, and dedicated woman. His intimate life remained a mystery, with politics being his primary focus.

## **At the Diet**

### **Introducing, István Széchenyi**

The Diet session that began in December 1832, one of the so-called Reform Diets, lasted four years and proved important. The participants were heavily influenced by recent events, including the French and Polish revolutions, the cholera epidemic, and the peasant revolt in northeastern Hungary. However, the appearance of two books, "Credit" (Hitel) and "Light" (Világ), written by Count Istvan Széchenyi in 1830 and 1831 respectively, caused the most agitation among the estates.

Count Istvan Széchenyi, a relatively unknown aristocrat at the time, had a significant impact on Hungary's economic and cultural development. Despite recurring depressions and his eventual suicide in 1860, Széchenyi was a patient planner and organizer. His active role in improving Hungarian conditions began in 1825 when he donated a year's income from his estates (around 60,000 gulden) to establish the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This gesture inspired other aristocrats to follow suit, and soon the Academy was inaugurated.

Following this, Széchenyi founded several other important institutions: the National Casino (a debating and reading club for aristocrats), Hungary's first horse breeding association, a steamship company for Lake Balaton, the first rolling mill, and the first commercial bank. He also assisted in planning Hungary's first shipyard, promoting silkworm farming, improving wine production, regulating the Tisza River and the Lower Danube cataracts, and constructing the first permanent bridge between Buda and Pest, known as the Széchenyi or Chain Bridge. This bridge, built by an Englishman, was used by the Austrian army in the winter of 1848/49 to pursue Hungarian revolutionaries and served until 1945 when it was destroyed by the Germans.

Széchenyi was the first magnate to address the Diet in Hungarian, mainly because his Latin was poor. His oppositionary tone and use of the Hungarian language caused suspicion in Vienna, and Emperor-King Francis ensured he would not be promoted. Széchenyi resigned his military commission and devoted himself to public life. Distrusted by both the central administration and the Hungarian lesser nobility, he was admired but considered too aristocratic and too moderate in his patriotism.

Unlike his contemporaries, Széchenyi insisted on tying Hungary's modernization to industrialized Austria and refused to treat non-Magyar nationalities as inferior. He believed in assimilating the Slavs and Romanians into Magyardom through the attraction of a better life rather than through forceful laws.

It was these convictions that made his inevitable clash with Kossuth and other liberal nationalists. Széchenyi's book, *Credit*, provided a detailed analysis of Hungary's problems and proposed reforms. He argued that agriculture's backwardness was not due to ill fate or Austria's influence but rather to outdated methods and the reliance on unpaid serf labor. He advocated for the introduction of hired labor, which would require the creation of credit. However, credit could not be made available as long as laws on entail prevented the free sale of land. In *Credit* and his subsequent works, Széchenyi opposed all aspects of feudalism, including the common use of grazing lands and woods, the indivisibility of many hereditary properties, the immunity of nobles from taxation, the lack of civil rights for the majority of the population, and their inequality before the law. He also criticized the lack of peasants' rights to free land

ownership and the restrictive guild and pricing system. Széchenyi demonstrated that trade's backwardness was due to domestic social and economic issues, not discriminatory Austrian tariff laws.

In Light, Széchenyi responded to a fellow aristocrat's claim that his proposed reforms would ruin heavily indebted large landowners. He argued that serfdom was the main obstacle to development. His most progressive work, *Stadium*, published abroad and smuggled into Hungary in 1833, outlined twelve clearly defined articles for reform. Széchenyi's vision of reform was one led by the central government and the Hungarian aristocracy, progressing step by step on solid grounds.

The Reform Diet of 1832-36 was influenced more by poet Ferenc Kolcsey and Transylvanian landowner Baron Miklos Wesselényi than by Széchenyi. Both were more radical than Széchenyi. Imbued with the sense of a mortal Slavic and Romanian threat to the isolated Magyars—a constant theme in Hungarian politics—they aimed to create a modern, powerful nation by incorporating the lower classes into the body politic. Kolcsey wrote in his diary that the constitution must include the people, making it relevant to ten million citizens, not just seven hundred thousand privileged individuals. This was a race against time, as Hungary needed to create a dynamic, enlarged nation to avoid downfall. However, this race was dangerous; Hungarian liberal nobles feared that the government would direct the **rising expectations of the lower classes against the nobility**. This seemed to happen at the beginning of the Diet of 1832 when deputies proposed a trade bill, but the government prioritized peasant legislation. Whether the government's intentions were serious or not, the liberal nobles risked being exposed as enemies of the peasants. **Wesselényi's persuasive oratory convinced the opposition to accept the government's agenda, leading to four years of intense debate.** The Lower House initiated the reform of peasant dues and rights, but these initiatives were often blocked by the Upper House or the king. Conversely, the Lower House regularly voted down proposals from the Upper House. Despite this, some significant changes occurred. Serfs were relieved of some minor burdens, the enclosure of common pasture was facilitated, the nobility assumed the costs of the Diet, and a law was passed requiring everyone, including nobles, to pay tolls on the new permanent bridge connecting Buda and Pest. Additionally, the state was authorized to expropriate land needed for railroad construction. These laws infringed on noble privilege and feudal property, but the most significant law concerned language. Magyar was to be the **exclusive or primary language** in legislation, courts, and the church, pushing Hungary toward **conflict with its nationalities**.

The question of whether to publicize the Diet's debates was a major issue. In a country without a free press but with a free assembly, immediate publication of session minutes was crucial. However, many deputies and the government feared this move. Public meetings of the two chambers were already problematic, with spectators cheering liberals and jeering conservatives. Despite censorship and the need for royal authorization to set up a printing press, young men in Pressburg openly opposed the king's allies and paraded in honor of his opponents.

Upon arrival at the Diet, Kossuth spoke for press freedom at an unofficial gathering of deputies, an unheard-of move for an "absentees' deputy" and a nobody. Met with silence, Kossuth then began writing daily summaries of Lower House meetings, distributing them widely. By 1833, seventy handwritten copies of Kossuth's Parliamentary Reports were circulated throughout Hungary, increasing to one hundred, with the government among the subscribers. Though private correspondence was uncensored,

Kossuth's mailing campaign contradicted press laws. His reports, biased toward liberal speeches, were printed on a secret lithographic press until authorities confiscated it in October 1833, compensating Kossuth for his loss. The government's attempt to start its own reporting failed, and Kossuth maintained his reporting monopoly.

In his early thirties, Kossuth became nationally known for his energy and dedication. He worked tirelessly, spending five to six hours in the chamber and many more hours on follow-up work, including recruiting scribes, dictating, correcting spelling errors, and attending private parties to gather news. Unlike other politicians who could retire to their estates, Kossuth had no such luxury, contributing to his success in 1848. Over four years, he sent out 334 reports, significantly impacting the provincial nobility. Living modestly, he supported his family and, when the Diet ended in 1836, Kossuth was well-versed in Hungarian politics and ready to seek new opportunities.

Following the Pressburg episode, Kossuth moved to Pest and quickly launched a new manuscript journal titled **Municipal Reports** (Torvényhatóságok Tudósítványok), which provided biweekly accounts of the activities of the noble counties. The journal charged high subscription fees to its 120 subscribers, which included county assemblies, reading clubs, and provincial notables, including Széchenyi, who had recently vetoed Kossuth's admission to the National Casino.

The journal was an excellent idea because county politics were thriving. The Reports allowed assemblies to coordinate their activities. Liberal friends from various regions sent reports to Kossuth, who carefully sifted, edited, and distributed the information. Distribution was challenging because the royal mail refused to forward Kossuth's correspondence, so every copy had to be sent through traveling friends. The Municipal Reports were more militant than the Parliamentary Reports, denigrating conservatives, glorifying patriots, and unmasking absolutism and corruption. However, Kossuth faced more resistance from the authorities this time. The twenty-fourth issue was confiscated, and in the spring of 1837, **Kossuth was arrested.**

## **A Change in Court of Vienna**

*In the two years preceding Kossuth's arrest, significant changes occurred in Vienna's Hungarian policy.* Emperor-King Francis had died in 1835, and his place was taken by his eldest son, the epileptic and retarded Ferdinand. To maintain effective government, a **State Conference** was established, presided over by **Archduke Louis** and composed of **Archduke Francis Charles**, Metternich, and Count Franz Anton Kolowrat. Real power was exercised by Metternich and Kolowrat, who disliked each other and had conflicting views on Hungary. Metternich tried to win over the Hungarian nobles, while Kolowrat despised them and preferred the Slavs. Additionally, the ambitious and ruthless Bavarian Princess Sophie, mother of the future Emperor Francis Joseph, wielded significant influence, particularly regarding Hungarian matters.

The new State Conference adopted a harsh Hungarian policy. Following the dissolution of the Diet in 1836, four young radical jurists in Pressburg were arrested and tried for treason, leading to widespread

protest directed by Kossuth through his Municipal Reports. Kossuth assumed the unofficial legal representation of the principal defendant, Laszlo Lovassy, and wrote widely circulated petitions for justice. Despite the protests, in March 1837, Lovassy was sentenced to ten years in prison under harsh conditions, leading to his insanity. Other moderate measures included replacing the Hungarian chancellor with an ultraconservative aristocrat and charging opposition leader Baron Wesselényi with sedition and treason, leading to a three-year prison sentence, although he served only a short term due to his blindness.

In May 1837, Kossuth was arrested in Buda and charged with disloyalty and sedition. Despite being initially held in secret confinement, conditions eventually eased, and Kossuth was allowed to see his mother, write and receive letters, smoke, read his indictment, and obtain books. During his imprisonment, Kossuth improved his English by studying the Bible and Shakespeare. He conducted his defense with such skill that it took two years before he was sentenced to a four-year term. However, in May 1840, he was released after three years due to a change in government policy, which aimed to reconcile with the Hungarian nobility.

**Kossuth's release coincided with a new Diet session in 1839.** The opposition, led by **Ferenc Deak**, aimed to address the nation's grievances, particularly political imprisonments, before discussing government proposals. Despite the clash, some liberal-national laws were passed. Deak, alongside Széchenyi and Kossuth, became a leading figure in Hungarian politics. Unlike the passionate Széchenyi and the calculating Kossuth, Deak was unassuming, patient, and pragmatic, focusing on justice and judicial reform. He played a crucial role in the release of political prisoners in 1840 and the passage of laws that weakened the feudal structure and promoted the Hungarian language in official matters.

In January 1841, Kossuth received an offer from a Pest printer to start a newspaper, Pesti Hirlap (Pest News). Supported by Metternich, Kossuth used the newspaper to advocate for his increasingly radical politics. By 1844, Pesti Hirlap had become a powerful instrument of Kossuth's influence, with a circulation surpassing five thousand, significantly impacting Hungarian politics and pushing the country closer to revolution.

## **A Retrospective to the National and Linguistic Issue**

Hungarian nationalism has deep roots, tracing back to the medieval Hungarian state. As early as the fourteenth century, Hungarians considered themselves a *bastion of Christianity*, similar to many other European nations. This nationalism was primarily confined to the **political nation**, i.e., the nobility. However, significant political events sometimes united different classes in the pursuit of national goals, such as during the fifteenth-century struggle against the Turks, the rise of Protestantism in the sixteenth century, and uprisings against Habsburg absolutism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

By the eighteenth century, patriotism among the aristocrats declined due to Habsburg triumphs and Enlightenment influences, leading them to adopt German and French cultural practices, often forgetting their native Hungarian language. The lesser nobility, however, continued to use Latin for official and personal communication.



The dominance of Latin as the official language was solidified in the eighteenth century, partly due to the **Counter-Reformation efforts by the Jesuits**. This linguistic choice made Hungary more tolerant towards its linguistic minorities but also hindered modernization. The linguistic crisis emerged when Joseph II introduced a language ordinance in 1784, mandating German as the official language. This move threatened Hungary's autonomy and the nobility's dominance, leading to national resistance that ultimately derailed many of Joseph's reforms.

Hungarian national consciousness revived under the influence of German Romanticism and evolved from a cultural and linguistic revival into a political and social reform movement. The historian Johann Gottfried Herder's predictions about the disappearance of the Magyar language amidst Slavic expansion fueled fears, leading Hungarian leaders to push for the spread of Magyar culture by law. Kossuth, saw the need for Hungary to expand and develop. He advocated for unification with Transylvania and the establishment of Hungarian as the official language in public administration. He was particularly adamant about *assimilating minority cultures into the Magyar identity*, except for Croatia, which had its distinct history and administration under the Crown of Saint Stephen.

Kossuth's nationalism, while not unique, was marked by its fervor and urgency. He proposed that Magyar should become the language of all public affairs in Hungary and criticized the use of minority languages only in private life. His views on the Slovaks were particularly stringent, rejecting their claims to cultural autonomy, while he saw **the Germans and Romanians** as potential allies against the Slavs.

By 1844, Kossuth's aggressive campaigns, including calls for boycotting Austrian goods, led to his removal from Pesti Hirlap by Metternich. After resigning in frustration, Kossuth met with Metternich in Vienna but turned down an offer to moderate his stance. Without a job or money, Kossuth continued his nationalist activities by founding a national industrial and trade association.

## **A National Economy?**

When still the editor of Pesti Hirlap, Kossuth began founding industrial and trade associations. After his ouster from the newspaper in 1844, he elaborated on his political and economic theories at association banquets and in a small trade journal. His ideas were neither original nor consistent, as he quickly shifted from advocating free trade to promoting economic autarky and defensive tariffs. Despite their impracticality, his schemes mirrored the optimism and economic ignorance of the lesser nobility. However, Kossuth succeeded in popularizing the industrial revolution, gathering support from both nobles and commoners and promoting egalitarianism by uniting members of various estates for a common goal.

Hungary's economy was backward compared to Western standards and had a poor reputation abroad. Attempts to introduce modern agricultural techniques and industrial practices often met with limited success. When Kossuth sent friends to London to inspect new machines or to Paris to invite French entrepreneurs to Hungary, the results were disheartening. French opinions compared Hungary to the Kalmuks, indicating a severe underestimation of Hungarian economic potential.

The Napoleonic wars had initially brought prosperity to agriculture. High food prices during the Continental System encouraged big landowners to expand their properties, enclose commons, hire wage labor, and introduce more intensive cultivation methods. However, the deflationary period following the wars left many estates deeply in debt. Large landowners then turned to raising sheep for wool, which brought new wealth to some aristocrats but also deprived many peasants of their livelihoods. The fluctuating fortunes of agricultural exports illustrated this instability: wheat exports dropped below 100,000 tons by 1827 but rose to 250,000 tons by 1845, while wool exports increased from 10,000 tons to 25,000 tons over the same period.

The bene possessionati, the wealthiest segment of the lesser nobility, generally fared better than the titled nobility. They managed their own properties, drew considerable salaries from the counties they administered, and produced for the growing needs of Hungarian cities rather than for unstable foreign markets. The prosperity of the Napoleonic years also affected petty nobles, who dressed fashionably, bought furniture, and sent their sons to school. However, many could not withstand the subsequent economic downturn and returned to a near-peasant lifestyle.

The condition of the peasantry varied widely. Some travelogues depicted near-starvation while others showed relative wealth and satisfaction. Rich peasants were often seen as hoarding flour and lard, while cotters and day laborers were described as subsisting on coarse rye bread or even tree bark and roots. The mountain peasants, mostly Slovaks, Ruthenes, and Romanians, were portrayed as particularly impoverished, living in hovels or holes in the ground. Despite their harsh conditions, some Slovaks were described as contented and well-fed, while others were rebellious and downtrodden.

Landowners increasingly imposed servile burdens on the peasants and sought to acquire more demesne land. The state's appetite for taxes remained undiminished. Although it's difficult to prove a general decline in peasant conditions during this period, there was clear dissatisfaction with the demands of the landlords, patrimonial jurisdiction, and the lack of landownership. While revolts were rare, refusal to perform labor services was common, as was general sloth and thievery.

Urbanization and industrialization were progressing, though slowly. By 1840, Pest had 64,000 inhabitants, which grew to over 100,000 by 1848. The number of skilled workers increased from 63,000 in 1828 to 150,000 by 1848. New industries emerged, including steam-powered paper mills, flour mills, leather tanneries, sugar refineries, and factories producing machine tools and textiles. However, Hungary still lagged significantly behind Austria in industrial development.

The financing of industry came mostly from Western capitalists, with Hungarian aristocrats also contributing. The Jewish population in Hungary grew rapidly, with many Jews becoming successful entrepreneurs and contributing significantly to economic development. By 1848, the Jewish population had increased to 250,000, forming about 2% of the total population. Jewish skills were in high demand, especially in Pest, where 1,500 Jewish artisans practiced their trades, often without authorization.

The credit law of 1840 increased the amount of capital available to entrepreneurs, leading to the establishment of savings banks and the creation of large financial institutions like the Pest Hungarian

Trade Bank. The president of the Trade Bank was a Hungarian aristocrat, while its general manager was the converted Jew Moric Ullman, a division of labor that foreshadowed future practices. By 1847/48, trade bank deposits had grown from 670,000 gulden to almost 5 million.

The arrival of the railroad in Hungary, funded by the Vienna Rothschilds and other financiers, marked a significant step toward modernization. By 1848, steam-powered railroads connected Pest with central Hungary. Count Széchenyi's patient efforts had initially driven Hungary's modernization, but Kossuth's popularization of industrial growth played a crucial role.

Kossuth's initial enterprise, a Hungarian trade association, and his subsequent Trade Defense League aimed to promote Hungarian industry and protect it from foreign competition. However, these efforts were often impractical and overambitious. Kossuth's protectionist campaign, inspired by the German economist Friedrich List, ultimately failed due to Hungary's dependence on Western assistance.

Despite these setbacks, Kossuth remained undeterred and continued to pursue political and economic reforms. He launched the Association for the Creation of Industry, aiming to build a railroad connecting Buda-Pest with Hungary's Adriatic coast, but the necessary funds were not available. The collapse of his trade association and defense league marked a temporary setback, but Kossuth's unwavering dedication to his vision for Hungary's future continued to inspire his supporters.

In 1846, Kossuth returned to politics, becoming one of the most popular leaders in the liberal camp. His efforts laid the groundwork for significant changes in Hungary's political and economic landscape, despite the many challenges and obstacles he faced.

### **Kossuth as the Head of Opposition**

By 1846, Metternich had renewed his counterattack in Hungary. Following the failure of his policies of repression and leniency, the chancellor now experimented with methods that, if carried to completion, would have amounted to a revolution from above. Metternich knew well what was wrong with Hungary: an increasingly aggressive liberal opposition, the resistance of the counties that made a mockery of royal legislation, and oppressed peasants and national minorities who were less and less willing to bear the oppression. Here was an opportunity for forceful action! At Metternich's instigation, Count Emil Dessewffy launched a Conservative Party in November 1846. Now, finally, there were a number of young, rich, and educated aristocrats ready to save Hungary for the Throne and for themselves. The Conservatives' social and economic program hardly lagged behind Kossuth's. And, unlike Kossuth, they were willing to take notice of the existence of national minorities. No wonder that Széchenyi joined the party! Founding a political movement in such a traditionalist place as the Habsburg Monarchy created a dangerous precedent, but, at least for once, the government was ahead of the opposition. There was an even more significant development: Széchenyi and a number of other independent politicians decided to enter the internal administration of Hungary, thus creating the country's first unofficial cabinet.

That was not all. Ever since 1845 the government had experimented with the system of "administrators" aimed at recapturing the recalcitrant counties. These functionaries were meant to replace or to assist the

many lord-lieutenants who had proved unable or unwilling to represent Vienna's interests. The administrators were paid the royal sum of 6,000 gulden yearly and, even though the opposition howled at this violation of the constitution, the undertaking brought results. Local resistance was broken by cajolery and bribes or, if necessary, by the force of arms. The administrators speeded up the handling of affairs and introduced many useful reforms.

### **Introducing, Apponyi**

In Vienna itself direct power over Hungary was handed over to the vice-chancellor of the Hungarian chancellery, Count Gyorgy Apponyi, a ruthless and talented politician. In November 1847 Apponyi was appointed chief chancellor of Hungary. To frighten the Hungarians, Apponyi openly flirted with the Croatian nationalists. At the same time he reinforced the police intelligence service in Hungary, the reports of which showed that a showdown with the opposition had become inevitable.

The question was whether Metternich would dare discard the constitution and, in so doing, win the dispossessed masses over to the Austrian cause. That the masses were not necessarily behind the liberal nobility was shown by the Galician events of February 1846. In that month a violent national revolt had been planned in all parts of partitioned Poland. The uprisings in Prussian and Russian Poland came to nothing, but in the Free Republic of Cracow the revolutionaries did actually take over and had to be crushed by Russian, Prussian, and Austrian troops. The result was the annexation of Cracow by Austria. In a vastly surprising development, the Galician uprising was nipped in the bud, not by the Habsburg army, but by the serfs. The Polish revolutionary nobles had promised sweeping reforms to the serfs and had incited the peasants to kill the Austrian officials. Instead, the Polish and Ukrainian peasants massacred **over a thousand noblemen** in Tarnow.

The effect of the Polish disaster on Hungary was immeasurable, especially as the international economic depression had now reached that country and as the Galician peasant revolt itself had spread to northern Hungary. From now on the Hungarian nobility lived in heightened fear of a Jacquerie: a threat that Kossuth and his friends unhesitatingly attributed to the machinations of the Tsar and Metternich. Clearly, it was now up to either Metternich or the Hungarian Opposition to exploit the discontent of the peasants.

In this decisive moment Metternich shied away from action. Instead of emancipating the peasants by royal decree, he instructed King Ferdinand to **convoke the Diet for the fall of 1847**. There Metternich intended to introduce reform bills that, he hoped, would take the **wind out of the sails of the liberals**. Thus he threw away his one great opportunity to win the battle against the nobles. During the many months left before the new Diet, the opposition created its own political party with Kossuth as its most influential leader. The **Party of United Opposition** formulated a program that was at least a few hesitant steps ahead of the Conservatives.

Making a liberal party was no easy matter, for the opposition was deeply divided between "municipalists" and "centralists," and also between moderates and various shades of radicals. The municipalists—in the first place Kossuth—wished to build new Hungary on the time-honored institution of municipia, i.e., the noble counties run by the provincial lesser nobility. Such centralists as **Jozsef Eötvös** abominated the oppressive and backward county system and demanded a strong reforming national government, as well as the democratic self-government of the cities and the villages. The

centralists were the more progressive, but they were also far too intellectual and bourgeois to win a mass following. In any case, the provincial nobles (soldiers of the opposition movement) could never have been persuaded to destroy their stronghold, the county system. Kossuth knew well the realities of the Hungarian situation: if the lesser nobility was to reform and modernize Hungary, the counties had to be preserved.

It took almost a year's wrangling for the Opposition to arrive at a common platform. The final Declaration launched in June 1847 had been drafted by Kossuth but had been substantially edited—or rather toned down—by **Deak**, the eternal conciliator. It included all the liberal demands in the area of national sovereignty under the Habsburg dynasty, unification of all the lands under the **Crown of Saint Stephen**, economic and social progress, and a bill of rights. Only the nationality question was left unmentioned and this for the simple reason that, in the eyes of the liberals, the nationality question did not exist. All subjects of the Hungarian kingdom, without regard to status, race, or religion, were to benefit from the introduction of Magyar as the compulsory language of state education (as opposed to German or Latin), freedom of the press and religion, the extension of suffrage, a cabinet responsible to the National Assembly, equality before the law, general taxation, modernization of the city charters, equal voting rights in the Assembly to the free royal cities, and the abolition of entail and of peasant servitude. Although rather unclear on such crucial issues as whether the abolition of the lord-serf relationship should be made compulsory or voluntary, and when and how the lords should be compensated, the Declaration became the basis for the sweeping reform legislation of March 1848. For the time being, the government forbade the printing of the Oppositionary Declaration. Nevertheless, it was printed clandestinely and distributed all over the country.

The major reason for the government's interdiction of the Declaration was that for the first time—but certainly not for the last—in the history of the Monarchy, the Hungarian liberals expressed the desire to see a liberal constitution introduced not only in Hungary but in the other Habsburg lands as well. Magyar insistence that the absolutistically governed Austrian and Bohemian provinces adjust their political system to that of Hungary, as a *conditio sine qua non* for Hungary's remaining in the Empire, was to determine developments in 1848 and again in 1867. In fact, it was to govern the domestic affairs of the Monarchy until its collapse in 1918.

The national election campaign was the fiercest ever, its most sensational event Kossuth's candidacy in Pest county. This penniless and landless journalist, a newcomer in the county, was to represent in the Diet Hungary's most important territorial unit, which often dictated policy to many others. Against this nightmarish development Chancellor Apponyi mobilized all his forces: the secret police, the Conservatives, the Catholic prelates, the big landowners. But, as it soon turned out, the government had neither the machinery nor the money to defeat Kossuth, whose candidacy was supported not only by Pest county's largely progressive middle nobility, but by such liberal aristocrats as Count Lajos Batthyany, later Hungary's prime minister. It was rumored that Batthyany alone had spent 100,000 gulden on his protégé's election. Even if this figure was an exaggeration, Batthyany was not the only nabob to finance the campaign. The liberal aristocrats financed the printing of pamphlets and the organizing of demonstrations; and they wined and dined the poor sandaled nobility, who were often their clients. Of course, Kossuth helped his own cause mightily with his magnificent oratory.

As usual, the election campaign resembled a patriotic orgy. At mass banquets and parades the Kossuth supporters (aristocrats, poets, and journalists) appeared dressed up as swineherds, cowboys, or shepherds. Noble ladies wore diamonds on their peasant costumes. While many a landowner abominated the parvenu Kossuth, others were dedicated Kossuthists, as were a large part of the Catholic lower clergy as well as almost all the Protestant and Orthodox clergy (Pest county had a substantial Greek and Serbian merchant population). The results were decided by the sandaled nobles, whose votes had to be bought, and by the honoratiore, who were allowed to vote in Pest county. For the first time in Hungarian history, nonnoble clerks, notaries, ministers, elementary school teachers, and even some barbers participated in the election process. Kossuth's egalitarian political efforts in the national trade associations had now paid off: his party was supported by the new middle class in Budapest and other cities.

Hungarian elections were held openly, as was then the custom everywhere. There were only a few polling stations and the voters always went there in closed ranks, wearing the insignia of their favorite candidate. On October 18, 1847, the Kossuth faction marched to the polls sporting red, white, and green feathers—Hungary's new national colors—on their caps. Supporters of his conservative opponent wore white feathers. In the city of Pest the liberal charade was led by Batthyany and other magnates, all dressed in peasant garb but riding magnificent mounts. The results were predictable: Kossuth's ballot boxes contained 2,948 pellets, those of his opponent 1,314. The total number of votes was considered phenomenal, yet only a minority of those legally entitled to vote had cast their ballots. In Pest county with its 600,000 inhabitants, there were 14,000 adult male nobles, all entitled to vote.

Because of the participation of the commoner honoratiore, Kossuth's election was constitutionally doubtful. Yet no power on earth, short of a military dictatorship, could now prevent his going to the Diet. Metternich had failed.

**The government did not give up the fight, nor had the liberals been successful everywhere.** Deak had been elected but, out of indolence, he refused to serve. He appeared at the Diet only in March 1848. Eötvös and a number of other leading liberals had been defeated. But the increasingly anxious Széchenyi had been himself elected though not without difficulty, and thus Kossuth's greatest antagonist now moved from the Upper House into the crucial Lower House. According to a secret police report sent to Vienna at that time, deputies of twenty-one counties at the Diet were considered absolutely loyal to the Crown, those of eight counties could be won over, seven were doubtful, and the deputies of fourteen counties were hopelessly oppositionary.

Kossuth's fame was overwhelming. In the words of an exasperated conservative official from Pest county: "Kossuth is an agitator and not a peaceable and quiet character as had been recommended by His Gracious Majesty in his letter of convoking [the Diet]. He is of the kind who alone will cause more trouble than the rest of the Diet combined."

## February before of the Spring

On November 11, 1847, King Ferdinand opened the Diet in Pressburg with a few Hungarian words, a gesture meant to appease Magyar patriots but which insulted the Croatian deputies, who insisted on using Latin. The king's legislative proposals were extensive and nearly revolutionary, including almost all the Opposition's demands and the proposal to lift the customs barrier between Austria and Hungary. This progressive agenda swayed many hesitant deputies, despite the galleries being filled with cheering and booing students and young barristers, making it difficult for deputies to support the government. Kossuth argued for rejecting the royal agenda, and the deputies decided to discuss national grievances first, following tradition.

Kossuth prioritized the issue of county administrators in Hungary's list of grievances. **The Upper House promptly rejected the Lower House's recommendation to reverse the agenda**, wasting many weeks in debating the Diet's reply to the king. Eventually, at Kossuth's suggestion, the Lower House decided not to address the Throne for the first time in history. Without an agenda, diverse issues were discussed in no particular order, including universal taxation and the compulsory emancipation of peasants. Kossuth reminded the deputies that the nobility could no longer dominate Hungary but could lead the nation. However, the Opposition was divided on these issues, rendering the adopted resolutions worthless. Meanwhile, Chancellor Apponyi, Széchenyi, and the Conservatives worked on the deputies, temporarily gaining the support of several Opposition leaders.

On February 5, 1848, Kossuth insisted that the Diet demand an immediate end to the system of administrators, but he was voted down by a narrow margin, with the decisive vote cast by Croatian deputies. This defeat was a bad omen for the impending confrontation with the Croats, whom Apponyi had been courting and whom Kossuth had constantly irritated.

Kossuth did not give up and soon went on the offensive again. The struggle had been a draw, with the Lower House evenly divided between the two camps. International events then came to Kossuth's aid.

**In January 1848, a revolution broke out in Sicily**, spreading turmoil across most of the Italian peninsula and requiring **Austrian troops to defend Lombardy**. The Italian revolt was just the beginning, especially given the terrible international and domestic economic situations and the Treasury's inability to afford a war. The Court was worried, and liberals were excited. A Prussian diplomat in Vienna reported on February 29 about the dire situation, noting Metternich's weakness, the Emperor's poor condition, and the Empress's constant praying. Metternich himself wrote about expecting "the most horrible events."

**-News of the Paris revolution reached Vienna next day. From that time, changes followed** rapidly, with reformers and revolutionaries in Vienna, Milan, Prague, Pressburg, and Buda-Pest driving each other forward. Kossuth's influence was greatest in the Hungarian capitals, Pressburg and Buda-Pest. Hungary, with its own Diet and administration, a well-organized liberal movement, a powerful social class, and a tradition of political independence, played a major role in the events of March 1848.

Hungary's newfound greatness was built on a shaky foundation, created not by a rising industrial bourgeoisie but by the landowning nobility. Despite some successes in agriculture, trade, transportation, and industry, Hungary's economy lagged behind the western parts of the Monarchy. Kossuth and his fellow reformers could only temporarily hide the country's economic weakness behind modernistic slogans and political organization. This cover-up could last only as long as the Court and Austro-German ruling circles could not adopt similar slogans and organization. The rise of Hungary was partly due to Metternich's inactivity and conservatism, and Hungary would face powerful odds after his fall. The year 1848 would give Hungary virtual independence within the Empire but also teach their opponents to counter Hungarian progressivism with their own propaganda and political institutions. Hungary was the inevitable loser in the confrontation of 1848-49.

**Széchenyi was right, and Kossuth was wrong:** Hungary should not have embarked on its great political adventure without first developing economic strength and a bourgeois society. However, once the Empire showed signs of falling apart, it was hard to see how the Hungarians could have abstained from trying to secure the greatest advantage. In an understandable reach for independent development, Hungary helped bring about the Empire's great crisis.

More than anyone else, Kossuth fostered the crisis. His program was Hungarian sovereignty within the Monarchy, and he worked consistently to achieve this goal. Unlike Széchenyi, Kossuth was never disturbed by self-doubt, partly because he cared little for others' opinions and partly because of his intense aims. He borrowed ideas liberally but set out his own program. His determination was unique, as was his pragmatism regarding Hungary's immediate problems. His vision of the future and understanding of the European situation were hazy. This combination of the realistic and the utopian made him the perfect leader in an epoch when the Hungarian nation—and others—strove for practical reform and an ideal state of affairs.

XX

## **The Three Revolutions of Vienna**

Opposition to Prince Clemens von Metternich's regime grew steadily. His secretive, arbitrary government, supported by the most repressive police methods in Europe, was unsustainable. By the late 1830s, it became fashionable in Vienna to ridicule the government, with opposition evident even within the Viennese court. Count **Franz Kolowrat**, head of the empire's internal administration, though a conservative by nature, recognized the need for reform and opposed Metternich's uncompromising stance. Archduke John, future regent of Germany, also opposed Metternich from a liberal standpoint.

With Metternich's overthrow from his position, reconciliation between the bourgeoisie and the court seemed possible. The bourgeoisie depended on the court for culture, entertainment, and employment, whether in the vast army of civil servants or commercially, as the court was a major customer of luxury goods and general commodities. Thus, the Viennese middle classes harbored some affection for the House of Habsburg, influenced by nostalgia for reformist Joseph II. This contrasted with the **Viennese hatred of the aristocracy and clergy**, who were directly associated with the old regime. The liberal bourgeoisie



avored a quick end to the revolutionary uproar, feeling their aim was achieved with the fall of the Metternich system.

By contrast, the student body and many academics were far more radical, harboring ideas of "jingoistic Germanness, sovereignty of the people, national representation, and other eccentric principles." The social backgrounds of Vienna's students differed significantly from those of their German counterparts: over 25 percent were sons of craftsmen and journeymen, and another 14 percent came from lower civil servants. They maintained links with workers' communities and showed commitment to their plight, while the bourgeoisie mostly ignored their conditions. The most politically prominent students came from the medical faculty or the arts, with technology students closely connected to the working classes, whereas law students remained distant. These students also had close contacts with the German student movement and favored a tighter union with German-speaking territories.

Despite its antiquated political system and several economic downturns and social crises, Vienna's population had increased by nearly 50 percent since 1815, accommodating more than 400,000 people within the city walls. The inner city housed the middle classes, artisans, and domestic servants, while the industrialized working classes and the mass of the unemployed lived on the outskirts. With an increase of only 11 percent in Vienna's housing stock, living conditions had significantly worsened. Work also deteriorated during recent years of depression: on February 25, the Vienna Stock Exchange experienced a major crash when the Rothschild Bank withheld credit, leading to a 30 percent fall in public funds. The subsequent credit squeeze crippled silk manufacturing, already suffering from the introduction of mechanical looms, causing widespread unemployment and poverty, further exacerbated by the Europe-wide potato famine, leading to large-scale starvation in the mid-1840s. The influx of unemployed workers from Bohemia worsened the critical economic situation. A Dickensian system of child labor, unemployed skilled workers, and journeymen kept the situation volatile, as shown by disturbances in Prague, where workers protested against mechanical calico printing. Machine wrecking was widespread, particularly in the summer of 1848, with courts pronouncing relatively lenient sentences due to widespread poverty, population excitement, and wage-related dismissals. Consequently, a discontented industrial proletariat, which became one of the main revolutionary forces, developed on the city's outskirts. Even sympathetic contemporaries like writer Eduard Bauernfeld were disturbed by the utopian ideas of Social Democrats regarding the abolition of private property and other radical concepts.

Workers began to express specific demands, such as a reduction of the working day to ten hours and wage increases, though wages were close to starvation level, with cotton workers being the worst off. Apprentices and journeymen clashed with master craftsmen and their guilds. Viennese workers, forming individual associations for collective bargaining, were not a uniform group. Political rights began to play a part, with some opposing new liberal regulations that excluded them from service in the National Guard, which journeymen and domestic servants could join. These groups were often led by a reform-hungry academic intelligentsia centered on the University and the Polytechnic. The Polytechnic, founded in 1815 in imitation of the Paris Ecole Polytechnique, became a benchmark for technological innovation. In 1840, members of the Polytechnic, industrialists, and the Trade Association of Lower Austria formed the Legal-Political-Reading Club, aiming to provide the educated, particularly the legal profession, with important periodicals and significant artistic and scientific works. Another center for modernists was the Academy of Sciences, attracting physicians and medical students. The democratic press supported

workers, demanding a ministry of public works based on the Parisian model. The right to work and improved housing conditions became central demands.

Vienna's simmering discontent was crucially affected by external events. National uprisings in northern Italy, peasant unrest in Galicia, and nationalist opposition movements in Hungary and Bohemia undermined the Imperial Court. Lajos Kossuth, the charismatic leader of the Hungarian opposition, re-elected to the Hungarian Diet in 1847, introduced liberal reforms in Hungary and became a bitter critic of the old regime. His passionate campaign for Hungarian independence fueled revolution throughout the empire, making him a celebrity within academic circles.

### **Vienna's March Revolution**

News of the Paris Revolution and the spreading unrest in Baden and the Rhineland became official on March 2, 1848, and was greeted with enthusiasm by the academic community in Vienna. With the end of Carnival on March 8, students turned their focus to the Paris uprising and organized a general debate for March 12. The liberal lawyer Baron Alexander von Bach petitioned the Lower Austrian Diet, requesting public accountability for state finances and support for establishing an imperial parliament. Students petitioned for complete press freedom, freedom of expression, the establishment of a militia, and other basic rights.

On the morning of March 13, writers and academics joined some 400 students on a march to the seat of the Diet to emphasize the seriousness of their demands. They then moved to the Hofburg, the Imperial Court's seat. Meanwhile, outside the city walls, workers began their uprising, attacking tax offices, police stations, factories, and new machinery. Upon hearing news of the march to the Hofburg, they began moving towards the inner city. Gas lamps were demolished, and the escaping gas ignited, creating a ring of fire around the city. Numerous speeches by leading demonstrators were taken up by the protesting crowds, all demanding Metternich's resignation, the expulsion of Jesuits, the formation of an armed Civil Guard, and the establishment of a constitution. The poet and journalist Herrmann Jellinek wrote, "The March Revolution was the work of the people, of the 'rabble' so despised by the bourgeoisie, the 'riffraff' which the aristocracy defined as 'animals': the March Revolution was the great achievement of the mass of the people."

The 'hawks' at the Imperial Court did not dare to employ General Windischgrätz's army against the masses in uproar. Archduke Albrecht, still supporting Metternich, deployed regular troops to clear the streets, supported by contingents of the newly formed National and Civil Guards. In the ensuing violence, forty-eight demonstrators were killed, most of them workers. This caused further uproar, strengthening the solidarity between students, craftsmen, and the industrial proletariat to present a united front against Metternich. Under pressure from the city authorities, the army withdrew, and a University-based Academic Legion was formed, which, together with the Civil Guard, took control of the city. This development threatened to alienate the proletariat from the students. Metternich's fall had become inevitable, even his closest allies turned against him. Faced with no alternative, Metternich resigned on March 13, minutes before the Civil Guard's ultimatum expired. He left the city secretly the next day and went into exile in London.

Metternich's departure was greeted with jubilation but led to widespread looting and rioting in the city outskirts, where the Civil Guard and the Academic Legion were employed to restore order. On March 14, a constitution was promised, and a new government was established several days later, led by Prime Minister Karl Ludwig Ficquelmont with Baron Franz Xaver Pillersdorf as Minister of the Interior, both liberal opponents of Metternich. However, things were not as rosy as an American observer believed, who was confident that "Austria, from being the farthest in the rear, had, by a single step, taken the advance of all Germany in the path of freedom." The new government faced significant opposition; by May 4, Ficquelmont was forced to resign, making way for the more accommodating Pillersdorf. Pillersdorf began work on the promised constitution, following the Belgian bicameral model, but delays and rumors of a reactionary backlash caused resentment and led to further disturbances. The people were represented by an Imperial Diet and a second chamber, the Senate, consisting of members of the imperial family, imperial nominees, and the landed gentry, intended to uphold their historic privileges in Austria and Bohemia, but not in Hungary and Italy. The second, inherently reactionary chamber was anathema to those who believed in the sovereignty of the people and in Austria's closer alliance with Germany. News of German demands for universal suffrage as the basis for the National Parliament in Frankfurt strengthened this opposition and promoted strongly pro-German sentiments, indicated by the display of the new red, gold, and black German colors. The 'agreement clause,' which bestowed special privileges on the emperor, including his inviolability, sole executive power, and supreme command over the armed forces, remained unclear on several other constitutional details, such as the relationship between the central government and the provinces, receiving mixed responses. The nobility and the more prosperous bourgeoisie approved it; the Academic Legion, the Democratic Club, and other radical associations rejected it. The stage was set for a second, more radical phase.

### **From the May Revolution to the September Crisis**

Violent disturbances flared up again on May 15, forcing the new government to give way to this "pressure from the streets," reinforced by an influx of the proletariat from the city outskirts. The second chamber was abolished, and the revolution progressed from its 'liberal' phase in March to a 'democratic' phase. Such a pattern was typical for most revolutions and certainly applied in the case of Paris. In Vienna, however, the mood was already changing, indicating a shift symptomatic of its revolution.

While the liberals had been satisfied with a parliament to check the emperor's absolute powers and participate in legislation, the democrats now pushed for universal suffrage and popular sovereignty. Against this backdrop, the court fled Vienna on May 17 and, without prior consultation with the Pillersdorf government, took up residence in Innsbruck. The emperor's departure from Vienna caused consternation, and public opinion became more volatile. While the liberal *Wiener Zeitung* compared the emperor's 'departure' with the flight of Louis XVI, suggesting it would hasten 'the day of the republic,' conservative and liberal forces feared the survival of the empire was at stake, along with the city's position as the capital of a multilingual state. Civil servants, fearing for their positions, anticipated the declaration of a republican Vienna, a term associated with anarchy, communism, and mob rule. They denounced the workers as robbers intent on abolishing private property and charged members of the Academic Legion as 'irresponsible agitators' for leading the workers on. Petitions by citizens' groups, including the National Guard, were dispatched to Innsbruck, begging the emperor to return. The *Wiener*

Zeitung asked for the 'close cooperation of all well-intended people [to secure] persons and property, and the preservation of the constitutional throne.' Such statements were also prompted by a virtual collapse of the banking system as customers withdrew their savings, threatening financial insolvency. A serious rift arose between the bourgeoisie, the Academic Legion, and the proletariat in the industrial outskirts, with the power struggle between liberals and radicals finely balanced. Democrats were held responsible for the flight of the imperial court, the Academic Legion was dissolved, but re-established in the face of protest from students and workers. When matters reached a climax on May 26, 160 barricades were constructed in the inner city, and regular troops found themselves in armed conflict with students, workers, and the National Guard. Fewer than 12,000 troops in the Vienna garrison faced nearly 40,000 student legionaries and national guardsmen, as well as thousands of workers streaming into the city to support them.

The democratic victory led to forming a Security Committee, consisting of members from a Citizens' Committee, the National Guard, and the Academic Legion. One of the new Committee's first demands was the removal of all 'unnecessary military forces' from Vienna and the surrender of Count Hajos, former Commander in Chief of the Vienna National Guard, as a hostage to the students. The Committee also urgently attempted to persuade the emperor to return to Vienna. A program of public works was established but failed to ameliorate existing social and economic problems, faring little better than its French model. Scores of radical newspapers emerged, most prominently the Wiener Katzenmusik and the Volksfreund, which published vitriolic attacks against the camarilla and the church and even printed some articles critical of the monarchy. When their denunciations targeted the wealthier members of the bourgeoisie, the fragile union between the middle-class Viennese and the workers came under strain. As the economic situation deteriorated and friction between the bourgeoisie and the workers became more apparent, utopian socialist ideas began to gain ground in certain quarters. The twenty-thousand earth workers, among them many women, protested against a wage reduction, and the National and Civil Guards interfered with bloody consequences. Vienna was not ready for a genuine class struggle or for a republican resolution of its political problems. Despite this, the city enjoyed relative calm for the next few months, with the Security Committee virtually the only executive power. In June, a parliament was elected, but public support was lukewarm. The revolution began to lose its momentum.

While monarchist loyalty may account for the weak support for a republic, it cannot fully explain the decline in revolutionary fervor. A closer analysis of the political and economic situation reveals several critical factors contributing to the waning of the revolution. Firstly, establishing the Security Committee achieved one of the revolutionaries' major aims, and with the government's virtual capitulation, there was no clear consensus on what should happen next. Secondly, the coalition between the property-owning bourgeoisie and the proletariat was inherently unsustainable. The earth workers' riots in the Prater during the summer of 1848, coupled with a sharp economic downturn, increased tension between both classes, especially once parliamentary elections returned a decisive majority of middle-class representatives. The liberal Pillersdorf government resigned, making way for a team with more monarchist leanings, headed by Count Johann Philip von Wessenberg. The return of the Imperial Court to Vienna on August 12 simply confirmed such tendencies. Nevertheless, the radical Silesian delegate Hans Kudlich, speaking up for peasant interests, was successful in his demand that "from now on all servile relationships, together with all rights and obligations coming therefrom, are abolished." Although the issue of indemnification of landlords remained unresolved, Kudlich's proposal had been largely accepted by September, and once

their goal was achieved, the peasants quickly abandoned the revolution. A further crucial element was thereby removed from the revolutionary equation.

The third and most decisive reason for the waning of the revolutionary drive was the nationality issue. Separatist national interests soon gained importance over and above liberal aspirations, as every national group sought to secure a position of power. The Austro-German minority within the empire faced the difficult decision of whether to enter a closer union with the rest of Germany, risking the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, or to stay within the empire, risking the dilution of their German cultural hegemony in the face of Slavonic and Hungarian demands for cultural and national emancipation. Their difficult relations with Germany were not improved when Prussia concluded the Peace of Malmö on August 26, indicating that power within the new Germany would lie with Prussia. The old rivalry between Austria and Prussia was rekindled, and when the Basic Rights of the German people (declared on October 8 by the Frankfurt National Assembly) stated explicitly that "no part of the German Reich must be united with non-German countries," the dilemma facing the Austro-Germans was reinforced.

Alongside this inner-German conflict was the growth of a Pan-Slavonic movement, which threatened to divert revolutionary aims. Austro-Germans and Hungarians were fearful of a united Slavonic front, which raised the prospect of Russian influence in the Balkans. A Pan-Slavonic conference met in Prague in early June to consider a possible union of all Slavonic peoples as a defense against their partition between Germans and Hungarians. Their manifesto demanded "full equality of all nations, irrespective of their political power or size," and the conversion of the Habsburg Empire into "a federation of nations all enjoying equal rights." When revolutionary disturbances erupted in Prague, General Windischgrätz seized the opportunity to quell the unrest with a fierce bombardment of the city, crushing the rebellion and halting the aspirations of Slav nationalists. The Prague uprising presented the Vienna revolutionaries with a dilemma: satisfaction with the failure of the Czech insurrection was colored by the fear that their revolutionary ambitions might also be ended by such a military intervention. This fear was recognized by the earthworkers who petitioned parliament, requesting unity with and equal treatment of all nationalities.

Karl Marx, not always a prudent judge of the Viennese revolution, clearly recognized the counter-revolutionary potential arising from German nationalist feelings. Commenting on the defeat of the Prague uprising, he wrote: "Gripped by revolutionary ferment, Germany seeks relief in a war of restoration, in a campaign for the consolidation of the old authority against which she has just revolted." Only a war against Russia would be justified, as this would shake off "the claim of long, indolent slavery and make herself [Germany] free within her borders by bringing liberation to those outside." Even more dangerous for the survival of the Austrian Empire were the rivalries between Hungarians and Croats. In March, the principalities of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slovenia chose to remain under the Hungarian crown, provided they were granted virtual autonomy. Exploiting the hostility between Croatia and Hungary, and without recourse to the government in Vienna, Emperor Ferdinand appointed Baron Josip Jelačić as Ban of Croatia, despite the impassioned protests of Hungarian leaders. By forging a pincer movement, first against Hungary and then against Vienna, Jelačić strengthened his links with the Habsburg dynasty, particularly with their most reactionary generals Radetzky and Windischgrätz. The nationality issue further weakened Vienna's revolutionary credentials when many Austro-Germans sided with Radetzky against the revolutionary Italians, leaving the city free only to enter a coalition with Hungary. However, even this alliance remained problematic because of the nationality issue. The radical and national liberal

factions, though a minority, favored joint action, recognizing the need for an alliance with Hungary as a defense against Pan-Slavonic (and Russian) aspirations. With the conservative and moderate wings in Vienna opposed to such an alliance, the imperial authorities were able to take advantage of a disunited opposition.

The Hungarian situation was only one factor in developments during the summer and autumn of 1848, which indicated a general resurgence of reactionary forces. The dismissal of the Pillersdorf government by the Security Committee, with Archduke John's support on July 8, initially suggested a strengthening of the democratic faction. The Wessenberg administration appeared to support the liberals; however, the ministers Bach and Schwarzer soon abandoned any democratic leanings in favor of a reactionary position. As a result of moderates forsaking the revolutionary cause, the June parliamentary elections returned a majority of middle-of-the-road liberals to power who stood for a united, constitutional monarchy and a strong state. Approximately 60 percent of the parliamentarians belonged to the bourgeoisie, and 25 percent were peasants. With almost half of all deputies of Slav origin and mindful of Vienna's ambivalent attitude during the Prague uprising, few of them had any sympathy for the Viennese revolution. Only the extreme left remained 'revolutionary,' still seeking to reject all historic rights and privileges, though even they were in favor of retaining the monarchical principle. Most of the new ministers were conservative with professed loyalties to the monarchy, and only a quarter had the backing of the Security Committee. Additional events provided further evidence that the revolutionary cause was in decline. Upon Ferdinand's return to Vienna on August 12, rifts between a defiantly oppositional Academic Legion and the bourgeoisie erupted once more.

### **The 'October Revolution' and Reactionary Victory**

October saw the final act of the Vienna revolution. As political pressure increased, poor leadership and increasing divisions led to defeat. Although democratic forces in both Vienna and Hungary were prepared to unite in the fight against the reactionary upsurge, national priorities and mutual distrust hindered progress towards establishing a strong coalition. With relations between students, the National Guard, the petit bourgeoisie, and the proletariat strained, and lacking clearly defined political objectives, radical leaders among the students and within the democratic clubs could no longer rely on public support. Political in-fighting and corruption were rife, leading to chaos and anarchy. Austro-Germans were increasingly divided, with some favoring a closer union with Germany and others remaining loyal to the 'black-yellow' colors of the Habsburg dynasty, with the latter gaining ground among the bourgeoisie and substantial sections within the National Guard.

The actual 'October Revolution' began when Count Theodor Baillet Latour, the minister of war, ordered some troops to be transferred from Vienna to Hungary to assist Jelačić's army against the rebellious Magyars. The democrats, already furious at parliament's refusal to meet the Hungarian deputation pleading for support against Jelačić, could not condone such a move. On October 6, the Academic Legion, supported by angry Viennese workers and radical elements of the National Guard, prevented regular troops from leaving Vienna. During an exchange of fire, several people were killed, including the general in charge of the operation. Encouraged by their success, the revolutionaries marched on the ministry of war, intent on overthrowing the government. Prime Minister Wessenberg and his minister of

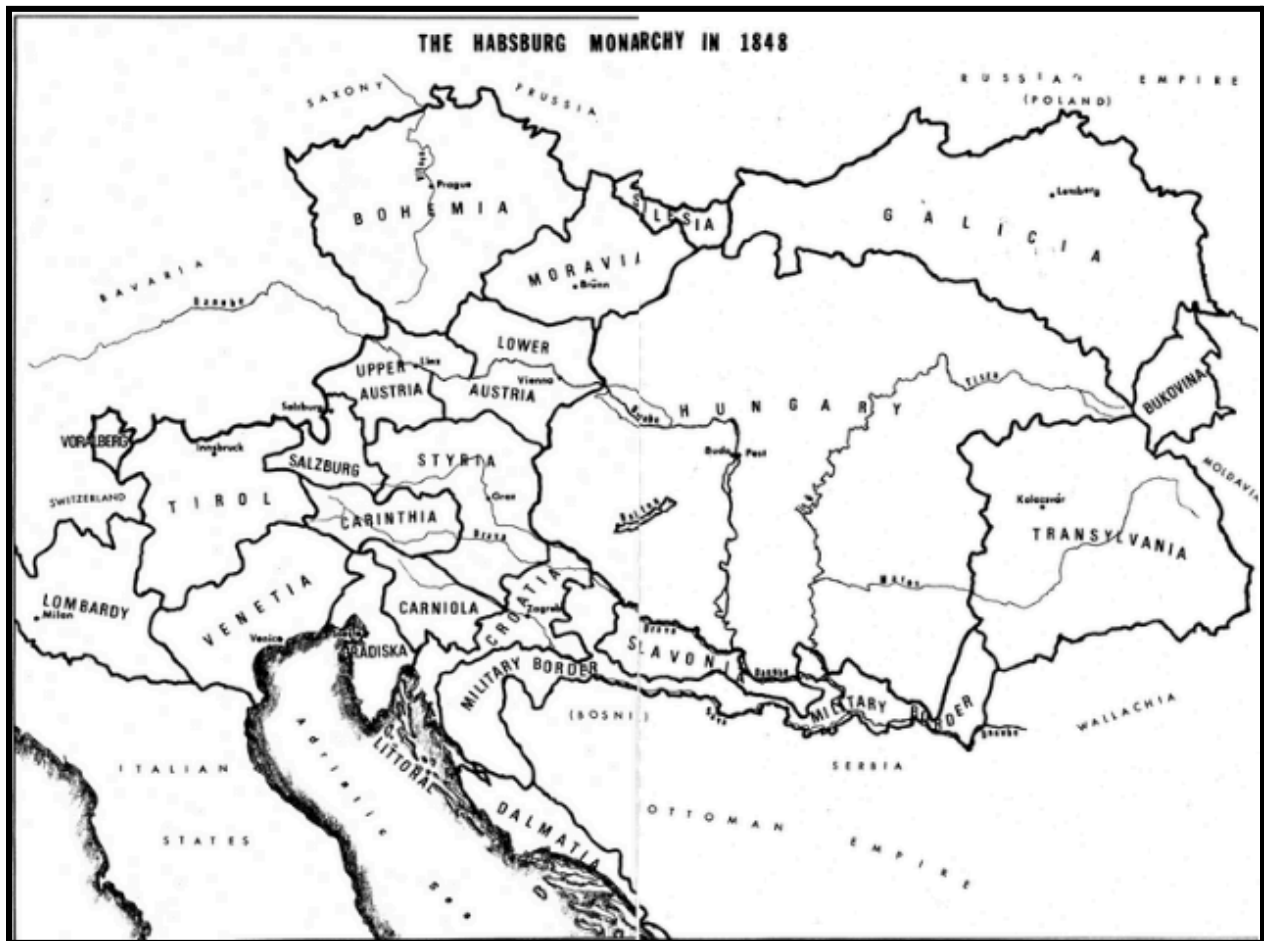
the interior, Bach, managed to escape, but the despised minister of war, Latour, was seized by the crowd and brutally murdered. The crowd then stormed the armory to secure the city against military attack and declared a provisional government. The Imperial Court fled Vienna for a second time, seeking refuge in the Moravian city of Olmütz. Student radicals, the petit bourgeoisie, and the proletariat now took control of Vienna. On October 10, they declared solidarity with Hungary but hesitated to march against Jelačić, wary of a close alliance with the Magyars. Responding to such violent action, the emperor declared war on Vienna. However, when his stern communication of October 17 was followed two days later by a conciliatory declaration promising to guarantee the liberal laws already granted, Ferdinand lost further credibility. Both sides now prepared for war. Vienna appointed a new Security Committee and appointed the poet Messenhauser Commander in Chief of the National Guard and the Polish revolutionary leader Josef Bern as head of all military operations. A mobile guard, largely consisting of the proletariat, became a third force in the defense of the city. Despite these efforts, the revolutionaries were in a hopeless position. Their various factions and armed units were undisciplined, poorly led, and badly equipped. The counter-revolutionaries, by comparison, relied on experienced generals and professional units. On October 20, General Windischgrätz informed Vienna that he would liberate the city from "a small, insolent faction that shrinks from no infamous action." He proceeded to encircle the city and, three days later, issued the ultimatum to surrender. Displaying defiance, the revolutionary forces prepared for a siege, but within days, shortages of food and water became serious, and the general will to resist reached a breaking point. The absence of the peasantry from the revolutionary cause proved a decisive drawback. On October 28, an artillery barrage signaled the beginning of the struggle for Vienna; advancing infantry overran strategically important outskirts, causing acute anxiety in the inner city. As negotiations for a speedy surrender began, news reached Vienna that Kossuth, at the head of 25,000 troops, was on his way to relieve the revolutionaries. Premature optimism interrupted the surrender negotiations, but by the evening of the next day, Kossuth's army was already in retreat, and on October 31, the city was taken, and the revolution was at an end.

The loss of life during the tumultuous period from March to October had been considerable; the imperial armies lost fifty-six officers and 1,142 soldiers, while the revolutionaries suffered between 4,000 and 6,000 casualties, among them many casual laborers and domestic servants. The military revenge was harsh; Jelačić's Croatian troops plundered the city and killed anyone offering resistance, but many revolutionaries managed to escape via Switzerland, Italy, or Germany and emigrated to America. Windischgrätz dissolved the National Guard and the Academic Legion; Messenhauser was put in charge of his own execution. The most controversial act was the execution of Robert Blum, who, together with Julius Fräbel, had arrived in Vienna on October 13 as delegates of the Frankfurt Assembly's democratic faction. While still in Frankfurt, Blum recognized that success in Vienna was vital for the revolutions elsewhere in Germany and Europe. Elected an honorary member of the Academic Legion, he had taken part in the defense of the city. Blum's execution, sanctioned by the new prime minister, Prince Felix Schwarzenberg, and carried out on November 9, caused shock waves and anger throughout Germany and had direct consequences for the beginning of the counter-revolution in Berlin.

Prince Schwarzenberg's new government was reactionary by nature, and although adopting some of the reforms instituted during the revolution, Schwarzenberg ensured they were enforced only after receiving the imperial seal of approval. Parliament was exiled to Kremsier and dissolved on March 4, 1849, when a new constitution, his own work, was announced but never actually implemented. Ferdinand was

persuaded to resign in favor of his eighteen-year-old nephew, Francis Joseph, who completely ignored the constitution and governed without an elected parliament until his death in 1916. After the fall of Vienna, the imperial forces turned against Hungary, where the revolution had the support of the lesser nobility, the petit bourgeoisie, and the peasants. After initial Hungarian victories at Komorn and Ofen, the Magyars faced defeat when Tsar Nicholas I entered hostilities with an army of 130,000 men in support of the 80,000 strong Austrian army and a 35,000 strong Croat force. In the face of such overwhelming superiority, the Hungarians were routed on August 9, 1849, at Temesvar. Kossuth escaped to Turkey, and the victors imposed a strict military regime, ensuring that the last embers of Magyar national freedom were suppressed.

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## **Prague uprising of June 1848**

From March 11, 1848, with the Assembly in Svatováclavské lázně, political unrest began to stir in Prague, joining the broader revolutionary wave sweeping across Europe. By this time, Czech politics had already fractured into two distinct currents: the liberal faction led by figures like František Palacký and Karel Havlíček Borovský, and the radically democratic faction represented by Karel Sabina, Josef Václav Frič, Vincenc Vávra Haštalský, Vilém Gauč, and Emanuel Arnold. In the early stages, the moderate liberals held sway, advocating for measured and constructive actions.

The establishment of the St. Wenceslas Committee on March 12 marked a pivotal step. This committee spearheaded efforts to articulate and address the demands of the Czech people. On March 19 and again on March 31, the Committee drafted petitions to the Emperor, focusing primarily on the need for linguistic equality. One significant achievement during this period was the founding of the National Newspaper on April 5, which served as a crucial platform for disseminating liberal ideas. Further, on April 10, the St. Wenceslas Committee transformed into the National Committee, reflecting its expanded role and ambitions.

A landmark event was Palacký's Letter to Frankfurt on April 11, which articulated the Czech stance on the unfolding German unification process. This period also saw the creation of the Lípa slovanská association on April 30, an initiative aimed at fostering Slavic unity. The organization of the Slavic Congress from June 2 to 12 further underscored this pan-Slavic aspiration, drawing delegates from across the Slavic world to Prague.

Meanwhile, the radical democratic wing was gaining momentum. On June 1, they launched their own newspaper, the Prague Evening Paper, which provided a voice for their more aggressive reformist agenda. The radical faction's influence was bolstered by

the arrival of prominent delegates to the Slavic Congress, including the notable anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, whose presence symbolized the growing radicalization of the movement.

As June began, tensions in Prague escalated. The commanding general in Bohemia, Alfred Windischgrätz, sought to quell the rising unrest through military displays of power. Constant military patrols marched through the city, artillery batteries were strategically positioned on Petrin and Vysehrad, and a massive military parade was held on June 7, supported by reinforcements from Kutná Hora and Hradec Králové. These actions only served to heighten the sense of tension within Prague.

On June 11, Prague students convened at the Karolinum and sent a delegation to Windischgrätz, demanding the military presence be scaled back to alleviate the growing unease. Their demands were dismissed, prompting the students to disseminate their demands via a leaflet known as the "Red Poster," which they distributed and posted throughout the city.

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## **Uprisings in Italy**

### **Five Days of Milan**

The Five Days of Milan was an insurrection and a major event in the Revolutionary Year of 1848 that started the First Italian War of Independence. On 18 March, a rebellion arose in the city of Milan which in five days of street fighting drove Marshal Radetzky and his Austrian soldiers from the city.

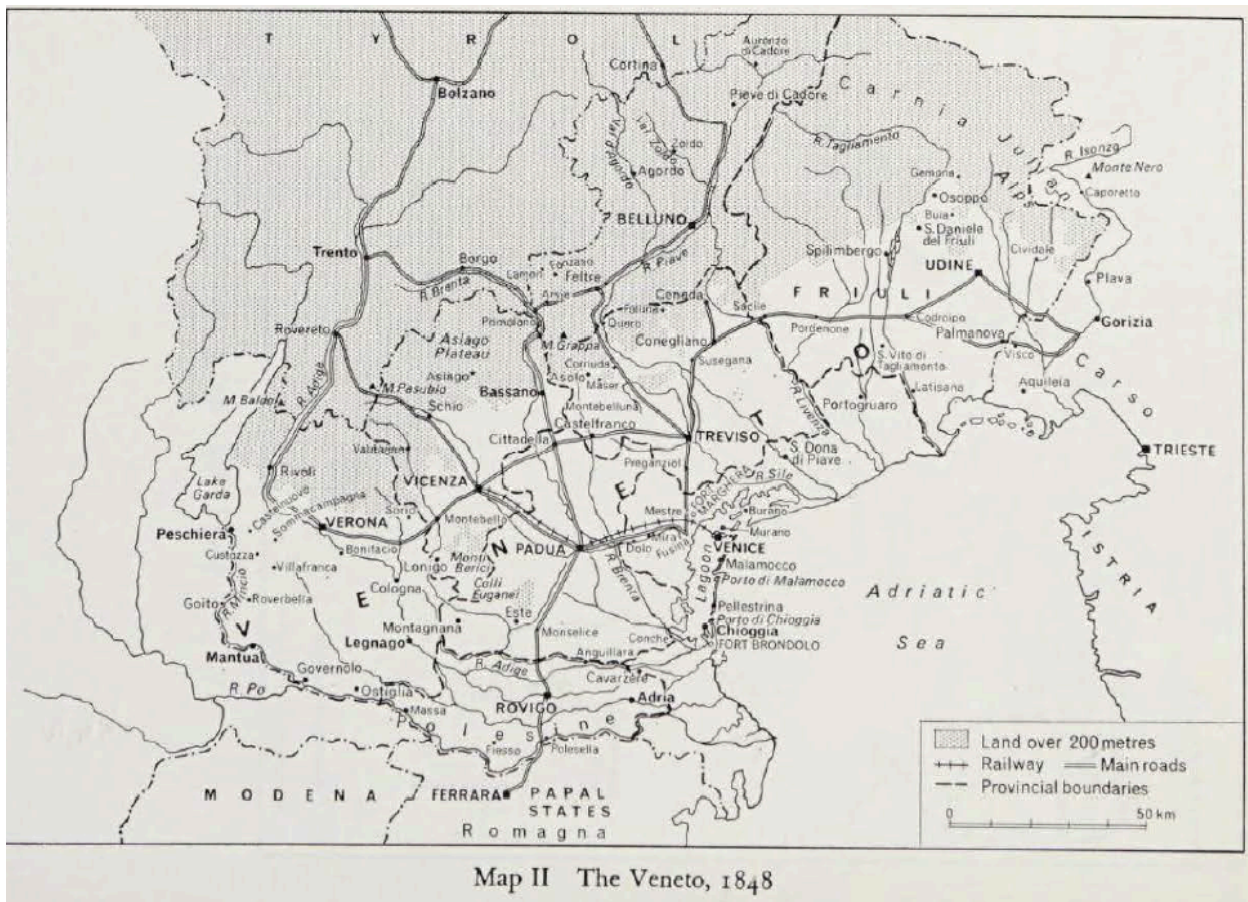
Almost simultaneously with the popular uprisings of 1848 in the Kingdom of Lombardy–Venetia, on 18 March of that year, the city of Milan also rose up. This was the first evidence of how effective popular initiative, guided by those in the Risorgimento, was able to influence Charles Albert of Sardinia.

The Austrian garrison at Milan was well equipped and commanded by an experienced general, Joseph Radetzky von Radetz, who despite being over 80 years old, was energetic and rigid. Radetzky had no intention of yielding to the uprising.

However, the whole city fought throughout the streets, raising barricades, firing from windows and roofs, and urging the rural population to join them. The populace was backed by the archbishop and at least 100 priests joined in the fighting against the Austrians. A bust of Pope Pius IX was hoisted onto the barricades.[16] A provisional government of Milan was formed and presided over by the podestà, Gabrio

Casati and a council of war under Carlo Cattaneo. The Martinitt (orphanage children) worked as message runners to all parts of the town.

Radetzky saw the difficulty of resisting under siege in the city center, but while afraid of being attacked by the Piedmontese army and peasants from the countryside, he preferred to withdraw after losing control of the Porta Tosa (now Porta Vittoria) to the rebels. On the evening of 22 March, the Austrians withdrew towards the "Quadrilatero" (the fortified zone bounded by the four cities of Verona, Legnago, Mantua and Peschiera del Garda), 120 km eastwards, taking with them several hostages arrested at the start of the uprising. Meanwhile, the rest of Lombard and Venetic territory was free.



## Manin and the Lombardo-Venetian Revolution

**The March Days of 1848 in Venice** \_\_\_\_\_ marked a crucial phase in the broader European revolutions of that year, significantly shaped by the leadership of Daniele Manin and the Venetian populace. Manin, who was released from prison on March 17, quickly became the central figure of the revolution. His ability to inspire and mobilize the Venetians was unparalleled, despite initial resistance from his friends and fellow leaders who believed that a revolution was premature.

On March 17, Manin addressed a large crowd in St. Mark's Square, advocating for moderation but ultimately declaring that insurrection was sometimes a duty. Over the following days, he revealed to his friends his intentions to lead a revolution against the Austrians, a notion that was initially met with skepticism. Meanwhile, the more conservative municipal authorities and upper-class Venetians were cautious, preferring to maintain order and believing that the recent revolution in Vienna would lead to favorable concessions.

The Austrian forces in Venice, composed of a significant garrison, remained a formidable obstacle. However, a crucial turning point occurred when Manin and his supporters requested the formation of a civic guard to protect private property and maintain social order. Despite initial refusals, pressure from various quarters, including the municipality and the patriarch, eventually led to the governor's approval of a civic guard, which quickly grew in number and armed itself.

The situation escalated on March 18, when news of the proclamation of a constitutional government for Lombardy and Venetia arrived from Trieste, leading to widespread celebrations in Venice. However, underlying tensions remained, and rumors of an Austrian bombardment, coupled with the influence of revolutionary events in Milan, kept the revolutionary fervor alive.

On March 22, the revolution reached its climax. The arsenal workers, frustrated by harsh working conditions and low wages, initiated a mutiny that culminated in the killing of their overseer, Marinovich. Manin seized this opportunity to rally support and took control of the arsenal, ensuring the distribution of arms to the Venetians. Concurrently, other revolutionary leaders secured key military positions in the city, including cannons in front of St. Mark's Cathedral.

The municipal authorities, fearing widespread violence and a democratic republic led by Manin, attempted to negotiate with the Austrian governor Palffy. However, the growing momentum of the revolution, fueled by popular support for Manin, led to the eventual surrender of the Austrian forces and the proclamation of the Venetian Republic on March 22.

Despite initial attempts by the municipal authorities to limit the revolution's scope and exclude Manin from power, popular pressure and Manin's undeniable influence led to his appointment as the president of the new republic. The following day, a formal proclamation and a Te Deum in St. Mark's Cathedral marked the establishment of the provisional government of the Republic of Venice.

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## Back to Hungary, March 1848

### Vienna Success and Croatian Contretemps

From Pressburg to Vienna, travel on a steam packet took only a few hours: time enough for the Hungarian leaders to rethink their strategy. Clearly, the Address to the Throne, as composed by Kossuth less than two weeks earlier, was now outdated, requesting as it did a separate Hungarian cabinet only as a pious wish and not as an immediate need. Yet the Diet, on the morning of March 15, had instructed the delegation to press for an immediate appointment. Now it was resolved to create a *fait accompli* by drawing up in advance the king's reply. His Majesty would merely have to sign. This Royal Rescript was drafted by Kossuth himself, on the night of his arrival in Vienna. If the king had signed the document as it stood, he would have instructed Count Batthyany to form a cabinet, appointed Palatine Stephen as royal plenipotentiary in Hungary, and promised to ratify any and all bills adopted by the Diet under the leadership of the palatine. This was the first—but not the last—instance when Hungarian reformers, in particular Kossuth, drafted a Royal Rescript for Ferdinand's signature. That they dared do such things, and that their drafts were sometimes accepted by the Court, testified to Hungary's sudden power and the near collapse of the old regime.

Resplendent in their gala national dress, girt with their richly studded swords, and bearing egret feathers on their caps, the arriving Hungarian nobles presented the Viennese with an unforgettable sight. Kossuth himself looked somber and dignified in his simple black national garb. The reception given the Hungarian "Argonauts" (as the Viennese press referred to them) went beyond their fondest dreams. The crowd may have numbered 100,000. Masses of armed students and National Guardsmen lined the streets; a myriad of hand-held lamps illuminated the dusk; weeping women rushed forward to touch Kossuth's cloak; his carriage was unhorsed and pulled by citizens and forced to stop again and again for him to make a speech.

What struck most observers was the virility and elegance of the man. At forty-six, his brown hair was now lightly flecked with white; his beard—full and wavy and thereafter so much in vogue in Hungary—gave him dignity and enhanced the handsomeness of his face. He was frail, and when he began to speak, he always acted as though he were about to collapse. Then, as if overcoming with a superhuman effort his weakness, his exhaustion, and his many illnesses (of which he complained constantly), his voice rose gradually until it rolled into a rumbling storm. Kossuth was not only a brilliant speaker—alternately majestic, dignified, fearsome, mellow, flattering, and humble, refined and direct in simplicity—but his voice carried farther than that of anyone else, an indispensable attribute for someone constantly addressing crowds.

**While the Champion of Liberty and Hero of the People was thus being celebrated, the Imperial palace, tightly shut, was protected by several companies of soldiers. Members of the Imperial family were at the moment virtual prisoners. Writing in exile ten years later, Kossuth recalled with bitterness the events of the day:**

masters of the Burg . . . what would become of them, within one-quarter of an hour, if I were to thrust the spark of the living word into the gaping mouth of the gunpowder-kegs which surrounded me from all sides; this on the very spot where even the written word [the German translation of Kossuth's March 3 speech] had sufficed to ignite a flame that had consumed the centuries' old edifice of absolutism? But I, who had come merely to seek justice for my fatherland, was not even tempted by the opportunity.

Kossuth's claim that on March 15 he was master of Vienna and that, had he wanted to, he could have put a sudden end to Habsburg rule, is not quite borne out by historical evidence. Only a few hours prior to his arrival, the emperor had promised a constitution to Austria and the Viennese had applauded him for it. On that day, in the exaltation of the moment, both Ferdinand and Kossuth were popular and, in any case, the temptation for Kossuth to do away with the House of Austria did not loom large. Obviously, he enjoyed the adulation of the crowd, and he knew how to turn it to his own and to his country's advantage. But he had no desire to dissolve the Monarchy, nor to end the rule of the emperor-king. On the contrary, he had come to Vienna to secure Hungary's rightful position in the Empire and to repossess the monarch for his country.

If March 15 was the *journée* of revolution, March 16 was that of frantic bargaining. Early in the morning, Archduke Stephen hastened to Court to inform his relatives that unless there was accession to Hungarian demands, the country would secede and might well proclaim a republic. To his credit, the palatine did not mention that there was also a movement afoot in Hungary to make him king. Around noon Ferdinand received the Hungarian delegation and, in response to flowery speeches, mumbled a few words of acknowledgement. Besieged for days by councilors, delegations, and petitioners, the emperor was at the end of his strength: his face a deathly pale, his head lolling, he was almost unable to understand what was happening. "Peinlicher Anblick," Széchenyi noted in his diary, while Kossuth was to write later: "Once the official procedure was over, Emperor-King Ferdinand V turned to Archduke Stephen, and folding his hands as in prayer, begged the archduke with childish simplicity that now that the latter had become his vice-regent [in Hungary], he should remain vice-regent and not take away his throne (I' pitt' di, 'nim mir meinen Thron nit!)."'

Soon thereafter the State Conference met in the Hofburg. With brief intermissions, it was to remain in session until dawn. The participants (the Archdukes Louis and Francis Charles; General Windisch-Graetz, commander-in-chief in Bohemia and an arch-conservative; a few Hungarian high officials; and a number of ministers of state as well as lesser councilors) were aghast at the arrogance of the Pressburg Diet. But as the day advanced and alarming reports kept coming in of turbulence everywhere—the 40,000 Pest peasants played a major role here—they agreed to consider Kossuth's draft Reply. The Royal Rescript, issued on the morning of March 17, was a verbatim rendering of the Hungarian text but with two crucial omissions: the name of Count Batthyany, and the promise of an unconditional ratification of the bills to be adopted by the Diet. This was not good enough for the Hungarian leaders; now not only Batthyany and Kossuth, but Széchenyi himself was adamant. The palatine thereupon rushed to his Imperial uncle and obtained his oral consent to the appointment of Batthyany. Immediately thereafter, as royal plenipotentiary for Hungary, Archduke Stephen wrote a note to Batthyany appointing him prime minister and instructing him to submit a list of cabinet members. The Hungarians had won a great victory but there could be no doubt that the king's consent had been achieved by the palatine going behind the back of the

State Conference. This was to constitute the grounds on which the Court would later repudiate the Hungarian constitution, send Archduke Stephen into exile, and condemn Count Batthyany to the gallows.

The events of March 16-17 had shown clearly that the highest governing circles of the Monarchy were not united in their Hungarian policy. Naturally, they all wished to save the Monarchy, and their own privileged positions in it, but they disagreed among themselves on tactics and strategy. For years the Hungarians had been insisting that the Vienna Court was dominated by the “Camarilla,” a sordid conspiratorial clique that was as obscurantist and reactionary as it was anti-Hungarian. The existence and absolute power of the Camarilla (allegedly led by the fiendish Archduchess Sophie, mother of Francis Joseph) was an article of faith with Kossuth, one that he refused to abandon to his dying day. There was literally no political speech or writing in which he did not refer to the “murderous,” “infamous,” or “accursed” Camarilla as the dedicated enemy of everything that was good and noble. Kossuth and his compatriots saw themselves as innocent victims of Camarilla machinations: they, the Hungarians, had the law on their side while the Camarilla violated the law. Revolutionary Hungary’s Paris envoy, Count Laszlo Teleki, assured the Polish Prince Adam Czartoryski in 1849: “... nous n’avons pas pris les armes que pour la défense de notre constitution légalement garantie et ... c’est la Camarilla qui est en état de révolte contre nous.” Nationalist Hungarian historiography unconditionally embraced the same view and modern marxist historians fervently reiterated the accusations of Kossuth. What neither Kossuth nor the nationalist radical historians ever made clear is who or what constituted the Camarilla. Some Hungarians use the term interchangeably with State Conference; others separate the “civilian” from the “military” Camarilla; again others a bit cavalierly identify the term with the entire Vienna Court, including the Austrian government.

Historical evidence does not support the Hungarian thesis. It is true, of course, that following Ferdinand’s accession to the throne in 1835 a group of archdukes and Imperial bureaucrats had been taking all decisions in the name of the feeble monarch. It is also true that the secrecy surrounding all high-level deliberations fostered the creation of such legends. But the fact remains that there was no conspiracy, and that there were many factions at the Court which were formed and re-formed on important political issues. Of the twenty-five-odd persons who usually attended meetings of the State Conference, at least ten were Hungarian aristocrats; the rest were of diverse nationality, often Germans from outside Austria. By 1848 nationalist sympathies had begun to influence these people, and so had diverse ideologies. Some members had pro-Magyar or pro-German or pro-Slav leanings; others showed aristocratic-federalist or bureaucratic-centralist inclinations; some put their faith in a quick military solution of the Monarchy’s problems; others favored temporary or lasting concessions to the liberal cause. The Imperial family itself was divided: Archduchess Sophie—“the only man in the Hofburg” but naturally not a member of the State Conference—was willing to introduce reforms and to sacrifice both Metternich and Ferdinand; Archdukes Louis and Francis Charles were generally rigid, as was Archduke Albrecht, a tough militarist; Archduke John had German liberal leanings, and Archduke Stephen, not a regular participant of State Conference deliberations, yearned to be both a loyal Habsburg and a loyal Hungarian. As for the Hungarian Court officials, their opinions ranged from absolute political orthodoxy to mild sympathy with Batthyany and the Diet, if not with Kossuth.

The strongest opposition to Hungarian demands on March 16 had come not from the conservative-aristocratic camp but from the camp of German-Austrian bureaucrats, who had pointed out

with some justification that the emperor's March 15 promise of an Austrian constitution clashed directly with the king's March 16 concessions to the Hungarians. These functionaries saw the March 15 Rescript as the first step toward the creation of an all-Austrian cabinet supported by a soon-to-be-elected all-Austrian parliament. How would Hungary's separate constitution fit into such a scheme? Hungary's later defeat lay in this German-Austrian opposition to separate Hungarian development. Conceivably, the Hungarians could have dealt with their conservative opponents alone: Habsburg traditionalists, like Windisch-Graetz, had always recognized at least some of Hungary's historic rights. It proved to be much more difficult for the Hungarians to combat a coalition of conservatives and bureaucratic centralists, especially as the latter came to be increasingly supported by German-Austrian liberal nationalist opinion, with only a few Vienna democrats remaining staunch supporters of the Hungarian cause. Finally, when the Czechs, Croats, and other Slavs joined this mighty coalition (for reasons of their own to be explained later), the fate of Hungary was sealed.

Why had the politically inexperienced Stephen, then thirty-one, overruled the State Conference? No doubt because he enjoyed his popularity in Hungary and because this was his way of saving the Monarchy. From that time on, all major Austrian leaders—whether archdukes, generals, or politicians—endeavored to save the Monarchy in their own way, and sometimes in violation of Imperial-Royal decrees. Finally, the generals were to save the Throne, often in defiance of the expressed wishes of the Crown. But, unlike the generals, Archduke Stephen was not to earn the pardon and gratitude of On March 18 the State Conference ruled that Stephen had overstepped his authority, but by then it was too late. Bowing to the inevitable, the Conference “temporarily” upheld the appointment of Count Batthyany. The Hungarian success was complete.

In those days the roof seemed to collapse on the Monarchy. On March 17, while the palatine was pleading with the king, revolution broke out in Venice; the next day the same happened in Milan. On the same March 18, as if to show the Habsburgs that succor could not be expected anywhere, violent clashes occurred in Berlin between revolutionaries and Prussian royal troops.

**On March 19 a Czech delegation came to Vienna to present its demands.** Two days later, the Austrian commander in **Venice capitulated to the rebels without having fired a shot:** a republic was proclaimed there, with **Daniele Manin as president of Venice and hopefully of Italy.** One-third of the Austrian land forces in Venice and the majority of the Austrian fleet—manned mainly by Italians—declared—for a united Italy. The rest of the fleet fled to Trieste, and from there to Pola. On March 22 the small Austrian garrison in Milan, headed by **Field Marshal Radetzky, Austrian commander in Italy, evacuated the city. The Milan revolutionaries** formed a provisional government and asked for brotherly help from the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. **On March 23 the king of that country, Charles Albert, ordered his army into Lombardy:** Austria was now at war with a foreign country. All Italy was in revolt; client princes of Austria had to flee their capitals; even the pope promised troops against His Catholic and Apostolic Majesty. **Radetzky now withdrew to the Quadrilateral,** the four great fortresses guarding the Alpine passes between Italy and Austria. Meanwhile, there were **demonstrations in Galicia and a revolt in Krakow.**

The State Conference tried to save what it could. Troops and a little money were dispatched to Radetzky. In Vienna a further step toward consolidation was taken on March 20 with the formation of an Austrian



cabinet, the first in the country's history. It consisted of old and trusted servants of the Crown; but it was not at all clear whether this ministry, headed by Kolowrat, an old-regime figure, would command any authority. Windisch-Graetz was sent back to Bohemia to keep order there and, on March 23, a

**Croat colonel, Josip Jelacic, was appointed ban (governor) of Croatia. This was a fatal move, destined to lead to war with Hungary.**

### **Croatia**

For nearly 700 years the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia had been associated with the Kingdom of Hungary: both formed integral parts of the Crown of Saint Stephen. Although theoretically equal, small and backward Croatia-Slavonia had less than 1.5 million inhabitants to Hungary's more than 10 million (the latter without counting Transylvania), and it was definitely in a subordinate position. Moreover, ever since Turkish times, Croatia-Slavonia had been divided into two parts: Civil Croatia and a much larger and more populous Military Border. Originally established as a line of defense against the Turks, the Military Border was not administered, like Civil Croatia, by the Hungarian Chancellery in Vienna, but by the Court War Council. Thus the Military Border, while legally part of the Crown of Saint Stephen, was not the concern of either the Hungarian or the Croatian authorities. The Military Border, incidentally, extended well beyond the boundaries of historic Croatia-Slavonia into Hungary proper and into Transylvania, thus infinitely complicating matters to contemporary jurists and presumably to readers of this work. Still, the bulk of the Border was in historic Croatia-Slavonia, and its peasant-soldiers were either Croats or Serbs. These were the famous Grenzer, similar to the Cossacks of Russia, and the pride and joy of the Habsburg Civil Croatia was a small country with, however, its own diet (the Sabor), its landed nobility, and some measure of autonomy. Relations between the Hungarian and Croatian nobility, once fraternally united in opposition to the centralizing and reforming endeavors of Vienna, had lately become envenomed. Hungarian nationalism was seen in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, as a mortal danger to the historic rights of their country. Naturally, the Croats were also divided among themselves. Some—mainly young middle-class intellectuals—belonged to the Illyrian movement: they dreamed of the unification of all South Slavs in one sovereign country, perhaps under the nominal rule of the Habsburg dynasty. Other Croats, mostly from the nobility, simply wished to strengthen Croatian rights under the Crown of Saint Stephen. Again others, especially a distinct group of Croatian peasant-nobles, were ardent followers of Kossuth.

The status of Croatia greatly worried Vienna. There were thousands of Croatian and Serbian soldiers under Radetzky in Italy, constituting the best part of that army. If the Hungarians were satisfied but not the Croats, there was real danger that the latter would refuse to fight for Austria. To avoid giving the Croats the impression that they had been delivered, bound hand and foot, to the whims of their Hungarian overlords, it was imperative that the governorship of Croatia be offered to a man whom both the Croats and Vienna could trust. This man was Jelacic. The son of a two-star general in the Habsburg army, he became an officer in 1819. He counted as a Croatian patriot because of the heroic poems he wrote and read aloud to his soldiers in camp; he was the commander of a Croatian regiment; he was a conservative and his loyalty to the Throne was absolute; finally, Jelacic hated the "lawyers' clique" in Pressburg and Buda-Pest. His appointment, of doubtful legality, was hurriedly passed lest the Hungarian government (not yet constituted) be able to prevent it. After all, the ban of Croatia was one of Hungary's highest dignitaries. Characteristic of the disunity in Imperial circles was the fact that while some Austrian officials saw Jelacic's appointment as a peaceful measure and an inevitable consequence of the great concessions made to Hungary, at least one Imperial official, not a member of the State Conference, wrote

to **Jelacic**: “Austria will have to reconquer Hungary, and therefore you must at all costs retain the loyalty of the Military Border.”

Within two weeks **Jelacic** was promoted to a two-star general, and in an unprecedented move the new governor of Civil Croatia was also put in charge of the armies of both Civil Croatia and the Croatian-Slavonian section of the Military Border. In September 1848 he was to invade Hungary, precipitating the war between the Habsburgs and Kossuth. Seen from Vienna, Hungary still posed a serious problem, but for the time being not of catastrophic proportions. It appeared that the country would remain in the Monarchy, something that could not be said of northern Italy. Nor could it be said of German-Austria proper, where radical agitation was growing for unification with the rest of Germany at any cost—even, if necessary, by discarding the Habsburg dynasty. Left to their own devices for a few days, the Hungarians now proceeded to create a new country. In this effort Kossuth took leadership.

## **Making of a New Constitution**

The delegation’s dazzling success in Vienna swept all Magyars, except for archconservatives, off their feet. Now even Deak thought it was better to have a Habsburg as palatine of Hungary than to have someone else, or to have a republic, or to see the archduke proclaimed king of Hungary. The palatine distrusted Batthyany but made him prime minister because Batthyany was less dangerous than Kossuth. Batthyany feared Kossuth but had supported the latter’s election to the Diet in 1847 so that Kossuth would become a member of the legislature rather than a demagogue at large; now Batthyany was preparing to entrust Kossuth with a responsible but not too influential cabinet post. Kossuth distrusted the radical intellectuals, but he suffered their activities because he needed their support. He also endorsed the Committee of Public Safety, and infiltrated it with his own friends because it burdened the intellectuals with responsibility for maintaining order in Buda-Pest. Finally, Petofi with his friends had little respect for the peasant-agitator Tancsics, but they supported him so as to secure the loyalty of peasants to the radical and national cause.

In this nerve-racking situation, the noble Diet, or rather its liberal majority, set itself the task of drawing up in rough outline the maximum reforms it was ready to adopt before quickly dissolving itself, lest more extreme measures be imposed on it by the street. The new Hungarian government, it was hoped, would then execute the reform laws as it saw fit and would restrain the radicals with the might of the state.

For the next two weeks, including Sundays, there were to be daily meetings of both Houses: with unofficial “circular” sessions preparing the work of official ones, with incessant debate and voting, and with almost all important bills originating from Kossuth.

On March 18 Kossuth proposed, and the Lower House accepted, equal voting rights to be given during the remainder of the session to the hitherto practically voteless town representatives and clerical chapter delegates. On the same day both Houses voted in favor of a number of other proposals by Kossuth, among them those on general taxation and the abolition of feudal dues and services. Now that the landowning noble estate had made such a supreme sacrifice, it was high time for the members of the clerical estate to give up something, too. All eyes were turned to them, but the deputies of the chapters kept silent. In one of his reminiscences Kossuth tells us what happened next:

The emancipation of the serfs having been voted in. . . I stole quietly to the stand where the deputies of the chapters were sitting and, addressing them in a gentle low voice, I said: “Gentlemen: the tithe of the landlords has just ceased to exist; it is natural therefore that the tithe of the clergy cease also. Secure for the Hungarian Catholic clergy the glory of surrendering it yourselves; do not wait for me to make the proposal. You must take the initiative yourselves.” Thereupon one of them replied: “Thank you for the warning; I shall do so immediately.” . . . I still laugh when I recall how some of the reverend colleagues of this gentleman tugged at his cassock. “Per amorem dei,” he should not be a fool. But the good man wanted to be. He announced, in the name of his chapter, that he would renounce the tithe, on behalf of the people, in perpetuity, and without any compensation. His example was followed by his colleagues, all making enthusiastic statements; not one spoke against it, not even the cassock tuggers. . . . Such was the genesis of the eternally glorious Law XIII of 1848 [on the abolition of tithes due the clergy].

To reassure the worried priests, Kossuth immediately guaranteed state financial support to the lower clergy, a promise he kept as long as he was in power.

With the Batthyany-Kossuth faction standing somewhat left of center in the political spectrum, it was inevitable that clashes would occur with opponents on both the left and the right.

The first such confrontation took place on March 19, when delegates of the Buda-Pest Committee of Public Safety appeared at the circular meeting of the Lower Table to present the Twelve Demands and to request that the Diet immediately remove itself to the nation’s capital. Széchenyi happened to be in the chair at this meeting and—with all his loathing for hotheads—he could not help but admire these young revolutionaries, particularly twenty-two-year-old Pal Vasvari, a historian and one of Hungary’s few revolutionary theoreticians, who was to die at the hands of Romanian guerrillas a year later. “Charmant garcon,” Széchenyi noted in his diary, adding that Vasvari reminded him of Saint-Just.

Less sensitive souls remained unimpressed by the beauty of youth. Delivering the reply of the House, Kossuth mixed flattery with threats. Neither then nor after did he refer to March 15 in Buda-Pest as a revolution; it was for him simply another manifestation of the “national movement.” He told the youth delegation that the Diet would not budge: not with the few weeks of urgent work left; the Twelve Demands were laudable but unnecessary, as most of them were already included in the Diet’s program. Kossuth then stated:

I recognize the inhabitants of Buda-Pest as inexpressibly important in this fatherland; I recognize Buda-Pest as the heart of the country, but I shall never recognize it as [this country's] master . . . just as the word "nation" cannot be arrogated by one caste, so it cannot be arrogated by any one city; the 15 million Hungarians, as an entity, constitute the fatherland and the nation . . . this nation is so strong in the awareness of its rights, its vocation and its mission, that it can crush anyone who entertains the notion of indispensability to the nation.

Kossuth's message was understood clearly by everyone, especially the moderate-conservative elements in Pressburg to whom the speech was really addressed. Their newspaper bannered Kossuth's threat to the youth as a headline. There was to be no second revolution in Hungary; Buda-Pest would not be allowed to play the role of Paris; commoners ought not to try to wrest power from the nobles; all changes would be made by the legally constituted Diet, and not by plebeian revolutionaries.

With this address, Kossuth achieved two aims. By simultaneously complimenting and warning "Young Hungary," he made it clear that they were to remain loyal to him: they had, after all, no one else to whom they could turn. But by not advocating the dissolution of the Committee of Public Safety, he also served notice on the conservatives. Without Kossuth in the cabinet, there could never be peace in Hungary.

The following days saw feverish activity in the Diet. On March 20 the annual convening of the new National Assembly was decided, together with the creation of a national bank. On the same day, the new press bill was presented, abolishing censorship but setting strict limitations on the freedom of the press by severely punishing press delicts and by requiring publishers to deposit a high bond before starting a newspaper. The youth in Pest later burned the bill in public, and in its final form the press law became somewhat less stringent.

On **March 21** decisions were made, among others, on the charters of the cities. This gave some urban elements the opportunity to demonstrate their own interpretation of freedom. The bill would have granted voting rights at municipal elections to every city inhabitant, otherwise qualified, without regard to religion. In other words, it would have granted suffrage to financially secure Jews. Members of the guilds, both masters and journeymen, had long resented the illegal immigration into the cities of Jewish shopkeepers and artisans.

March 22 saw the presentation of the bill on the National Guard system. Guards were the great fashion of the Springtime of Peoples: no revolution was considered complete without these armed and uniformed civilians, charged with defending property and the new regime. In Hungary, the first Guard companies sprang up on March 15 in Pest; from there, the movement spread rapidly to other cities and even to the countryside. The formation of a militia was inevitable, but it was also dangerous: for what if the armed peasants should turn against the landowners or, as one deputy put it, the peasants should become "the tools of emissaries heralding communistic doctrines"? It was decided to set rather high property qualifications for entry into the Guard; for instance, no peasant holding less than one-half of a serf section was allowed to serve, which meant that most peasants were excluded. Speaking on the issue, Kossuth again struck out in two directions: he challenged the conservatives by declaring that "whatever the people have acquired cannot be taken away from them; rather, one must legalize and organize it"; and the

radicals by categorically rejecting the idea that Guard officers above the rank of captain be elected democratically.

As it turned out, the Guard companies blithely ignored the Diet's decision with regard to property qualifications; after the national minorities revolted, the government needed all the men it could get anyway. On the other hand, the Diet's initial fears proved unwarranted: the Guards became the willing though inefficient tools of the new regime.

On **March 23** the two Houses adopted no less than seven major laws, among them one on the abolition of entail and one on compensation to be paid the landowners who had lost feudal dues and services. It was a major tribute to Kossuth that the deputies, unlike himself almost all landowners, consented to wait for compensation without a deadline and without any better guarantee of payment than that "the compensation of private landowners will be placed under the protective shield of national honor." True, no one could reasonably expect the peasants to pay, nor did anyone have the slightest notion where the state would get the money from, in the near future.

On the same **March 23** Batthyany submitted his proposed cabinet list to the Lower House, and thus Kossuth, when he spoke on the issue of compensation, was already addressing his audience as future minister of finance. Unlike the new constitution, the first Hungarian government was not Kossuth's brainchild but that of Batthyany. Two days earlier Kossuth had been invited to Batthyany's house, there to be told who the ministers would be and to be offered the portfolio of finance. Formally, he had shown himself reluctant but there could be no doubt about his accepting the nomination: everyone knew that if he insisted on such a crucial post as that of minister of interior, the king would reject the cabinet list; and if he refused to enter the government, the Diet and the people would turn against Batthyany. Yet Kossuth had also suffered an outright defeat on that day when he had failed to get either one of his two collaborators, Count Laszlo, Teleki and Pal Esterhazy, on the list.

For the first but certainly not for the last time during their friendly rivalry, **Batthyany emerged stronger than Kossuth**. As a result of Kossuth's defeat or magnanimity, the first Hungarian government was a durable one; unlike the weak Austrian cabinet, whose composition was to change constantly, Batthyany's ministry truly governed Hungary for the next six months.

Batthyany's cabinet list was comprised of the brightest stars in the Hungarian political firmament, their ideologies ranging from the conservative to the very liberal, but with the pre-1848 liberal opposition forming a six-member majority over two conservatives and one without party affiliation.

**Prince Pal Esterhazy**, at sixty-two the doyen of the new government, became "minister near His Majesty." The wealthiest man in Hungary and the head of the country's greatest family, he was an outright conservative. He had worked with Metternich and had been for many years Austrian ambassador to the Court of Saint James.

**Széchenyi** was made minister of public works and of transport. More depressed than ever, he accepted the portfolio because he could not bring himself to say no to his friend Batthyany, and because he too hoped to neutralize Kossuth in the cabinet. On March 23, when he accepted the post, he noted in his diary: "I

have just signed my death sentence! My head will certainly land on the block!” To which he added: “I shall be hanged with Kossuth,” a dire prospect for Kossuth’s bitterest enemy. But even Széchenyi was to do his best as minister until madness clouded his mind early in September 1848.

The other ministers came from the liberal camp in the Diet: Batthyany as prime minister, Kossuth as minister of finance, Baron Jozsef Eötvös as minister of cults and education, Ferenc Deak as minister of justice, Bertalan Szemere as minister of interior, and Gabor Klauzal as minister of agriculture, industry and trade. In age they ranged from thirty-five (Eötvös) to forty-six (Kossuth); politically they were all experienced. All had been trained in law; all had once served as county administrators; with the exception of Batthyany and Eötvös, who because of their titles sat in the Upper House, all had been or were at that time deputies in the Lower House. With regard to the Court, Kossuth was the most militant, Eötvös the most moderate. In domestic policy, Eötvös was theoretically a radical; all the other liberals favored the cautious reforms of Kossuth. Again with the exception of Eötvös, all believed firmly in noble supremacy.

Eötvös, a poet, journalist, and Hungary’s first successful novelist, was the leader of the centralist movement mentioned earlier, which wished to destroy the rotten counties, unconditionally emancipate all peasants, and build political democracy on the basis of communal self-government and a strong central executive. In his novels he belabored the nobles, the cruel county jails, the corrupt county administrators, and everything that was antiquated and feudal in the country. He was a true humanitarian and, in 1867, when he would again become minister of cults and education, he was to create an excellent state school system and give an enlightened nationalities’ law to Dualistic Hungary. Before 1848 he had been Kossuth’s friend and ideological opponent and, like Deak, he had reluctantly sided with Kossuth against Széchenyi. Now he entered the cabinet very much against his best convictions, for he was persuaded that, in order to save noble political and economic supremacy, Kossuth was driving Hungary to war. Still, he agreed to serve, out of loyalty to his colleagues. Only after war had broken out did Eötvös seek (in September 1848) more peaceful pastures.

Szemere seemed ideologically closest to Kossuth, although he often spoke like a centralist and his convictions were difficult to fathom. He was to prove an energetic, petulant, and ruthless wartime administrator; like Mézaros and Kossuth, he did not quit with the other ministers in September 1848. Rather, he carried on till the end of the conflict, finally as prime minister. Thereafter, he too went into exile. Of the two other liberals, Klauzal belonged to the moderate faction; and the well-known Deak, also a moderate, was one of those who accepted his post only reluctantly.

This then was the first constitutional cabinet of Hungary.

## **The April Laws**

The Diet’s drastic reform bills caused significant concern at the Court, particularly since no one in Vienna knew how to address them. In a confidential memorandum to the king dated March 24, the palatine outlined three alternatives for dealing with the Hungarians. He suggested either withdrawing troops from Hungary and abandoning the nobility to the peasants, collaborating with Batthyany to save what could be

saved, or dismissing the palatine, sending an army to Hungary, dispersing the Diet, and imposing martial law. The first option was considered immoral, the third unfeasible due to military commitments, leaving the second as the only viable choice for preserving the province.

Archduke Stephen, attempting to mediate between the conflicting parties, persuaded the State Conference to agree with his approach to negotiate with Batthyany. However, when this approach was abandoned in the fall of 1848, the Court adopted the third alternative, including an invasion army and a state of siege.

While collaborating with Batthyany, the palatine did not mean to surrender without bargaining. A significant opportunity to weaken Kossuth's position came with the nobles' agitation over the bill on the abolition of serfdom, which had passed easily in the Diet but angered many landowners. The State Conference decided to request the Diet to suspend the bill until compensation means were found, expressing satisfaction with the taxation of nobles.

On March 28, the State Conference issued a second Royal Rescript attacking the bill on the separate Hungarian government, adding a nationalist issue to a socioeconomic one, which unified the Hungarians in opposition. The Rescript stipulated the preservation of the Hungarian Court Chancellery, the king's plenipotentiary powers, central treasury control, the king's monopoly over military commissions, and Hungary's responsibility for part of the state debt.

The Royal Rescript read on March 29 caused consternation, leading Batthyany to temporarily announce his resignation. Kossuth responded by rejecting the Rescript, mobilizing the street and calling for revolution. His passionate speeches encouraged mass demonstrations in Pest, which pressured the State Conference to drop most restrictions on Hungarian self-government, leaving only minor reservations.

The Hungarian leaders secured the king's acceptance of Batthyany's cabinet list, including Kossuth as minister of finance, despite his unpopularity at Court. Kossuth's portfolio was unenviable, as he was expected to balance a nonexistent budget while ensuring payments to the king and the Hungarian administration and military.

The Diet, set to close on April 9, worked feverishly to settle suffrage reform. The new bill extended the franchise to noblemen, burghers, and those meeting specific property, residence, and employment qualifications, excluding the landless, many peasants, urban poor, and Jews. The new House of Representatives, elected in June, consisted almost exclusively of noblemen, maintaining their hegemony in parliament. This new assembly, ironically, accomplished less in terms of social and economic reforms than the old one.

The Hungarian Diet's radical reform bills created significant anxiety at the Court, with no one in Vienna sure how to handle them. On March 24, the palatine sent a confidential memorandum to the king, outlining three possible courses of action. The first option was to withdraw troops from Hungary, leaving the nobility at the mercy of the peasants, which the palatine found immoral. The second option was to collaborate with Batthyany to salvage what could be saved. The third option was to dismiss the palatine, send an army to Hungary, disperse the Diet, and impose martial law, which was deemed unfeasible due to the Monarchy's multiple military commitments.

Archduke Stephen, not a traitor but a mediator trying to navigate between two hostile camps, managed to convince the State Conference to negotiate with Batthyany. However, when this approach was abandoned in the fall of 1848, the Court adopted the third alternative, sending an invasion army, appointing a royal commissioner, and declaring a state of siege.

During the collaboration with Batthyany, the palatine sought to negotiate without completely giving in. A significant opportunity to weaken Kossuth arose with the nobles' agitation over the bill on the abolition of serfdom. This bill, which Kossuth had easily pushed through the Diet on March 18, angered many landowners, including liberals. Count Antal Szapary threatened Batthyany over the lack of immediate compensation for landowners, illustrating the tension.

On March 26-27, the State Conference requested the Diet to suspend the bill on serfdom until compensation means were found, while expressing satisfaction with the taxation of nobles. The following day, the Conference issued a second Royal Rescript attacking the bill on the separate Hungarian government. This Rescript stipulated the preservation of the Hungarian Court Chancellery, the king's plenipotentiary powers, central treasury control, the king's monopoly over military commissions, and Hungary's responsibility for part of the state debt.

The reading of the Royal Rescript on March 29 caused consternation in the Diet. Batthyany announced his resignation but reconsidered, trusting the palatine to take immediate action. Kossuth, raising his powerful voice, rejected the Rescript and mobilized the street for support. His speeches led to mass demonstrations in Pest, pressuring the State Conference to drop most restrictions on Hungarian self-government, leaving only minor reservations.

Batthyany's cabinet list, including Kossuth as minister of finance, was eventually accepted by the king, despite Kossuth's unpopularity at Court. Kossuth faced the challenging task of balancing a nonexistent budget while ensuring payments to the king and the Hungarian administration and military.

As the Diet prepared to close on April 9, it worked urgently to settle suffrage reform. The new bill, largely influenced by Kossuth, extended the franchise to noblemen, burghers, and those meeting specific property, residence, and employment qualifications, while excluding the landless, many peasants, urban poor, and Jews. The new House of Representatives, elected in June, consisted almost exclusively of noblemen, maintaining their dominance in parliament. This new assembly accomplished less in terms of social and economic reforms than its predecessor.